

Tips from The Top for First Years

Because Transitioning from school to tertiary education can be rather daunting, we have rounded up graduates from all disciplines, country-wide, and across generations to get their tips from the top exclusively for you.

“Time management, prioritise, and don't leave everything to the last minute.

Everything in moderation - social and work

If it's too overwhelming seek help from older students ie. 3rd or 4th year almost as a mentor.

Have a good relationship with the lecturers. Ask instead of stressing over something that could be explained again in a different way.

Remember you an adult now. No one is going to run after you. You need to be responsible for your own studies and only you are answerable.”

Liza – *Teacher at special-needs school*

“The ending of school is the beginning of your future, so don't stress about what you going to do afterward. Get through this year (there are only about 10 months), putting all your focus on passing well, and then the rest will follow. Set goals in the first term of what you want to achieve and then how are you going to do it? Use resources - past papers, set up study groups, consulting etc.”

Sonja - *Business coach*

“Use the resources available to you, there are loads! These include the facilities, student advisors, lecturers, groups/committees etc. And most importantly, don't quit!”

Nicole - *General manager: marketing and value-added products*

“Start preparing early. Keep in contact with lecturers. Do NOT miss lectures!”

Nicole's friend who has just graduated from UKZN

“I think the sheer volume of work is the biggest shock you'll face and the pace at which it comes. Also, the lecturers are not teachers - they deliver information and expect the students to understand. So my advice would be: attend lectures, don't allow yourself to drop behind (you won't have time to catch up) and make use of tutors who will explain in more detail. (If none of that works, sleep with the lecturer – JOKING!!)”

Maureen - *Retired headmistress*

“My advice to all young people starting on their journey would be:

Listen carefully.

Be present.

Take risks.

Work hard.

Be honest (but also kind).

Don't be afraid to fail - but learn from your failures ... that, in itself, is success.

Don't let yourself down.

Spend time with people that will encourage you to succeed.

Never have regrets.

Be creative.

Live every moment as if it's your last.

Manage your time carefully. Do what works for you (don't compare yourself to other people - we are all unique).”

Reneé - *Training manager*

“Be calm about the whole registration process, once you are in the system you are there so think calmly about your courses and don’t stress because for the first month or two things can be changed. Nothing is set in stone! Once you start your course time management is essential.... from day ONE otherwise it becomes very overwhelming. BE CALM, nothing is as scary or as hectic as it appears to be. You can only take one step at a time, so Slow down and breathe.”

Liesl – Pharmacist

“Give yourself space for mistakes. It’s a hard adjustment and everyone struggles in the beginning and that’s okay!”

Leigh – Current fine art student

“Be prepared.

Pair knowledge with understanding because knowledge on its own is useless.

Respect those who are sharing their wisdom with you.

Question everything until you feel a peace in your heart that it is truth.

Be kind.

Persevere - a failure is just an exercise before you get it right.

Believe in yourself.”

Zina – Development manager at an NPO

“It is okay not to know exactly what you want - this is another leg on life’s long journey and there will be uphill and possible deviations on route. It’s okay to be scared. It’s okay to feel confused. It’s okay to not have it all laid out and perfect. Give everything you do your best. Then shout for help! From past teachers, friends, parents, anyone you trust to have your best at heart [i.e. Dux]. You can’t do university alone.”

Gwyneth – Teacher and owner of a homeschool centre

“Do the work! Tertiary education is a privilege - don’t waste the opportunity.”

Katherine – Optometrist, business owner, and mother of a first-year

“So my advice would be to enjoy life while at varsity - don’t try kill yourself on your studies, focus on you as well. It’s an important part of your life and you learn so much about yourself that you need to be able to embrace who you are.”

Gillian – BCom accounting student at UNISA and full-time junior accountant

“1. Move out of your comfort zone, make (academic) friends at the beginning of the semester.

2. Talk to your seniors when you need help, you are no longer in this alone. One has to know that matric is NOT university, therefore there is always someone you can talk to.

Kedibone – current student

“The number of distinctions obtained in High School is not a true reflection of your ability to succeed in university and thus be dedicated to your ABC (apply Butt to Chair). Read to understand - do not cram and hope for the best. Don’t be shy to ask for help when you struggle, also humble yourself.”

Morongwa – final year BCom Accounting Sciences student

“Don’t fixate on university; the world needs entrepreneurs: plumbers, mechanics, electricians, cooks etc. If that is your niche, go there and do it with pride. Also... the world needs teachers. It is an undervalued profession but the most rewarding one. (I know someone who walked away from a career in publishing to teach ‘for a year’ and could never turn back!)”

Sam – Teacher, linguist, and business owner

“One of the best messages you could ever receive are the ones congratulating you that you have been accepted to enrol in university. Nothing beats that feeling. In your mind you know that ‘I’m headed where I was told life begins’. That’s not only where life begins, but where the real test to your lifestyle choices will be tested as an individual.

Students at varsity all have different experiences as we are all from different backgrounds. We all react differently to challenges given to us in the type of setting we will find in university.

There is no better explanation for "FREEDOM" you can have other than the kind of freedom you find in university. You can wake up at any time of the day you want, skip classes if you want to, go to any club if budget allows you. All these things exist throughout your university life but the most important thing that is tested here is your ability to stay focused. We all come to varsity to obtain the degree, and most disadvantaged people go to university in order to change the situation back home. Whatever you do during your time of varsity, never lose focus; never forget that you're here to study in order to have a better life. A better life for your family. Work hard and smart too.

There are times where you come across a module that everyone finds hard. In those situations, always try to stand out and pass the module so you can move on to other stages.

Remember this is a new page in your life; a clean one. Grab this opportunity with both hands and make the best out of it.”

Tshepo – *Current civil and environmental engineering student and Dux facilitator*

Get your Dux in a row. [Become a Dux](#) today and join a select group of learners who get psycho- and socio-student support – especially while you are settling into this new phase of your life. [Contact](#) us for more information on your launchpad to the extraordinary.

“Dux /dʌks/ noun

The top pupil in a school or class.”