

# Four tips to survive and succeed at university

The academic year is underway at South Africa's tertiary institutions, but some of the most important lessons for students cannot be learned in the lecture hall or prac labs. Success at varsity depends on students knowing themselves, staying within their own boundaries and maintaining consistency, according to Marlinie Ramsamy, CEO of FranklinCovey South Africa.



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“South African students enter the tertiary education space from vastly diverse backgrounds, with differing cultural viewpoints and political affiliations,” Ramsamy explains. “This is a time when they’re able to explore the adult world for the first time – over 18 and away from the close supervision of parents and teachers – but without those safety nets, it’s often the first time that young people really are responsible for themselves.

“While young people should have learned to be organised, manage their time, and take responsibility for their actions in their formative years, students who lack these skills can turn to FranklinCovey principles to equip themselves with the skills they need to excel in the challenging tertiary education environment,” she adds.

## Ramsamy suggests these steps:

- **Begin with the end in mind**

Take some time to imagine your graduation ceremony, taking care to visualize every detail of the degree completed, the results achieved, and the career path that those open. Think about what those images mean, and plan each step that needs to be taken to achieve the end goal. Plan a balance between social time and academic time, and stick to it. Identify the tools you need to complete your studies, and secure them. Understand how much your studies will cost, and create a strategy to ensure that you have the income you need, whether it’s by securing funding, balancing studying with working, or by taking out a student loan.

- **Learn from failure**

Tertiary institutions are vastly different from high school – there’s nobody to check on your homework, nobody to check that you’re attending class, and nobody to tell you it’s time to go to bed. What’s more, many ‘smart’ students succeed at school because knowledge comes easily to them in that context, without much effort. These are the students that are most likely to fail at tertiary level, as they need to really work hard for the first time.

No failure is wasted if you ‘sharpen your saw’ and learn from the experience. What could you have done differently? How will you approach this same situation in the future, with the intention of achieving different results?

- **Know yourself**

Tertiary institutions have long been a microcosm of South African society, with student protests being the first time many young people find their political voice. Before you participate in a protest of any sort – whether it’s about

political or social issues – make sure that you understand your own purpose, and how participating in the protest will affect you. Does participating in a protest support your life goals? Will it help you find solutions? Will you be able to influence a meaningful and positive outcome? If the answers to these questions are positive, and they are more compelling than succeeding in your academic work – your purpose for being at a tertiary institution – then participate. But make sure that you have weighed up all the factors in the situation carefully, and that you are remaining true to yourself first.

- **Be proactive, and responsible for yourself**

Ask questions. Take initiative. Plan your day, your week, your month, your semester – and then work hard to stick to those plans, only adapting them if your academic requirements demand it. And remember – if you've created these structures for yourself, you are responsible for their success or failure.

Although access to education is an undeniable human right, access to tertiary education is still a privilege. Whether this is right or wrong is a completely different debate – but the present reality is that not everybody has access to this opportunity. Those that do, should treat it with respect and gratitude, as this will lead their approach to their studies. Something that is appreciated will be respected, and respecting the opportunity of a higher education is sure to inspire students to begin with the end in mind, learn from their mistakes, and be proactive in creating their plan for success.

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