

# Alternative Format: Academic Resilience

## Landing Page

Welcome and thank you for accessing this toolkit which has been designed to help support you with your academic skills development during your time at Edge Hill.

Click 'Start Course' to start the toolkit from the beginning or alternatively select the most relevant heading(s), from the contents below.

We recommend completing the sections in order, but you are welcome to work through this toolkit in the way that suits you best.

## Accessibility

### Our commitment to accessibility

As an Edge Hill student, you are part of an incredibly **diverse** learning community. As part of our ongoing commitment to ensure an **equitable** and **inclusive** learning experience for all students, we have placed **accessibility** at the heart of UniSkills support, which enables all students to **participate**.

### Alternative Formats

This is an alternative format for the Academic Resilience Toolkit.

## Welcome from UniSkills

“Hello, we are the Student Engagement team – otherwise known as UniSkills! We are the people you’ll meet (in real life and online) through various support channels, as we help you develop your academic skills while studying at Edge Hill University. Later in the toolkit you will have the opportunity to explore our wider support, but this is your chance to find out more about the team”

Access the video below to hear more about UniSkills and how to use this toolkit from our friendly Student Advisor. Alternatively, you are welcome to access the transcript as a **Word version** or **PDF version**.

## How this toolkit can help

**Academic resilience** is a skill which can be learnt and developed over time. It can enable students to deal more confidently with **academic challenges** and **setbacks** (e.g., feedback, disappointing marks, making mistakes).

Access this short video, featuring one of our friendly academic skills advisors, who will tell you more about why academic writing is important. Alternatively, you are welcome to access the transcript as a **Word version** or **PDF version**.

**Top tip:** Are you short on time, eager to get started revising or already have some experience of university exams? You might want to jump to a specific **word or phrase** within this toolkit.

### Toolkit objectives:

Upon completion of this toolkit, you will have developed the skills to:

1. Understand what it means to be **academically resilient**
2. Differentiate between a ‘**fixed**’ and ‘**growth**’ mindset
3. Use **practical tools** to nurture your academic resilience
4. Deal confidently with your **feedback**
5. Understand how to set **achievable goals**

## What is resilience?

The word '**resilience**' comes from the Latin verb *Resilire* which means 'to leap back'

Resilience can also be described as the ability to bounce back from a setback or disappointment.

Importantly, resilience:

1. Does not mean never suffering from setbacks, but it does relate to being able to **spring back** afterwards
2. May be beneficial in enabling the body to have a **smaller increase** in cortisol (associated with stress), when confronted with adversity
3. Is not a personality trait - it **can be learned!**

Resilience can mean different things to different people.

Daniel, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Year BSc (Hons) Geography student said:

"Resilience was vital for me during the COVID pandemic, where I needed to adapt and overcome social and mental challenges. This situation was difficult but allowed me to learn key skills such as an effective work life balance that I have only developed further."

Ivy, a 3<sup>rd</sup> Year BSc (Hons) Biology student said:

"A time when I displayed resilience was moving to a new country. I felt so alone in the beginning, and it took me a year to really find my feet and feel at home in the UK. Some things that helped me were:

- Getting out of my room every single day. Even if it was just to the Catalyst and back.
- Saying "yes" as much as possible. Going to clubs, study sessions, or even a quick coffee can remind you that other people probably feel the same way you do.
- Acknowledging your feelings, and finding ways to manage them. This can be a quick call home, a call to a friend, writing in a journal, or doing something active.
- Going screen-free for a while. Whenever I feel really overwhelmed and behind in life, I give myself a break from social media anywhere from an afternoon to a few weeks at a time. I find

that being more present helps you remember that life doesn't have to go so fast when you aren't drowning in comparison."

Uroosa, a 3<sup>rd</sup> Year BA (Hons) Religion student said:

"When I was working in hospitality and it was my first proper job, it was hard to adjust being the newest and doing lots of things I'd never done before. But with hard-work, accepting feedback and willingness to learn from my mistakes, such as bettering my customer interactions - I was able to become a fully competent and valued member of my team - I even then started to help train new members of staff."

Spend a few minutes thinking about what resilience means to you. Are there times when you have demonstrated effective resilience skills? How did they help?

## What is academic resilience?

### Academic Resilience

Academic Resilience may enable you to deal with **academic challenges and setbacks** (e.g., feedback, disappointing marks, making mistakes, lack of confidence).

Some different academic setbacks and challenges includes:

**Feedback** - Feedback is an important part of learning at university and you will receive feedback on many aspects of your work.

Occasionally you may be disappointed with your grade or feedback, especially if you do not achieve what you set out to do. The ability to **accept, understand, and learn** from this type of academic setback is an important part of developing your academic resilience.

**Mistakes** - Making mistakes is part of life!

If you make a mistake at university, whether that is answering a question incorrectly or mixing up your deadline dates, the ability to **reflect** and **grow** demonstrates good academic resilience.

While it might not feel like it in the moment, mistakes are **good learning opportunities!**

**Confidence** - Lack of confidence is common for many students. This may come across as reluctance to contribute to group discussions, or be a feeling that you do not have the ability to achieve your academic goals.

Often these feelings can come from a fear of looking foolish, or failing. By nurturing your academic resilience, you can help to **overcome these challenges!**

## Achievement

Interestingly, research suggests that there is a positive relationship between academic resilience and academic achievement.

So, by developing your academic resilience, not only are you gaining a valuable life skill, but you are also increasing your **potential to succeed** at university!

## Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is your **belief in your own abilities** to handle, adapt and overcome setbacks and challenges. You can develop your self-efficacy in a number of ways.

## Perseverance through failure

Failure is how we **learn** and **develop**. Accepting failure as an **opportunity to learn** about ourselves, and being prepared to continue despite this, helps to demonstrate resilience.

## Role models

Finding good role models can help to develop self-efficacy.

By learning from others who have demonstrated **strength** in overcoming challenges, you can explore the **strategies** they used and consider whether these approaches might also work for you.

## Interpreting feelings positively

It is not possible to feel positive 100% of the time, and there will be ups and downs on your student journey. However, being able to **reframe your feelings** and emotions can prove helpful.

For example, the next time you feel nervous about delivering a presentation, try reframing these nerves as excitement. 'Tricking' your mind into feeling excited will help you to feel more confident, and enable you to reveal the knowledge, skills, and competencies you **already possess**!

## Social Persuasion

Do you ever find your inner-chatter highly critical?

If you're doubting your own academic ability or need a **morale boost**, think about what your friends might say to **support** you. Or better still, ask them!

## Summary

Developing your self-efficacy can in turn help build your **resilience** skills. Remember that failure is a part of learning and not something to be feared, it is how you **learn** from your mistakes that matters.

# Understanding Mindset

## Fixed or Growth Mindset

Psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck is considered one of the leading academics on the **mindset** of psychological traits. She describes the qualities of people with '**fixed**' and '**growth**' mindset as:

- Those with a **fixed mindset** consider intelligence or talent to be innate, unchangeable qualities, meaning there is little reason to try and develop them: i.e., '*effort has no place in success*'.
- Those with a **growth mindset** would argue that even though we might start with different levels of competence, success is ultimately determined by the effort we put in: i.e., '*you can increase your intelligence or develop your talents*'.

## Why does your mindset matter?

How you approach the **tasks** you face at university can have a significant impact on their **outcomes**. Your mindset is something which can **change** and **develop**. If you have a fixed mindset now, it does not need to stay that way. Using the tips in this toolkit can help you to **grow and develop** your mindset.

Your mindset can impact your general **organisation**, **academic writing** skills, and how you deal with your academic feedback.

## Getting Organised

### Fixed mindset

- You continue to work in the same way
- You're not open to trying new organisational tools or apps
- You think, *'I will always be disorganised'*

### Growth mindset

- You think about different ways of working and what might **improve** your **organisation**
- You're open to trying **new methods** and **tools/apps** to find which works best for you
- You think, *'I may be disorganised now but there are ways I can improve'*

## Academic Writing

### Fixed mindset

- You believe your writing skills are static
- You might not access support because you believe it may not help
- You don't see the benefit of writing a plan
- You think, *'I will never understand how to reference'*

### Growth mindset

- You believe your writing skills can **develop**
- You **access support**, ask questions and look for ways to develop your writing
- You are open to trying **new ways** of planning

- You think, '*I am struggling with referencing now, but **I can improve***'

## The power of yet

*'I can't do this **yet**...but I can improve'*

This small, three letter word - 'yet' may be the key to helping you shift your mindset from fixed to growth.

What sounds better, '*I don't know how to reference*' or '*I don't know how to reference, yet*'?

Try it out for yourself, next time you face a challenge or setback, see if you can apply the **power of yet**.

## Grit

Dr. Angela Duckworth builds on Growth Mindset theory by discussing **grit**. Asking what makes some people 'grittier' than others? Why do some people fall at the first hurdle, but others can handle setbacks and challenges and keep on going.

# Action planning

## Planning ahead...

Action planning is a brilliant way to proactively **manage your time** and **set achievable goals**.

Thinking about academic writing as an example, planning is an essential element within that process, e.g., creating a **search plan** prior to searching for academic literature, an **assignment plan** before you begin writing, and a **feedback plan** once you've received your results.

Planning should therefore be a continual process to help keep you on track and motivated. Action planning will also help foster good **time management** skills and the importance of focusing your **goals**.



## Time management

Effectively managing your time at university can support you to meet your academic **deadlines** and still maintain a good **study-life balance**. You may find it useful to use a diary or a planner to help **organise your time**. There are also plenty of **apps** which can help you stay on top of calendar entries and to-do lists. It is always worth taking time to explore currently **popular options**, or asking your peers for **suggestions**. Some apps we have found useful include Trello and Todoist.

[Trello](#) is an intuitive app which offers a way to **visually manage projects** and lists. It can help you to **organise tasks**, and **track your progress**.

[Todoist](#) is an app that allows you to create **to-do lists**, schedule **due dates**, and **prioritise** your tasks. Todoist also allows you to set **reminders** which can help you stay on track!

**Top Tip:** A good place to start is by **evaluating** how you currently use your time. The sections below offer prompting questions to help you identify any areas for improvement.

## Evaluating your use of time

### Finding balance

Whilst at university, most demands on time fall into four categories: Study, Family, Work and Social.

Finding a workable **balance**, so that you are using your time **effectively** can be a challenge, but there are things you can think about which will help you **plan** your time better.

To begin to understand the **demands** on your time, scroll through the following steps and answer the prompting questions.

### Study

- Where do you study best?
- Do you prefer quiet or busy environments?
- Do you have a commute to your favourite place to study?

### Family

[ehu.ac.uk/uniskills](http://ehu.ac.uk/uniskills)

[ehu.ac.uk/lis](http://ehu.ac.uk/lis)

- Do you have caring responsibilities? (This could be children, elderly parents, etc.)
- Who requires your time and when?
- Are there times/days when you are busier?

### **Work**

- Does your employment fit alongside your studies?
- Do you have a good work/study/life/balance?
- Is your line manager understanding of your commitments to university?

### **Social**

- Do you have enough down time to enjoy social events, hobbies, etc.?
- Do you prioritise study or socialising?
- Do your friends and family respect your commitments to studying?

### **Identifying gaps**

Reflecting on your answers to the questions in this section, will help you to identify **where** your time is spent.

Understanding where your time goes is a good starting point to identifying any **gaps** that could be utilised better.

Remember, **balance** is the key to using your time wisely. It is important to ensure that you are still factoring in time for social activities and hobbies. Making sure that you take breaks from study helps to maintain your **motivation** when you do focus on your academic work.

## The Pomodoro Technique

Once you have planned your study time, it is important to think about how you can use this time most effectively. The Pomodoro technique is a popular way to manage time by breaking it into **small chunks**.

This is an excellent strategy if you find yourself sitting for prolonged periods of time and getting little done, or if you struggle with even starting a task. It **limits** and **focuses** your time, and ensures that you factor in **regular breaks**. Pomodoro focus tools can really help to make tasks feel **manageable**, and to alleviate feelings of being overwhelmed.

## Setting goals

It's important to consider what success means to you, as it may differ from what it means to your peers. While most of us want to strive for perfection, sometimes life gets in the way - and that's okay! Set yourself some **SMART goals** to outline exactly what you want to achieve and when to give you more focus.

## What are SMART goals?

**SMART** stands for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound. Making your goals **SMART**, provides a clear **structure** and **timeline** to give you the best opportunity to **succeed**. This technique can be applied to both short and long-term goals.

### Specific

When you know exactly what you are setting out to achieve, you are more likely to reach your goal. Using prompts can help you to make your goal specific.

For example, considering **what** you are wanting to achieve, deciding **when** you will start, and identifying **why** it is important to you to achieve it.

### Example:

#### What?

- I want to do better in exams (specifically a grade of 60 or above)

## When?

- I will start revising earlier to allow enough time to recap and understand concepts

## Why?

- I get good marks in written assignments, but past exams have brought down my overall module mark

## Measurable

Making a goal measurable enables you to know when you have achieved it, and can help you to monitor your **progress**.

Seeing progression can also help you to stay **motivated**.

## Example:

I want to be more organised about my academic learning by planning in times across the week when I will study

## How will I measure this?

- I can use a Gantt Chart or a weekly planner to work out the times in my week that I can study, and plan what to do in each slot
- I can mark off (or colour in) each slot once I have finished studying and this will enable me to keep track of my progress

## Achievable

It is important to be realistic about what you can achieve. Larger goals can be more achievable if they are broken down into smaller steps.

## Example:

If my average grades are in the 50s and I want to improve, it would be a big leap to aim straight for 70+ grades. However, it is much more **achievable** to work on building up to 60+ grades first.

Think about:

**Can you achieve your goal?**

- Yes, I am confident that I could get grades in the 60s as I have already received a couple of 58s

**What can you actively do to give you the best opportunity of achieving your goal?**

- I need to read feedback from my previous assignments to identify areas where I can improve

**Do you need any extra support? If so, what support is needed and from where?**

- Yes, I can access a UniSkills one-to-one appointment for any additional support and guidance

**Relevant**

Think about how relevant your goals are. Goals should challenge and stretch you, but they should also be relevant to what you are aiming to achieve. This will help to keep you **motivated** to complete your goals.

Make sure you understand **why** you have set each goal and how you will recognise a successful outcome.

**Example:** I want to improve my presentation technique as I am always nervous and usually rush through to get it over with!

**Why?**

- I know the subject content, but my nerves sometimes stop me from demonstrating this to the best of my ability

**What will success look like?**

- I will be able to present confidently, slow my speech, and make eye contact with my audience

**Relevance?**

- I have several assessments that are in the form of presentations next year and I want to be able to do my best in them

### **Time-bound**

Having a **realistic timeframe** for your goal will help to make it more achievable.

This may be a self-imposed plan to achieve your goal within a certain timescale, or it might be that there is a **deadline** associated with it.

**Example:** I am at the start of my final year and I want to update my CV so that it includes all my experience, voluntary roles, and work placements.

**Timeframe:** I need to get this completed before I start applying for jobs in semester 2 of my final year.

### **Is it realistic?**

- I will also have assessments to submit in Semester 1 which I need to prioritise
- I could access [Careers resources](#) now to help me start thinking about what information I might need to include
- I can start to build up my CV at the start of Semester 1 before I have assessments to focus on
- I can use the break between Semester 1 and 2 to focus on refining my CV, and book an appointment with the Careers team to check I have included everything

Being realistic about any **commitments** you have and **time** you can allocate to your goal, will help you to create a manageable timeframe to achieve your goal.

**Activity:** Think of a short term academic goal you would like to complete. Download the [Setting Goals](#) activity sheet to help make sure you meet this goal by making it **SMART**.

## **Things to consider**

Once you have worked out your goals, consider how you will **prioritise** the steps you need to take to complete them. Remember to also check that your goals are necessary, and not a whim or distraction; **classifying** your goals by importance can help with this. Find out more below.

**[ehu.ac.uk/uniskills](http://ehu.ac.uk/uniskills)**

**[ehu.ac.uk/ls](http://ehu.ac.uk/ls)**

### **Prioritise Your Goals**

- **Time manage** your goals.
- Think about the **dates** you set to complete your goals, as each will need a different **timeframe**. Are they short or long-term goals?
- If you have several short-term goals that will complete a larger long-term goal, you will need to think about the best **order** to complete them.
- It is important to focus on the right goal at the right time, as they may impact on other **outcomes**.

### **Classify Your Goals**

- Are your goals important to a long-term goal, or are they a luxury goal?
- A luxury goal may in a way be a form of **procrastination**, meaning that whilst it would be nice to complete this goal, it is not essential to the bigger picture. You could easily waste time completing small goals that do not allow you to succeed or move onward with your long-term plans.
- Ask yourself why each goal is important to complete.

## **Dealing with feedback**

### **Feedback**

Feedback is an important part of **learning**, as it can help you and your tutor keep track of your **progress**. Even if you initially respond to **constructive comments** with a **fixed mindset**, you will find much more value when you are able to **reflect** with a more **growth mindset** on how you can positively act upon the feedback.

## Feedback and emotions

Receiving feedback can be a very emotional experience, especially if you don't receive the grade you anticipated. It is important to recognise that emotions (good and bad) are all part of the feedback experience, and that **strengthening your resilience** can minimise the impact of a low grade or perceived negative feedback.

Tips for managing negative emotions when receiving feedback:

- Allow yourself to fully **experience** your emotions (upset, anger, sadness, etc.)
- Take a step away from the feedback and allow time to **process your feelings**
- Return to the feedback when you feel able to take a **growth mindset** approach
- **Reflect** on the feedback and try to explore the **reasons** why it may have been given
- Identify what you can do differently next time to avoid the same outcome, and seek **support** and **guidance** from your tutors if you need it!

## Wellbeing

Developing resilience can be a process, and part of that is about looking after yourself. There is a wealth of support for you at Edge Hill, from [self-help resources](#) to in-person [mental health and wellbeing appointments](#). Prioritising your wellbeing is just one of the ways you can help to **strengthen your resilience**.

**Top Tip:** Research has shown that the stress hormone cortisol is negatively associated with resilience. What this means is, the **more resilient** you are, the less a setback (such as disappointing feedback) will impact you both physically and emotionally, and you are also more likely to recover from any setbacks quickly.

**Planning** is an important part of any assessment, and this is something we most likely do at the **beginning** as we plan what and when to read and plan out a structure for our work.

Completing a **feedback plan** at the **end** of an assessment once you have received your grade and tutor comments can help you act on your tutor's feedback, ready for your next assignment.



**Activity:** Download the [Feedback Resilience Plan](#) to map out key points from your academic feedback and how you to intend to action them.

## Growing Your Academic Resilience

### What next?

This toolkit has introduced the concept of resilience and demonstrated that it is a skill which can be **learnt** and **developed**.

Completing the **Grow Your Academic Resilience** plan below, can support you to **identify** your own goals, **consider** how you can work towards them, and recognise what a **successful outcome** means to you.

Before you begin the **Grow Your Academic Resilience** activity below, consider the following statements:

- Can you recognise what success might mean for you?
- Do you understand the steps needed to achieve success?
- Can you acknowledge that you might need support along the way?
- Can you recognise the strengths and skills you already possess?

**Activity:** As we come to the end of this toolkit, this last activity will allow you to reflect on what you have already learnt and what you hope to achieve going forward.

Download the [Grow Your Academic Resilience activity sheet](#) and follow the steps below.

### What does resilience mean to you?

This is a space for you to consider your own **definition** of resilience.

There is no right or wrong answer here.

It may be based on what you have already learnt, or it could be a more personal description.

### What is your short term goal?

This is a space for you to consider your own **definition** of resilience.

There is no right or wrong answer here.

It may be based on what you have already learnt, or it could be a more personal description.

### **What support/steps do you need to complete this goal?**

Is your goal something you can achieve by yourself, or do you need to access some help?

There is lots of **support** available to access at Edge Hill University.

Make a list of who you might need to connect with, this could be your tutors, UniSkills or other support teams at the university.

### **How do you recognise success?**

This is the final step and a chance to imagine what success will mean and feel like for you.

How will you recognise that you've achieved your goal?

What will the outcome feel like for you?

### **Strengths and Skills**

There are two additional boxes to complete within this activity, which ask you to list the **strengths** and **skills** you are already bringing to this goal.

This is important, as you should also acknowledge what is going well and how you can use and build upon these skills further.

## **One last thing...**

The best way to ensure that you complete your goals is to make yourself **accountable**. You can do this by:

- Printing out plans and placing them somewhere you can access regularly; your fridge, a noticeboard, etc. You could try using our [study timetable](#), or make one of your own.

- Use productivity apps such as [Forest](#) which can help you stay accountable by gamifying your ability to stay focused!
- Telling friends and family about the plans you have made, and that you would appreciate their support and encouragement.
- Share your plans with the UniSkills team via our [Instagram](#) account. We are always happy to cheer you along.

... and if you have already completed any of the activities within this toolkit - well done!

## Related Resources

### Useful Reading

BRISCOE, H., OLSON, C. and PRIOR, M., 2023. Dealing confidently with feedback: the impact of a Grow Your Academic Resilience workshop. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education* [online]. (28). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.47408/jldhe.vi28.1019>(opens in a new tab) [Accessed 8 July 2025].

DUCKWORTH, A., 2017. *Grit: Why passion and resilience are the secrets to success*. London: Vermilion.

DWECK, C.S., 2017. *Mindset*. Updated Edition. London: Robinson.

### Useful Links

DUCKWORTH, A. L., 2013. Grit: the power of passion and perseverance [online video]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H14bBuluwB8>(opens in a new tab) [Accessed 8 July 2025].

DWECK, C., 2014. The power of yet [online video]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-swZaKN2Ic>(opens in a new tab) [Accessed 8 July 2025].

You can find our other toolkits on your [UniSkills webpages](#).

## UniSkills blogs

UniSkills write regular [blogs](#), including a monthly focus on library resources and academic skills. In these quick reads you can learn about useful resources, how to access them and their benefits to your studies. You might even find us exploring new ways of thinking!

## Other Resources

Check out [LinkedIn Learning](#) for access to free, unlimited access to thousands of high quality online courses and video tutorials written by industry experts.

# UniSkills Support at Edge Hill University

As well as our toolkits, there are many ways you can access support for your academic skills development. No question or query is too big or too small. Whether you are new to studying or need to refresh or develop skills, we have a range of options for you to access at both graduate and postgraduate taught level.

## Webpages

Reach your potential and visit our [UniSkills web pages](#). Find out more about the support designed to help you develop your academic skills and confidence at university and beyond. Whatever your subject or level of study, UniSkills has something to offer.

## Workshops and webinars

[UniSkills workshops and webinars](#) are an opportunity for a deeper dive into a specific skill that will support you on your academic journey. Facilitated by our friendly and knowledgeable Academic Skills Advisors, these sessions provide an informal safe space where you will be supported alongside other students in a small group setting.

## Appointments

All students are able to book [a one-to-one appointment](#). Our experienced Academic Skills Advisors can help you develop your academic skills and strategies throughout your time at university. One-to-

one support is available on a wide range of topics including academic reading, writing and referencing, finding information, and preparing your assignment for submission.

## AskUs

For any questions across any of our library and learning services, you can [Ask Us](#) online.

## Campaigns

Explore our year-round [UniSkills campaigns](#) to enhance your academic journey at Edge Hill. From pre-arrival prep to acing your exams, we've got something for everyone!

## Keep in touch

### Library and Learning Services Instagram

Make sure you're following us over on Instagram for all the latest Library and Learning Services news, events and support: [@EHULibrary](#)

You'll discover: weekly what's on stories; reminders about upcoming campaigns and events; fun, interactive polls and competitions; hidden treasures from our Archive; and reading for pleasure recommendations.

### Library and Learning Services Blog

In the [Library and Learning Services \(LS\) blog](#) you'll find lots of information, ideas and support curated by a wide range of staff and students from across the service.

Browse through all our useful blogs via the Home tab or visit individual areas of interest via the sub-blog headings along the menu bar.

## Your views count

Thank you for engaging with this toolkit.

We'd love to know what you thought, and you can share your feedback in our short [UniSkills Toolkit Satisfaction Survey](#). The survey should take you no longer than five minutes to complete.

Your feedback helps us to continually improve our support - thank you!

You have now completed this UniSkills toolkit and can close the window. We hope you found it useful, and we look forward to continuing to support you with your academic skills development.