

Teaching and Supporting Online Learners 4

Be aware of other obstacles in their paths

	Strategies	Some Student Comments
1	Recognise that many choose to study online because they have responsibilities they have to maintain – e.g. work, children, other responsibilities – and need to fit their studies around these	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I try to do a couple of hours every day. I've got about... 12-18 hours of study every week so I try to do three hours every day. I get up and go and get the kids at 2:00 o'clock – they finish at 3:00 and then I study until dinner time, till 6:00 and then I cook dinner and then it's my children's time.</i>• <i>Up until recently I have studied during the middle of the day when my youngest one is asleep. He would sometimes sleep 2-3 hours during the day and I would have to put my four year old in front of the TV or something where he would get out of my hair and I would use those couple of hours during the day to study.</i>• <i>All day today I was doing my assignment. I got a fair bit done there and I got some other stuff done and then I got some stuff organised for the house. I was there to pick up my daughter from the bus; I'm here when the kids come home. You're able to support the family a bit easier. Then at night you just sit down and do some study; it suits everyone really.</i>

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2	<p>Be approachable – be willing to listen and understand individual needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Any time that I felt I was overwhelmed, the tutors would just speak to me or, you know, I could email them and tell them and they would be very encouraging.</i> • <i>My grandfather passed away and I had assessments due. Obviously I wasn't really in the mind space to do the uni so I emailed my tutor straight away, I just told her the story basically and they were really flexible and really understanding.</i>
3	<p>Be prepared to be flexible with assignment due dates where necessary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>(I) just wrote to the tutor and said "I just need one more week. This is what I, you know, this is the timing..." he was really good and he just went "Yes, that's fine, approved, take another week". So he helped.</i> • <i>I had two big assignments to do for the maths subject and I'd asked him for an extension – the first time I told him what was going on, he said, "Look, you know, just take your time and get them to me when you can. If you've got any questions, just send me an email". He was really, really good.</i> • <i>I think they understand that things do pop up and things are going to happen and assessments are going to sometimes be late, whether it's new or whether it's external reasons.</i>
4	<p>Make sure you know what support services – academic, financial, personal – are offered by your institution, make these explicit to your students in your class materials and encourage them to make use of these as needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>He lets you know what other support systems there are and which one would be best for you. Then he had suggestions of time management and things like that. It was really good.</i> • <i>If I knew the support, and they can teach you how to study and it's all laid out for you, you know, even your tutors will help you – I just would have done it so much earlier.</i> • <i>I didn't think I'd get as much support as you actually do get. The way the tutors help you and the information that you get online sent to you, it seems to be enough to get you through the units.</i>