# Introduction

Consistent engagement is a key part of a student’s studies throughout their education career. This is particularly true for students that are absorbing new content within a new environment. When a student fails to engage or participate regularly in scholarly activities, the risks of not understanding content and learnings is increased which can lead to long term consequences.

Upon reflection of my current studying habits, and through the lessons learned within ENG1000 and my lack of participation, I took on these risks of not understanding the material as well as I could have. This could be seen in my grade from the Arduino course, where I did not receive a 100% mark due to my absence, and this caused gaps in my knowledge. Because I was away for a week, I missed important learning material, and was left to learn the material myself, without the assistance of the tutor. This was a large mistake of mine, and even though I was away due to being sick, I could have made steps to remediate the absence more thoroughly, such as organising a catchup with my tutor directly, and submitting my reasoning to student connect within the appropriate time frame.

When assessing my academic journey through the enrolment plan, I have completed the first 4 subjects listed under Software Engineer and have already enrolled in the next 4. This guide is very useful and allows me to understand the steps of my academic journey. However, due to my absence, this guide is now on hold as ENG1000 is a core competency unit and is a prerequisite to a lot of future units. So, I will look to use this as an opportunity to learn from this, understand my current study and participation patterns, identify my weaknesses and growth opportunities, and implement them next session. I will also be sure to identify the impacts the new changes have on my results and how I feel about the workload. Through reflection and analysis of the two articles, Learning to Learn and Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education, I have identified four key areas that I must work on as a student. These include self-directed learning, soft skills, understanding the best learning outcomes and time management.

# Self-directed learning

An excellent student does not necessarily have a complete understanding of the content they set out to learn, but they have a strong understanding of their learning strengths, weaknesses, gaps in knowledge and what learning techniques and patterns have the highest return on investment for themselves. Wirth and Perkins state that students should strive to be ‘intentional learners’ who are purposeful and self-directed (2013). A student focused on becoming and intentional learner would assess their learning style and create a learning plan based on their learning needs. Also note, a self-directed student would see that lecturers and tutors are a powerful resource, not a learning requirement, and these types of students would show initiative with regards to their learning journey and do not require university staff to set the journey for them. Wirth and Perkins also state that students diagnose their learning needs, create objectives, implement effective learning strategies to match their learning personality and evaluate their learning outcomes (2013). As an engineering student, some steps that I could take to implement some of these changes suggested by Wirth and Perkins could include taking some online test to understand my preferred learning type, reading through the course material of my future units, identifying any potential gaps I might have in these learning, and create a structure plan broken down into weeks and days with learning objectives for each day. This would put me on a path to becoming a self-directed student, taking my learning into my own hands, and creating and tackling clear learning goals.

# Importance of soft skills

The workforce is no longer just looking for employees with incredible technical skills, niche specialisation and an innovative brain. Soft skills such as teamwork, effective written and oral communication and leadership are all now considered important skills within the workplace. Wirth and Perkins note that from surveys of professional organizations indicate that besides specific competencies and skills, today’s employers seek workers with people skills (2013). These soft skills are important as they help improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and culture of a workplace, where all members of an organisation are working together well, communicate clearly with each other and maximise output together. These soft skills can be implemented into my future learning plan, working on communication, both written and oral, teamwork in group activities, managing conflict, and as an executive of the robotic club, I can use that as an excellent opportunity to learn leadership skills. With these soft skills implemented into my learning plan, the plan will mould me into a successful student, employee, and most importantly, a lifelong learner.

# Best student outcomes

Many students will believe that the ultimate objective of university or any sort of learning qualification are the grades achieved. They do not understand the fundamentals of learning and what the underlying objectives are which is to help them develop their own intellectual tools and learning strategies (Wirth and Perkins, 2013). Bloom’s cognitive domain breaks down levels of learning and understand into the below tiers (Wirth and Perkins, 2013).

1. Knowledge
2. Comprehension
3. Application
4. Analysis
5. Evaluation
6. Synthesis

The first tier, knowledge, is the lowest level of understanding, which is to just know that a concept exists. The sixth tier, synthesis, is the highest level of understanding, which is to be able to create new ideas from a newly learned concept. For example, throughout this paper, I have attempted to synthesise my learnings from these two papers provided into my learning plan, and have created a plan around these findings. I now have strong understanding that the goal is to always understand a concept well enough that I can create logical, sound and abstract concepts and ideas from a newly learned concept.

# Time management

Throughout the session we have just completed, I struggled a lot with time management. Coming from a professional background of IT Sales, I had learned a decent level of written and verbal communication. However, I have assessed that my previous career was quite sporadic, and my time management skills need to be worked on. This is important for me to become a self-directed and diligent student and to stick to my learning plans that I will be creating to help facilitate this change. Chickering and Gamson note that learning is not a spectator sport and that learning to use one’s time well is critical for students and professionals alike (1999). Time management, a soft skill, is also considered very important, not only within university, but within the professional workplace as well. It allows employees to be more productive and work together more efficiently as people are not waiting on each other for tasks to completed or communication to be had. Chickering and Gamson also mention that students to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves (1999). I have noticed that this idea was included within ENG1000 a lot, with reflection assignments, such as this one, becoming a lot more prevalent within university. After reading through the article by Chickering and Gamson, I am looking to implement two things. Firstly, now understanding the importance of time management, I need a better solution for understanding when things are due and create accurate internal expectations as to how many hours a task will take to learn and understand the material to a synthesis level. I will look to implement the due dates of all my assessments into my calendar, estimate time to learn, and spread in the hours required into my learning plan, allowing for an additional 50% if the estimate is incorrectly assessed. My second core learning from this article are the benefits of reflection, and I will look to reflect on my learnings and time management from the week and make amendments to the following week learning plan accordingly. These implementations should allow me to become a self-directed learner that is not time poor and anxious about handing tasks in on time, or missing tasks entirely.

# Conclusion

Through my study of these materials provided for this assignment, I have learned about the importance of being a consistently engaged, self-directed learner and the benefits that I should receive from these planned implementations. These changes include the implementation of a clear learning plan, self-assessment of my learning strengths, weaknesses and style and frequent reflections of my learning to keep me on track and maximising my return on investment when learning. Ultimately, this has inspired me to be a learner for life, and with these strategies, I will be able to take initiative and achieve this goal.