

An Introduction to your studies - transcript

Hello and welcome to the start of your programme with the Centre for Financial and Management Studies. We hope that you are looking forward to starting your studies and that your chosen programme will help you to realise your objectives, whether these are for professional advancement, intellectual stimulus or for any other kind of self-fulfilment.

You have joined a study community that since 1992 has seen over 2,550 students graduate with the qualifications they registered for. The pass rate, amongst students who have completed their assignments and are entered to sit the exams is about 90% and the drop-out rate is low. All of these graduates are, like you, are very busy people, with careers and families to consider, as well as their studies. The information in this audio reflects the experience of these students and aims to help you achieve the most in your studies.

Much of the information that introduces the Centre, its programmes and the nature of studying by distance learning is available online. Some of the key elements such as *The University of London Regulations* can be accessed from our website as can a welcome pack area that includes answers to frequently asked questions. There is also a valuable section devoted planning and organising your study. If, you have a query that remains unanswered, do not hesitate to contact your administrator.

So, you've enrolled on your first course, your materials have arrived and your Online Study Centre login has been emailed to you. What next?

Take a moment to check that you have everything you should have. With each delivery of materials, you'll find a parcel checklist listing all the items that should be included in the package. You should check this list as soon as you open the parcel to make sure that nothing is missing. If anything is missing, get in touch with your administrator straight away so that we can get replacement items to you before you need them.

The items included in the package vary from course to course but all of them will have a course binder with one or more textbooks and/or a set of readings. Some of the courses will include CDs or DVDs, and quantitative courses will also include econometric software and data.

The course units, assignments, timetable and specimen exam are also available on the Online Study Centre.

Included with the materials of your first course is a book called *Studying at a Distance* by Christine Talbot. You should spend a bit of time on this important text. Most students looking back have said that doing so was very helpful.

There's probably no single factor guaranteeing success in study, apart from perhaps the desire and determination to succeed. The range of study strategies adopted by successful students is nearly as great as their geographical spread. But there are key elements that successful students share.

From the start, it is important to think about why you are studying your programme and what you want to achieve. Be realistic with your goal-setting so that you get a sense of satisfaction when you achieve your goals. Throughout the

programme remind yourself of the reasons for studying and why these are important to you as this will help to keep you motivated if the going gets tough.

Studying at a Distance by Christine Talbot is a small book with a wealth of skills and experience. Chapter One of Talbot's book will take you through how best to prepare for distance learning and this is a very good place to start your studies.

There are three key elements of study that you must consider. These are the role of time management; considering the physical area where you will study; and the role of colleagues, friends and family.

For each course, experience shows that you'll need to spend about 15 to 20 hours a week on average to study the materials, possibly a bit longer at first if you've not studied for several years. As each of the courses is eight weeks long the pace of study is intensive but we find that this does actually help to keep people focused. When and where you choose to study during the eight weeks is up to you and your personal situation. But, before you start the course, map out a realistic work schedule. This schedule is all the more important as we require you to submit your first assignment on the Tuesday of Week 5 and the second assignment on the Tuesday after Week 8 so you will need to factor sufficient time in your schedule to get these done.

Some people are able to set aside full days or half days in which to study, others choose to work in the early morning or evenings. Ideally you should try to build into your week specific times in good-sized chunks when you intend to work and stick to it. But bear in mind that brains get tired working on the same thing for too many hours so try to include in some rest breaks too.

For a useful guide to planning your study time, Chapter 3 of the *Studying at a Distance* textbook provides very good time management tips and we strongly recommend that you read the sections 3.1 to 3.7 now, and then you should draft a schedule for working on your first course.

Just as useful is to think about where you will be studying. As well as the obvious advantage of being able to leave your materials set up in your study area, it also establishes the idea that when you are there you are in 'study' mode. Christine Talbot looks at this idea and gives some useful tips for creating the best study environment in Section 3.1.

Studying at a distance can be hard work and it does require a high level of motivation so it's important to have a good support network. Talk to your family and friends as well as to your employer. Let them know about what's involved in studying at a distance and the support that you will need from them. There is more information on this in the Future Students section available on the website, to help explain the role of colleagues, friends and family in your studies. And don't forget that we are also here to help. Just contact your administrator if you have any concerns.

Now that you've thought about your study schedule it may now seem odd but you should consider what kind of learner you are. As Christine Talbot says at the beginning of Chapter 2 which concentrates on this topic, "by understanding more about the learning process and about your own approaches to learning and preferences for learning styles you will be better equipped to make the most of

your learning experience ". I suggest you go now to Chapter 2 and think about the advice offered there.

In planning your schedule consider too how many courses to take each year. How many you decide to take is largely dependent on how fast you want to complete the programme. But remember you do have up to five years to complete it. On average, students take at least three years to complete a Masters degree and two years to complete a Diploma. This means that many students take two or three courses a year. You can take up to five courses but we would generally advise against this as it is very intensive. Perhaps the best thing to do is to enrol on one or two courses to start with and see how you cope with that. It is important to give yourself time in between courses to reflect on and absorb the material as well as to ensure that you have sufficient time to revise for your exams scheduled for October each year.

In the next audio in this induction, we will consider the topic of Assessment.