

Lachlan IT Online

Flexible Learning

Student's Guide

2011

Tafe Western – Parkes College

Lachlan IT Online flexible delivery program

Welcome to Flexible Learning

We trust that your time with us will be rewarding and enjoyable.
In order to get the most out of your course, we have written this guide
to assist you in finding out what you need to know.

Important Information

Lachlan IT Online Website
<http://www.lachlanitonline.edu.au>

Email
lachlanitonline@tafensw.edu.au

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Introduction

Welcome to the world of flexible study with Lachlan IT Online, Western Institute of TAFE.

Parkes College, through the **Lachlan IT Online** flexible delivery program has been the leading provider of Flexible Delivery Networking and Web Design certificates in the Western Institute of TAFE for over 10 years. Recent years have seen an increase in demand from students right across Australia enrolling in higher level (Certificate IV and Diploma) courses through our program in the areas of Network Engineering and Website Design. We have also seen an increase in the amount of students coming to us with significant previous learning, which we recognise through our Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program.

2009 saw the introduction of both the CISCO Certified Network Associate (CCNA) program and the Microsoft IT Academy program which can be completed as part of the certificate or diploma program, or offered as standalone courses. In 2010 we developed the **Online Virtual IT Lab** for our flexible students in conjunction with our Partners VMware. 2010 saw the successful integration of the virtual lab into our mainstream course offerings.

All of these developments allow us to offer leading edge training to our students.

Lachlan IT online offers a range of learning options to allow you to study in the way that is most meaningful and suitable to you.

Your options include:

- Study only by attending scheduled tutorial classes
- Blended Learning - a mixture of classes and online study
- Online study - using the online resources to study and attend optional online workshops or tutorial sessions which may be offered throughout your course

The Lachlan IT Online website and toolbox materials can be found at <http://www.lachlanitonline.edu.au>.

Flexible Delivery

This information is all about our version of flexible delivery.

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tudying flexibly allows you, the student, to choose the times and places to learn, and what to learn, rather than being part of a structured and regimented face to face class.

The purpose of flexible delivery is to provide greater access to our subjects, giving you the ability to study in a way that is most appropriate for your situation.

Most modules offered in flexible mode come with on-line study material, designed to assist you in acquiring the skills you require for the module. Other modules may be project based requiring you to learn through attempting a wide range of practical tasks. There is also teacher support available in a variety of ways to help you in your study.

For each module that you attempt, we will provide an assessment scheme. Assessment schemes can be downloaded to your computer during your online student induction.

“Flexible learning expands choice on what, when, where and how people learn”

Australian Flexible Learning Framework

Is flexible study for me?

Every student will have a learning pattern. Standard face to face classes only suit certain types of students. The same can be said of flexible delivery. No one type of study will suit everyone.

When you attend a class you leave your distractions at home and have 2-4 hours without family, work and household commitments to distract you from your studies. However, you must make it to class each week at that same time and work at the same speed as everyone else.

Studying in flexible and/or online mode brings has its own challenges. Successful flexible students are self-motivated, organised, are able to work alone, learn and solve problems independently and not be distracted by outside activities. When studying online you will be studying at a place of your choice, such as at home, and it is necessary to take additional steps to assist you in keeping focused on your studies.

Individual Learning Plans

It is essential you develop a plan of where you are going, what subjects you are attempting and what deadlines you will be meeting in your study.

Without such direction, it is very easy to lose your study path.

- Your individual learning plan templates are located in the rear section of your course logbook. Your teacher should develop a plan for you when you are inducted into your course. If this has not occurred, please contact your teacher immediately.
- You need to constantly review how you are working in relationship to that plan for it to be of use to you.
- It is up to **you** to notify your teacher of any problems you encounter as they appear.

- It is up to **you** to take the corrective action suggested by your teacher.

To start with, be generous with the amount of time you allow to complete each module. Find out the number of hours usually allotted to the first module you are undertaking, and use this to work out, using today as your starting date, an estimated finish date to work towards. While time goals rarely go to plan, they can be useful as they are an indicator of your progress through the course.

The Role of the Teacher in Flexible Study

Traditional classes are conducted with a teacher in a classroom experienced in a particular field giving lectures and structuring the learning so that all students study at the same pace and begin and end at the same time.

Flexible study can allow you to set the pace at which you learn, and in a flexible program the teacher becomes a facilitator or helper to your learning. You need to be proactive in seeking assistance when you come across a difficult patch in your learning, and ask for help.

The teachers supporting flexible delivery courses are available to provide assistance at regular times each week, either by email, telephone or in person during tutorial sessions. Most of our contact is by email, so it is essential that you have an email address. It is also important that you respond to your teacher's email. Keep the lines of communication open.

Members of the Lachlan IT teaching staff try to maintain regular weekly contact with all students. Contact is mostly completed using internet based tools such as email, Skype®, Adobe Connect® or the Virtual Online Lab. As a result, the quality of your internet connection is crucial to your studies.

Always notify your facilitator if your home or email address changes.

“Only you can unlock the door to your future. The rest of us can only wait and watch”
Anon

What is a Training Package?

Training Packages are a government initiative designed to make training more flexible and relevant for industry. The Training Package concept is designed to provide industry, and those servicing industry, with greater flexibility in gaining competency to the standard required by the Information Technology industry.

Each module or competency you undertake is based on a training package. Our current training package is ICA05 and its standards are recognised across the country.

The national competency standards are a set of industry standards that define the workplace requirements across an industry. Each unit of competency identifies the skills, knowledge and other attributes required for a specific job at exact Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels.

Competency based training and assessment is carried out against a set of competency standards. These identify the minimum skills and knowledge required to be demonstrated by an employee to perform a particular function. They also identify any underpinning knowledge and attributes required to undertake a task. Competency standards are statements that outline what a person is to do, or to what standards they are expected to perform. Competency standards are developed with industry so they relate directly to the workplace.

Enrolling in Units

Each qualification offered by TAFE NSW is based on a set of competencies. In our current courses, each unit represents a competency from the training package. So the terms **unit** and

competency refer to the same thing. Your teacher will guide you to learning materials and assessment tasks which may cover one or a group of units simultaneously.

Initially we would ask that you carefully and realistically estimate the time and resources you can devote to your study.

On starting your flexible study, you will be enrolled in the initial units for that course, all of which need to be completed by an agreed date. This is to ensure that you progress with your studies.

Recognition of Prior Learning

TAFE NSW can recognise the skills and knowledge that you have gained through previous studies, work and life experiences. When you attempt your course we can take these skills into account. We call this **Recognition of Prior Learning**.

You may be considered for recognition if you have one of the following:

Successfully completed the same unit or subject in any other TAFE course.

OR

Successfully completed a similar unit or subject in a course studied at TAFE or any other educational institution.

OR

Relevant industrial, workplace, community or life experiences.

To apply for recognition you will need to provide evidence of your previous study or experience such as original result notices, certificates or references, and supporting documentation. Depending upon the type of experience TAFE can either provide an exemption for a specific module(s) or simply allow you to submit examples of your own work which match the requirements of a subject's assessment task.

You can read more about Recognition of Prior Learning at http://www.tafensw.edu.au/applying_and_enrolling/e_previous.htm (Previous Learning and Experience, TAFENSW website).

Enhance your Chance of Success

Studying flexibly requires good skills in the areas of reading, writing and numeracy.

Your learning will require you to read and understand written material, either in books or on the Internet. You will also require numeracy skills as part of your course.

If you are concerned, you can be given a literacy and numeracy assessment, to ensure that your skills are up to the level required to undertake your chosen course. The assessment is confidential, and is interpreted by a qualified adult basic education specialist. We do this so that we know and you know that you have the skills needed to succeed in the course.

If the assessment identifies that you require assistance in these areas, another course may be suggested to enable you to build up your skills to the required level, or to support you as you undertake the flexible course you have chosen.

The Access Faculty provides small friendly classes where students work at their own pace to improve study skills, reading skills, numeracy skills, computer literacy skills and writing skills. If you would like some assistance in

“All good things to know are difficult to learn”
Greek proverb

any of these areas, talk to your supervising teacher to arrange a meeting with someone from the Access staff.

Assessment

All assessments are competency based – you have to prove to your assessor that you can competently complete the tasks/answer questions/demonstrate the skills necessary for the module you are studying.

Your skills can be demonstrated and recognised through assignment work, quizzes, reports, documentation and through practical demonstration. Assessment for Lachlan IT will normally consist of the toolbox tasks for each competency or a project which may incorporate skills from a number of different competencies.. Some tasks are written, some are practical.

There is an audio podcast on the website that outlines how assessments are to be completed which can be found at <http://www.lachlanitonline.edu.au/Documents/Podcasts> .

How am I assessed?

Lachlan IT Online uses a variety of assessment methods, depending up on the unit, the level of certificate and the technology available. For many of the foundation level modules, a learning toolbox exists which breaks the content of a unit into assessable sections called tasks. These tasks have learning materials and an assessment (project). It is the project which a student must complete and emailed to Lachlan IT Online for review.

Written assessment for our students are to be emailed to the lachlanitonline@tafensw.edu.au email address. In the case of practical or project based work we can use a variety of methods to view your work. Some students have used video captures technology to demonstrate their work. We also make use of Online conferences through Adobe Connect© technology to demonstrate. For those working with the Virtual It Lab, practical assessments can be conducted in this environment. Others have arranged remote access via an internet connection; others have submitted their virtual machines files for review.

In other words – every student is different and we try and use the technology that best suites you.

Setting Out of Assessments – this is Important!

All assignments and other work submitted for marking should be set out using the following guidelines:

- Include a Title Page stating Course Name and Number, Unit Number, Module Name, Student Name and date of submission.
- Student Name and Student Number should be placed in the top right hand corner of each page in the header, and should appear on every page of the assignment.
- The page number should be included in the footer at the bottom of each page.
- All reports included in assignments should include an introduction, main body, conclusion and bibliography.
- All assignments should be proofread and spell checked before being handed in, to ensure that the most professional work possible is being submitted.

If you require additional help with the setting out of assignments, please talk to the teacher who is looking after your class to arrange this.

Submitting Assessments

Assignments can be submitted via email through the lachlanonline@tafensw.edu.au address.

Paper based assignments will not be accepted.

When submitting a completed assignment by email, you should identify the course, competency and task number in the subject line of the email. You should also ensure that the actual assignment identifies the course/module details, AND includes your name! Any attached files should be zipped prior to attaching to your email. Unzipped files may be stripped from emails by the email security systems in use by TAFENSW.

Example:

TO: lachlanonline@tafensw.edu.au

CC:

SUBJECT: Course 19001 Cert II, Operate Computer Hardware, Task 1.

ATTACHMENTS: ICUA2005AT1.zip

Receipt of emailed assignments will be acknowledged by a return email from the <http://www.lachlanonline.edu.au> site. Make sure that you keep a copy of any submitted work as a safeguard.

Feedback from Marked Assessments

The goal timeframe for the marking of assessments is within three weeks of the assessment being submitted. This feedback may be provided in email or discussed with you during your regular teacher contact. The assessment result and appropriate feedback will be emailed to students. If you are concerned at all, please contact your teacher for assistance or further information.

Results

Result notices are issued by the TAFE administration systems approximately three weeks after the end of each semester. Any enquires about these result notices should be directed to the Student Administration Office.

Students can also access their module results at the e-Services page on the TAFE NSW Web site, https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/pan/do_student_logon.jsp. You will need an "Online Access Code" to view your student records.

You – The Student

This information is to assist you in getting the most out of your flexible program.

Flexible study is designed to enable you the student to study at a time and place that are optimum for you, and to allow you to progress at your own pace, spending time on topics that require learning, and minimising time spent on areas that you are already familiar or competent in.

The online resources available via the Internet mean that study can take place at home or in the workplace where appropriate, and that full time attendance at TAFE is not necessary. The learning plan that you develop with your teacher's assistance gives you a schedule to work to as you study at your own pace.

The class room sessions are for support, and your attendance at these sessions is flexible also. Regular contact with your facilitator is recommended – either in person, by telephone or by email. If your learning mode includes classroom sessions, make every class count by setting goals for each session and achieving them.

Student interaction and support is an important part of flexible study. You may be in contact with other students in your class during tutorial times, in online discussions and chats. Having contact with other people studying the same work that you are, helps to maintain motivation and interest in your course.

“Minds are like
parachutes – they only
work when they are
open”
Thomas Dewar

Using the Internet for Flexible Study

When you attend a TAFE NSW, Western Institute campus, internet access is provided for you. This internet access is not for personal use.

Please refer to the Computer Users Code of Conduct on page 22 of the TAFENSW Western Institute Student Guide for further information. The Guide can be viewed on the Internet at <http://www.wit.tafensw.edu.au/student-services/student-guide/student-guide> .

Internet access from outside of TAFE is the responsibility of the student. For our IT courses, students should have broadband with at least a 1514K download speed or higher are preferred. Modifications to local firewalls may be required to get all TAFE services running on your local connection and are the responsibility of the student. Currently, only 32-bit Operating systems are supported by our remote access applications.

The Internet is one of the most important tools we use today. It is important to realise that it also has the potential to be one of the most dangerous. Students using the Internet as a major resource for their study need a high level of self-discipline to enable them to focus on their studies while using the Internet.

Students are encouraged to include information from a range of sources such as the Internet in assignment and project work. It is vital that all material taken directly from the Internet or reference books be referenced directly to avoid plagiarism and infringement of copyright.

When using information from the Internet in your study and assignments, acknowledge the source of the information by including the address of the Internet site or reference book details with the quote or in your references at the end of the assignment.

Go to <http://www.copyright.com.au> for further information about copyright.

Your Responsibilities

As a student you have many rights and responsibilities.

All students will be asked to complete a declaration regarding any History of Violence and students may be asked to agree to specific behaviour goals as a condition of their enrolment.

In summary, come to class (whether in person or online) to learn, not to play. Each student deserves his or her chance to learn. By simply coming to class without wanting to learn you are denying other student's access to class by wasting our limited time and resources.

The link <http://www.wit.tafensw.edu.au/student-services/student-guide/commencing-your-course> will provide you with information about codes of conduct and behaviour during your time as a TAFE student.

Staff and your fellow students have a right to be treated with respect. We insist that this happen.

“Come to learn,
not play”
Anon

Helpful Study Hints

When undertaking flexible units, this independent style of learning does require that you take an organised approach to your study. Here are a few pointers to get you started:

Choose a place to study - the classroom at TAFE, a desk and computer at home, etc.

Always do your study in this place - you will settle into 'study mode' more quickly if you study regularly in the same place.

Plan - work out how many hours per week are required to complete your chosen subjects, then set aside specific times to study - and stick to those times!

Organise your resources - if you need books, paper, equipment to complete your study, have them available where you intend to study - much time can be lost searching for things.

Keep in contact – talk to your teachers on a weekly basis - if you are uncertain about something in your study, ask for assistance.

Visit your local TAFE Library and Council Library - find out what resources they have on offer to help with the subjects you have chosen to study. The Information Technology resources can be located the libraries at the call number 005.

Talk to the TAFE Counsellor – TAFE NSW Western Institute has counselling services available at many campuses. These people are available to talk to you about career and study choices as well as personal issues. See your local campus office to organise an appointment with a TAFE Counsellor.

Email

It is important that all students participating in flexible learning programs have a personal email account. As previously mentioned, one of the key ways we can communicate with you outside of class times is through this method. With email you can request help and attach the troublesome piece of work to the email for input.

It is important to inform mail recipients if attachments are included, and what the document/s are, in order to reduce the risk of viruses creeping into the system via attachments.

Your facilitator will endeavour to reply to your emails within a 48 hour period.

Support for students continuing to study over holiday periods should to be arranged with your facilitator individually.

To contact any of the Lachlan IT staff, simply email **lachlanitonline@tafensw.edu.au**.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I want to fast track?

With learning options you have the advantage of being able to work at your own pace, rather than being tied down by set classroom timetables. Contact your facilitator to discuss ways that you can fast track your studies, so that they can assist you to work out a learning plan. Your schedule is your own, and can be changed as your needs change. It is important that you keep in regular contact with your facilitator so that both of you know what is happening.

Can I enrol at any time?

Some campuses accept enrolments throughout the semester, but this is not the case at all campuses. Check with your local campus or Course Information Officer for enrolment times.

Are there any prerequisites?

This will depend upon the course you want to study, and you will need to check this out with Course Information or the campus offering your course. The most common prerequisite is Year 10 or equivalent.

What do I need to study flexibly?

Flexible delivery requires you to have high-level skills in the areas of literacy and numeracy, to enable you to read, research and work independently.

To study online you would need to have access to a computer and know how to connect to the Internet, so you can access the online resources for your course. Broadband is essential. You will also need a personal email account and know how to open, create and send emails and attachments.

How many hours per week do I need to study?

This is an area that you must determine yourself. How much time per week do you **realistically** have to spend on your studies? You will need to use your time effectively if you already have a busy schedule, as it will play a key role in your study success.

If you are being sponsored by an organisation (such as an employment agency), they may have their own minimum study time requirements for you. Any hour requirements (eg. 180 hours a semester) are calculated by adding up the hours associated with the units you have completed during that time. Your course logbook contains the hours associated with each unit. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MANAGE THESE OBLIGATIONS.**

It is also your responsibility to discuss with your sponsor any problems you may have in meeting your obligations to them. Failure to meet your study obligations may be a costly exercise. Please be careful.

Getting Started

T Here are many things which must happen when you start at TAFE in a flexible learning program. Each step is valuable and must be done to minimise any administration problems later on.

Initial Information

When considering studying flexibly, the first step is to find out about the course and the learning options available. Initially you will be given information about the course you are interested in, as well as details about the flexible learning options available. The Lachlan IT website <http://www.lachlanonline.edu.au> will have information about all of our course offerings.

Enrolling

If you choose to study flexibly, you must then complete an online TAFE enrolment form and process payment of the required fee. You may not attend class until this is done.

Induction

At the beginning of the course, it is important that you be inducted. This process will be complete with a teacher either face to face or over the phone. If your induction is being completed over the phone it is important that you have access to computer connected to the internet.

“Fall seven times,
stand up eight”
Japanese proverb

Resources

Your prime resources for all courses are the toolbox environments. The toolbox notes are meant to be generic – meaning that they try and provide the foundation concepts, but present them in such a way that students are not locked into using a particular operating system or software application. The internet has a massive amount of technical information for any type of software or hardware and is our prime resource.

We also supplement the toolboxes using resources on our Lachlan IT online website. We are constantly developing new pod casts and links to other resources for students to use. If you feel there is a lack of resources in an area, please contact us and we will attempt to fill this gap.

Some students like to use texts to supplement the toolbox notes. Texts can be either borrowed from the Library of your local TAFE campus or purchased.

Textbooks can be purchased through any bookstore, but may not be in stock in smaller remote communities. You may also wish to enquire to the following Sydney based bookstores that provide an excellent mail order service:

- **University Coop Bookstore** - 80 Bay Street, Broadway NSW 2007
Internet: <http://www.coop-bookshop.com.au/> or phone: 1800 222 762
Membership discounts apply
- **Hotline Books** - Shop 51, Lemon Grove Shopping Centre 441 Victoria Avenue Mall Chatswood NSW 2067.
Internet: <http://www.hotline.com.au/> or phone: 02 9415 2265
TAFE Student discounts may apply.

- **Dymocks** - 424-428 George St Sydney NSW 2000
Internet: <http://www.dymocks.com.au/> or phone: 02 9235 0155
TAFE Student discounts may apply.

Texts are expensive, so make the most of them. Noticeboards are available in each campus for students wishing to privately sell texts they no longer require.

We also have the full Microsoft Systems Developer Network (MSDN) CD's which are available for students of Parkes Campus to borrow and install on their computers. This includes the full range of Microsoft Operating System CDs, MSDN document CDs, and specialised software such as Visio, MS project and programming languages. For further information, please email lachanitonline@tafensw.edu.au.

Make a learning plan

Your student logbook is downloaded as part of your induction.

The logbook provides information about the course and what units are required to complete it. At the back of the book is a section where the units are listed. You and your teacher can note the order in which units should be attempted and time goals to complete them can also be recorded.

When a unit is complete, get your teacher to sign that they have received the assessable material for marking.

For each module that you attempt

Consult your learning plan and discuss with your teacher the module choice you are considering.

Set a study date to complete the subject/unit. Try and meet that goal.

Make notes as you work through the material. It really does help

If you have trouble with a module

Look, it's going to happen. It's OK. Stay Calm. Try to think 'around' the problem. Re-read your notes or texts. Keep in mind what you are attempting to do.

Email your teacher or arrange to attend a class at your campus. Go on with other study while you wait for a solution. Have a list of specific questions you need answered ready for the teacher. Bookmark useful sites.

We, the teaching staff look forward to seeing you do your best. Remember that your teachers have a passion for seeing their students achieve and with mutual respect will help you as much as possible. **We hope that you have a productive and enjoyable time with us.**