

# Preparing to Study with UniSkills: Undergraduate (UG) Toolkit

## Landing page

**Congratulations** on choosing to **study at Edge Hill University**, however you are joining us and whatever your academic journey so far, we really hope you enjoy exploring this toolkit. It has been designed to help **prepare you to study at undergraduate (UG) level, introducing** you to **key academic skills** you will use and the **support available** from **UniSkills**.

We recommend completing this toolkit in the order it is presented, however **feel free to access however suits you best**. You will be able to **revisit this toolkit whenever you need** and there's no expectation to complete it all in one go, as [you will always be able to access it online](#).

## Getting the most out of this toolkit

### About this toolkit

As exciting as it can be starting to study at university we also recognise there can be lots of uncertainty when beginning a new adventure. This toolkit has been **designed for undergraduate (UG) students** to help **build your confidence** with **foundational academic skills** and answer some of the questions you may have about what it's like to **study at Edge Hill University**.

### Accessibility

As an Edge Hill student you'll be joining an incredibly **diverse learning community** and we are committed to ensuring an **equitable** and **inclusive** experience for all. This toolkit has been designed with accessibility in mind throughout, and **alternative formats** are available, to ensure that everyone can access the information they need.

If you are happy to continue exploring this interactive toolkit simply continue scrolling through each section. Alternatively, you can access the information from this toolkit in an accessible **Word** or **PDF** document.

## How to navigate this toolkit

To really get the most out of your toolkit we recommend completing it in the order it's presented, however please **feel free to access however suits you best**. You can select the most relevant headings and even **search for keywords** using the magnifying glass in the top left corner of the **navigation menu**.

All the **information**, and **interactive elements**, in this toolkit are an **invitation for you to engage** and you can choose how much you want to explore. There's also no requirement to work through all the information in one go as this [toolkit will always be available for you](#) to revisit and review any of the support, whenever you need it.

### This toolkit aims to:

1. Introduce **how you will study** at Edge Hill University.
2. Explain which **academic skills** are important for **new undergraduate students**.
3. Signpost you to further **academic skills support** from UniSkills.

### This toolkit supports the following graduate attributes:

**Resilience:** Resilience is the **ability to recover quickly from setbacks**. It encompasses aspects of self-awareness, motivation and perspective.

**Digital proficiency:** Digital proficiency is about **confident** and **capable** use of digital tools and technologies. This includes your **ability to access information** and **use software**, as well as creating and sharing content and **communicating effectively online**.

**Adaptability:** Adaptability is an important skill to develop in our fast-paced and ever-changing world. Many experts predict that today's graduates could have 3+ careers and 15-20 roles in their working life, so the **ability to be flexible** and recognise **transferable skills** is an important career (and life) skill.

**Interpersonal skills:** Interpersonal skills help you survive and thrive in the world around you, both virtual and physical. They are **essential for working effectively in teams**, **communicating** your viewpoint and **negotiating** with other and **understanding** the impact your behaviour has on other people.

[You can learn more about graduate attributes and employability by visiting the Careers web pages.](#)

## What is UniSkills?

### Meet UniSkills

Hello, we are your Student Engagement team - you may come to know us more as [UniSkills!](#) We support all undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) students in developing their academic skills.

Most of the team you'll work with are **Academic Skills Advisors**, who can help you build your academic skills and confidence throughout your time at Edge Hill University.

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*You aren't expected to arrive at university with all the skills covered in this toolkit. **You are here to learn and develop** and there's lots of support available to help you on your student journey.*

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### Welcome to your preparing to study toolkit

Everyone arrives at Edge Hill with their own level of skills and abilities and **you are not expected to know everything when you arrive**. All of the topics you will explore in this toolkit can be **developed through practice** and there is **lots of support available** to help you along the way.

Remember, you don't need to complete everything at once and there are no tests or grades. Take your time, **explore what feels useful**, and you can revisit this toolkit whenever you need. Play the welcome video below to **meet your Student Engagement Officer, Christine**, as she introduces you to this toolkit.

[Play 'Welcome to your Preparing to Study with UniSkills Toolkit: Undergraduate' video.](#)

### Video Transcript

*Hi, I'm Christine, your UniSkills Student Engagement Officer here at Edge Hill University. Together with my Academic Skills Advisor colleagues, I contribute to the delivery of your*

*academic skills support programme, which is available for all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. This Preparing to Study Toolkit has been designed to support you, as a new undergraduate student, to successfully transition into university, what this experience entails and the foundational academic skills you'll need to develop. This toolkit also signposts you to more in-depth and specific support, such as toolkits, online resources and other support services, should you wish to explore further at your own pace. On behalf of UniSkills, I hope you find this toolkit useful, reassuring and supportive.*

## How you will study at university

Studying at university is different to learning at school or college and **understanding how you'll learn** can help you feel **prepared** and **empowered**.

In this section of the toolkit you can learn more about the **typical ways you'll learn**, be **taught** and **assessed**, as well as explore some **real life student experiences** and the foundational academic skills you'll use at Edge Hill University.

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*Your **module or year of study handbook** should explain how you will be **taught** and **assessed**, and you can always **ask your tutors** for any further **guidance**.*

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## Studying at Edge Hill University

At Edge Hill University we're proud of our **diverse student population** and your arrival contributes to the Edge Hill student community. You might be joining direct from **further education** (FE), such as A-Levels or BTEC, or an **Access to Higher Education** (HE) course, such as Fastrack. Maybe you're an **international** student studying in the UK or **remotely**. Or perhaps you're studying a **vocational qualification**, or have already **experienced work**.

However you arrive, you'll quickly discover university involves more **self-directed** and **independent study** than you might be used to, as well as using and developing lots of **academic** and **transferable skills**.

## Glossary

As a new undergraduate student, you may come across a lot of **unfamiliar words** and **terminology**. To help you get started, we've translated some key university-specific language into an interactive glossary. Edge Hill also provides [University Terminology Explained](#), which features a **glossary of basic terms** related to university and higher education.

**Activity:** Read the glossary below to learn more about definitions of key words and terminology that may be new or unfamiliar to you.

Key words	Definition
<b>Lectures</b>	Learning in a group or large cohort from a lecturer in a <b>lecture</b> theatre or classroom.
<b>Seminars</b>	In <b>seminars</b> you'll learn through discussion with your peers (other students on your course) and an academic.
<b>Tutorials</b>	<b>Tutorials</b> are individual or small group discussions with a tutor and/or your peers.
<b>Workshops</b>	In <b>workshops</b> you'll learn through practical work relevant to your programme of study.
<b>Lab or field work</b>	Using specialised equipment, learning technical skills and applying theory through <b>laboratory</b> (lab) or practice in the <b>field</b> .
<b>Placements</b>	On <b>placements</b> , you'll learn through planned periods of professional work and reflection relevant to your programme.
<b>Group work</b>	Learning with peers through shared <b>group</b> tasks, projects and assessments.
<b>Peers</b>	<b>Peers</b> are other students studying on your course, in your year and across the wider university. They are often considered your academic equals and can offer a great social and academic support system.
<b>Coursework</b>	<b>Coursework</b> covers a wide variety of assignment types including essays, reports, presentations, and more.
<b>Exams</b>	Assessment through traditional unseen <b>exams</b> , seen exams, or online time limited assessments.
<b>Academic journal</b>	<b>Academic journals</b> are specialist publications focused on specific disciplines and aimed at researchers, academics, professionals, and

	students.
<b>Journal articles</b>	<b>Journal articles</b> (also called academic or research papers) are the main content of academic journals.
<b>Collusion</b>	<b>Academic collusion</b> is when you work together or share answers on assessed work that should be completed independently.
<b>Paraphrasing</b>	<b>Paraphrasing</b> is taking someone else's idea and rewriting it in your own words. You still need to reference your source, even though the wording is yours.
<b>Citing</b>	<b>Citing</b> (or a <b>citation</b> ) means referencing where your information has come from by giving credit to the original author or source letting your reader know whose ideas you are using and where they can find them.

## Independent learning

An important part of higher education study is **independent learning** or **self-directed study**. Broadly speaking, this involves taking **ownership** of your own learning, making **decisions, managing your time**, staying **motivated** and **reflecting** on your learning. Exactly what this entails will be different depending on what programme you're studying.

**Activity:** Explore the table below for some examples of independent study.

Example	Definition
<b>Preparing for study</b>	Completing tasks like pre-reading or accessing your learning materials ahead of a lecture or seminar.
<b>Managing your own time</b>	Good time management skills are invaluable to successfully navigate university and establish a healthy study-life balance.
<b>Planning assignments</b>	When you are given an assignment to write, it really helps to plan out what you are being asked to do and how you plan to complete it.
<b>Finding academic information</b>	Searching for academic information to read and use to enhance your knowledge and understanding on a topic.
<b>Academic reading</b>	Once you've found your academic information, you will need to read it carefully to make notes, develop your understanding and use it to construct your academic writing.
<b>Note-making</b>	Making notes when you're in a lecture or seminar, reading or planning

	your assignments.
<b>Using your digital skills</b>	Developing your digital skills by using university systems and technologies.
<b>Discussion boards</b>	Participating in discussion boards with your tutors and/or other students on your course.
<b>Setting goals</b>	Setting personal and professional goals can really help keep you motivated and feel a sense of achievement when you complete them.
<b>Revising</b>	Completing revision ahead of exams and assessments is an important skill to help you feel more confident and prepared.

## How you will be taught

Lectures and seminars are **common teaching formats** used at university. Both formats usually **work together**, with lectures providing you with **foundational knowledge** and seminars helping you **develop further** critical thinking and understanding.

In simple terms, lectures are for **listening** and **learning the basics**, whereas seminars are for **discussing, analysing** and **applying ideas**. There are **elements of self-directed study you can apply** to both, to really get the most out of your learning, but the main differences between a lecture and a seminar include:

Lecture	Seminar
Learning usually happens in a <b>large group</b> or cohort, in a <b>lecture theatre</b> setting.	Learning usually happens in <b>smaller groups</b> , in a <b>classroom</b> setting.
Learning is usually a more <b>one-way delivery</b> of information from your tutor or lecturer.	Learning is usually <b>discussion based</b> to develop a deeper understanding of your subject.
Lectures usually <b>introduce</b> key topics, ideas and theories to establish your core knowledge.	Seminars usually <b>encourage you to explore</b> topics and ideas in more depth.
Your role is primarily to <b>listen</b> and <b>take notes</b> .	Your role is to <b>actively contribute</b> to discussions, debates, presentations or group work activities.
<b>Interaction</b> may be <b>more limited</b> in a lecture,	Seminars are usually <b>more</b>

although you may be <b>invited to ask questions.</b>	<b>interactive and participatory.</b>
You can <b>prepare in advance</b> for both your lectures and seminars by engaging with <b>self-directed research</b> and <b>reading</b> and <b>completing any preparatory work</b> set by your tutors. This allows you to <b>engage effectively</b> in your learning, <b>ask meaningful questions</b> and <b>contribute to discussions.</b>	

## Making the most of your lectures

If you're unfamiliar with lectures, they can initially seem like a passive way of learning, especially compared to a seminar or your own self-directed studies. What you do **before** and **after** your lectures is **just as important as attending** and **actively engaging**.

Explore the information below for some top tips on how to study effectively before, during, and after your lectures:

### BEFORE LECTURES

**Familiarising yourself** with the **topic** or **themes** of upcoming lectures can help you **prepare**, build your **subject knowledge** and boost your **confidence** to engage more during the lecture.

Your tutors may **share slides, resources** or **set pre-reading tasks** ahead of your lectures, and you can also conduct **your own wider research**. Engaging with resources and reading *before* your lecture can support your understanding and help you formulate ideas and questions ready to discuss with your lecturer and peers.

### DURING LECTURES

*During* lectures you are usually joined by a large number of your peers, so it's important to show **respect** for each other and your lecturer. **Focus** on what is being presented, **actively engage** when invited and **avoid** any unnecessary **disruptions**.

**Note-making** in lectures helps you make **sense of what you're learning** so you're more likely to **remember it later**. There are no universal rules on how to make notes - **whatever format works best for you is the right one**, so long as you can understand and use them. Just remember **you don't need to capture everything** and there are [assistive and accessible technologies](#) to support your note-making.

### AFTER LECTURES

After your lecture, **revisit your notes** and **check you understand** what you have captured. If there are **any gaps**, or you're unsure what was being discussed, you **may need to supplement** your notes with further annotations, reading or research.

**Don't leave too long** a gap between the end of a lecture and revisiting your notes. Revisit them whilst they are fresh in your memory. **Overlearning** by regularly re-reading your notes can be a **valuable learning strategy**, particularly if you have memory or processing differences.

Revisiting your lecture notes and learning materials can also aid **revision** ahead of **exams**. For instance, by using your notes to create other revision resources such as mind maps or flashcards.

### Time management

Time management is a foundational academic and life skill. Developing good time management strategies can **help you balance academic demands, reduce stress** and **enhance your productivity**. As well as featuring useful time management resources, apps and advice on staying motivated, your [Time Management Toolkit](#) can help you:

- Develop **effective strategies** to manage your time and studies.
- Understand time management, identify **priorities, planning** and **scheduling** work.
- Set **achievable goals**, overcome **procrastination** and find your **study-life balance**.
- **Reflect** and develop personalised, sustainable techniques for **independent learning**.

### Note-making

Note-making is a foundational academic skill you can **develop with practice** to use in lectures, seminars, tutorials, labs and other learning environments – including your **independent study**. Making notes can help you make sense of information, capture **reflections** and questions and help you **understand** your topic. It can also help you **recall** information, **identify** trends and connections and **summarise** your thoughts and theories in your own words.

Finding the right note-making strategy for you can take time and practice and your [Note-making Toolkit](#) is a great place to start, as it can help you:

- Understand what **effective note-making** involves.
- Recognise **why** note-making is an **important** academic skill.
- Identify when and **how to make notes** in **different learning environments**.
- Discover **practical techniques** to develop your note-making style and **stay organise**.

## Group work

Group work at university can be a rewarding experience that helps you **build key skills** such as **communication, time management, critical thinking** and **decision-making**. Successful group work usually requires you to:

- **Understand the task** by checking assessment guidance, Learning Outcomes and tutor instructions before you begin.
- **Plan and communicate clearly** by agreeing roles, deadlines and ways of working together to ensure fair workload distribution.
- **Be inclusive and considerate** by taking account of others commitments, additional learning needs and different working styles.
- **Use spaces and tools effectively** by making use of campus study spaces and online tools like Microsoft Teams for collaboration and document sharing.
- **Stay accountable and act with integrity** by keeping track of your own tasks, checking progress regularly and understanding the difference between collaboration and collusion.

You can learn more about collaboration and collusion, as well as working independently and with integrity, in your [Academic Integrity Toolkit](#).

## Feedback

Another important way you'll **learn** and be **assessed** at university is through **feedback** from tutors and academics on your programme. How you receive feedback may vary depending on what programme you're studying, and it can be communicated to you as **written** feedback, **verbal** feedback, or even **audio** feedback. There are generally two types of feedback you will receive - **formative** and **summative**.

**Activity:** Read the statements below to learn more about the differences between formative and summative feedback.

- **Formative feedback** is feedback **for** your learning and focuses on your development. It is provided **before** your final submission, typically supports your learning, is often ungraded and allows you to make further changes before your final deadline.
- **Summative feedback** is feedback **of** your learning and focuses on your final grade or outcome. It is provided **after** your final submission, is typically based on your Learning Outcomes and highlights your strengths and areas for improvement before your next submission.

You can learn more about **why feedback matters**, how to identify **common themes** and how to **turn your feedback into achievable actions** in your [Focus On Feedback Toolkit](#).

### Top tips for your first year of study

Developing your **organisation skills** and strategies can really help you **maximise your time**, keep on top of your workload and contribute to managing a **healthy and happy study-life-balance**. Your first year of study is also a great opportunity to **learn new foundational academic skills** that you will continually develop as you use them.

We asked **Student Advisor, Tom**, what helped him when starting first year and what tips he'd give you as a new undergraduate student:

#### MEET TOM

My name is **Tom**, I'm a Student Advisor at Edge Hill University, and I am a third year Politics and Sociology student. As a **mature student**, I was a little **nervous** coming to Edge Hill, especially being out of the loop with A-Levels. But as I came into Edge Hill and **learned a lot about the different support structures**, and walking into my first ever session and seeing students like myself, of the same age, and people from different backgrounds, it was **really reassuring** to me.

[Play 'Meet Tom' video.](#)

#### TOM'S TRANSITION INTO EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY

My **top tips for students** who are coming to university, is **know where the support is** and **take a proactive approach**. For example, you're writing an essay and you come to it and you don't

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know where to find the information or you don't know how to even write an essay to start with. So **access your support network** of tutors or UniSkills.

Making **connections with your friends** to see the general issues and concerns that people have are a really good way to make use of the different support systems at Edge Hill. For me specifically, it was my **personal tutor** and **UniSkills** who **helped me strengthen those foundations** that I need for later study, in addition to my own career and personal development.

[Play 'Transitioning into university' video.](#)

### TOM'S FIRST YEAR AT EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY

While studying throughout **my first year at Edge Hill** it was nice to be able to **set foundations** and get into **good study habits**. So whether that's **independent learning** and report **writing**, essay writing, **reading** in general. Reading more academic journals and getting used to the skills needed for those and being in a nice environment where I can **learn effectively** and **access the support** when I needed it.

[Play 'Tom's first year at university' video.](#)

### Check your learning

**Activity:** Match the words below to the correct definition, when you're happy with your choices check the answers below the table to find out if you got it right!

Word	Definition
1. Formative feedback	A. Other students in your cohort or studying at Edge Hill.
2. Summative feedback	B. Smaller group discussions with your tutors and peers.
3. Peers	C. An example of independent learning.
4. Seminars	D. Feedback provided before your final submission.
5. Academic reading	E. Helps check your understanding and identify any gaps in your learning.
6. Time management	F. Can help reduce stress and support a happy study-

life balance.

7. Note-making in lectures

G. Feedback after your final submission, usually based on your Learning Outcomes.

**ANSWERS:** 1D, 2G, 3A, 4B, 5C, 6F, 7E

## Digital skills for your studies

### What are digital skills?

Digital skills are a core part of your university life. You'll use **technology** every day, sometimes without even realising, to **learn, communicate, stay organised** and **complete your studies**.

From accessing your virtual learning environment to writing assignments, joining online sessions and managing digital files, **developing your digital skills can help you study more confidently and independently**. Not everything you do at university is digital but recognising what skills you already have can help you identify others you might want to develop further.

### When will I use digital skills?

When you first start university, there are a few **key digital tasks you'll need to complete**, such as logging on to University systems, setting up your account security and connecting to Wi-Fi. Explore the tabs below to learn more about some of the **digital skills** you'll need when starting at Edge Hill University:

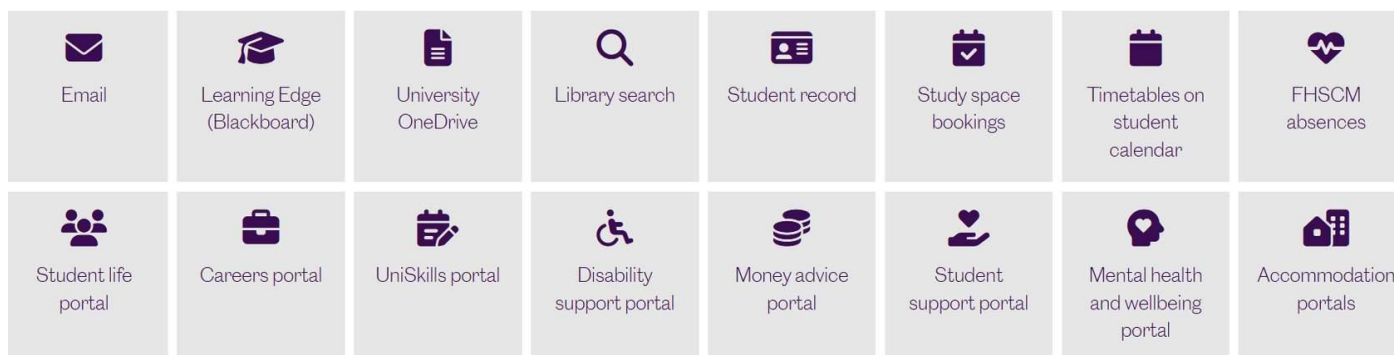
#### STUDENT HOMEPAGE

**Digital skills:** *Exploring and navigating the university website and your student portals.*

Your [Student Homepage](#) is a great starting point as a gateway to lots of information that you may need during your first few weeks and months at University. It provides **access to key University systems, support services** and **important messages** throughout the academic year. You can also **access your student portals** from this page.

Whilst the main structure and layout of the student homepage largely remains the same, some content on this page changes depending on the time of year or events and initiatives happening, so it's **always a topical place to explore!**

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### WI-FI

**Digital skills:** *Connecting to the university Wi-Fi.*

As an Edge Hill student you can **access free [eduroam wireless network](#)** from your **phone, tablet** or **computer** for secure access to the internet and other online services.

You can connect to eduroam in the list of wireless networks on your device and log in when prompted using your:

- **Username:** username@edgehill.ac.uk
- **Password:** your unique university password

If you need any help connecting your device to eduroam you can [contact the Catalyst Helpdesk](#) for further support.

### ACCOUNT SECURITY

**Digital skills:** *Changing your password and protecting your personal information.*

You will be provided with an Edge Hill username (also known as your **student number**) and **password** during your enrolment. To keep your Edge Hill network account secure you will be automatically prompted to **reset your password every 180 days**. If you forget your password or want to change it for any reason you can [initiate a password reset](#) at any time.

**Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)** adds **extra layer of security** to your account by prompting you to confirm it's really you when you sign in. After entering your password, you'll approve a notification or enter a code sent to your phone. You are **required to set up MFA** to access University systems, and you can register by following a simple [step-by-step guide on the MFA Registration web page](#).

If you need any help resetting your password or registering for MFA you can [contact the Catalyst Helpdesk](#) for further support.

### LAPTOP LOANS

**Digital skills:** *Loaning a laptop and using a networked device.*

Catalyst has **over 100 laptops you can borrow\***, as well as **over 350 networked PCs** that are **accessible 24/7** during term time. All devices provide access to the University network and online file storage, including most software available from the University.

**Laptops are self-issued** using your library account and can be found in the lockers on the ground floor of Catalyst. You will need your UniCard to issue or return a laptop.

There are two laptop loan lengths available:

- **24-hour loan laptop:** For use on campus only, these laptops are not issued with a charger and will not work off campus.
- **2-week loan laptop:** For use on and off campus, you will need to pick up a charger and bag from the Catalyst Helpdesk.

We understand there are lots of circumstances where overnight and two-week loans will not be sufficient and in these cases you can [apply for a semester loan laptop](#).

*[\\*Terms and conditions apply](#) and all laptop loans and PCs are subject to availability.*

### Edge Hill University digital systems

Studying at Edge Hill University requires you to engage with several different digital systems, each with its own purpose. It can **take time to get used to which system does what**, and that's completely normal.

Explore the tabs below to learn more about the main systems you'll use for **learning, creating coursework** and **storing your files**. The focus is on understanding how these tools fit into your studies, not on becoming an expert straight away.

### VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Your **virtual learning environment (VLE)** is more commonly called **Learning Edge or Blackboard**. On your VLE you'll find your course and module areas related to your programme of study, along with links to a range of other useful resources.

The [Learning Edge \(Blackboard\): Getting Started guide](#) is a **useful beginner's introduction** to accessing and finding your way around your VLE. You can also [explore video tutorials, refresher guides and tips](#) to get the most out of your VLE on topics such as:

- Logging in to your VLE.
- Finding your course and module area.
- Exploring your organisations.
- Navigating your learning and teaching content.
- Useful module tools.

### MICROSOFT OFFICE

[Office 365](#) is a cloud hosted service provided by Microsoft. It allows you to **create, edit, manage** and even **collaborate**. You can [download Microsoft Office 365 for free](#) on up to **five personal devices** as well as access to online versions of Office 365 products and OneDrive storage. Office 365 includes Word, Excel, Outlook, Access, PowerPoint, OneNote, Publisher and MS Teams.

To access Office 365, you will need your:

- **Username:** username@edgehill.ac.uk
- **Password:** your unique university password

### OUTLOOK EMAIL

The Edge Hill University email platform is **Outlook via Microsoft 365**. Outlook also includes helpful tools like **folders, flags** and a **built-in calendar** to keep you organised. You can **access your email on any device** through the web, desktop or mobile app, making it easy to stay connected wherever you are.

To access Outlook email, you will need your:

- **Username:** username@edgehill.ac.uk
- **Password:** your unique university password

We **recommend you check your student email account daily** as this is the main way the university will communicate with you about your course, events and support.

### ONEDRIVE

[University OneDrive](#) is your **personal cloud storage space** where you can save, organise and access your files from any device. It automatically backs up your work, keeping it safe and makes it easy to switch between campus computers, your laptop, or even your phone.

You can also **share documents** with course mates, **collaborate** in real time and keep everything organised in **one secure place** connected to your university account. If you ever lose a device, your files are still **safely stored** online and ready to access.

### Accessibility and inclusive learning

From proofreading and note-making, to planning your written work, **technologies can support you** to develop effective study strategies. [Assistive technologies](#) are **available to all students** and can be **useful tools to support your learning**.

You can explore your [Assistive and Accessible Technologies Toolkit](#) to learn more about tools like Mind Mapping, Text-to-Speech software and other accessibility apps, and there are further **accessibility features** available to you in Office 365 and Blackboard, including:

**Microsoft Office** offers several features to support reading, writing and presenting:

- **Immersive Reader** helps you focus on text by adjusting spacing, colour and reading aloud.
- **Editor** provides advanced spelling, grammar and clarity suggestions to support your writing.
- **Dictate and Transcribe** let you speak instead of typing, or upload audio to convert speech into text.
- **PowerPoint Rehearse with Coach** provides feedback on your presentation skills, including pacing, clarity and use of filler words.

Access further support with [Microsoft Office 365 accessibility features](#).

**Blackboard Ally** supports accessibility when accessing your learning materials online:

- **Alternative Formats** allow you to download files in different formats, such as audio, ePub, or HTML, depending on your needs.

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- **Accessibility Checker** highlights where documents may have barriers and provides guidance on accessibility, helping ensure materials are inclusive for everyone.

You can [download alternative formats of content in Blackboard](#) by using the Ally feature.

Recognising how **accessibility benefits everyone** can help you identify simple ways to make your digital communications **clearer**, more **usable** and **inclusive for everyone**. As you continue working with digital tools and materials, keeping accessibility in mind will support not only your own learning but also the wider university community. It is also a **great transferable skill** to take with you into the workplace.

**Activity:** Read the accessibility statements below and tick whether you think they are true or false.

Statement	True	False
Accessible content benefits all students		
Accessibility tools are only for students with disabilities		
Alternative formats help you learn in the way that suits you best		
Accessibility takes too much time, so it's better to skip it		
Tools like Immersive Reader and Ally help you check and improve accessibility		
Accessibility only matters for academic work		
Accessibility creates a more inclusive learning experience for all		
If a document looks fine on my screen, it will be accessible to everyone		
Headings and structure help screen readers and improve navigation for everyone		
Videos do not need captions if the audio is clear enough to hear		

## Digital skills support

The university offers a range of **support** through **resources** and **short courses** to help you build your **confidence**, **independence** and **digital skills at your own pace**:

### [Digital Skills web pages](#)

Explore a range of self-help guides and video tutorials covering essential platforms and tasks to support your studies.

### [LinkedIn Learning](#)

Edge Hill students have full, free access to thousands of high-quality online courses and video tutorials written by industry experts.

### [Ask Us @ Catalyst](#)

If you need help with your digital skills, or have any questions about using university systems, you can contact the Catalyst Helpdesk.

### [UniSkills Campaigns](#)

Access targeted support, created and delivered in collaboration with other specialist support, for help settling in, finding a happy study life balance, acing your assessments and much more!

## Check your learning

**Activity:** Match the words below to the correct definition, when you're happy with your choices check the answers below the table to find out if you got it right!

Word	Definition
1. Accessibility	<b>A.</b> Your virtual learning environment (VLE) where you'll find your course and module areas and links to other useful resources.
2. Online discussion boards	<b>B.</b> Important for everyone to consider and benefits all students.
3. Eduroam	<b>C.</b> Your personal cloud storage space to save, organise and access your files from any device.
4. Student Homepage	<b>D.</b> You should check daily, for important updates and

	information about your studies and student life.
5. University email	E. A good example of digital communications skills.
6. OneDrive	F. Free Wi-Fi available for use at Edge Hill University.
7. Blackboard	G. A great place to access information and key university systems such as your student portals.
<b>ANSWERS: 1B, 2E, 3F, 4G, 5D, 6C, 7A</b>	

## Research and reading skills

Research skills are what you use when you **search** for and **find academic information** to **read** and **learn**. You will be required to do lots of **independent research** and **reading** at university and this will help **develop your subject knowledge** and **confidence** when engaging in classroom discussions and completing your assignments.

In this section of the toolkit you can explore a simplified breakdown of a **research process** and learn more about **why it is important to use dedicated search tools** to find high quality information to support your studies.

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*Your research and reading skills develop the more you use them, and there's lots of support available from your tutors and UniSkills.*

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### What is academic information?

In a world of information overload, **learning to recognise high-quality academic information is an essential research skill**. The quality of the sources you choose can directly affect the quality of your work, so understanding different types of academic and professional information is **key to producing strong university assignments**.

**Research is always carried out for a specific purpose**, usually guided by an assessment question and linked to your learning outcomes. These help you **identify keywords** and topics, which form the basis of your research. Once keywords are clear, you can use them to search **tutor-recommended reading lists**, **academic databases** and **subject resources** to find academic information.

## Edge Hill University | UniSkills Toolkit Alternative Format

As an undergraduate student, you will use a range of sources, which may differ depending on your course, but all should be **relevant, reliable** and **academically appropriate**.

**Activity:** Read the statements below to learn more about three of the most common types of information sources and what value they can bring to your research.

- **Textbooks** provide foundational knowledge on a topic, such as providing definitions and key overviews of your subject.
- Electronic books (**eBooks**) can be accessed instantly, read online and provide additional accessibility features.
- Academic **journal articles** provide current, peer-reviewed research on your topic or field of study.

## How do I find academic information?

A simplified research process can be broken down into four key stages: *Identify, Find, Evaluate* and *Apply*. Read on to learn more about each of these four research stages.

### Stage 1: Identify

The first stage of any research process should be to **clearly identify what you need to find out**.

Useful tips:

- **Analyse** your assignment question to understand what you are being asked to do.
- **Identify** your keywords and topics from the question or your learning outcomes.
- **Reflect** on what you already know and identify any gaps in your knowledge.
- **Use your keywords** to search for recommended reading from your reading list.

By taking time at the start of your research process to identify keywords and gaps in your knowledge you can help avoid wasting time or conducting unfocussed searches.

### Stage 2: Find

At university level of study you will be expected to use **high-quality academic resources**, such as peer reviewed journal articles, so knowing **how to find them** is a key skill.

Useful tips:

- Use your [Reading List Online](#) to find essential and recommended reading from your tutors.
- Use [Discover More](#) to search the University Library's collection of resources.
- Use your [Subject Resources](#) to conduct wider research in your field of study.
- **Make notes** as you read to help you process and develop your understanding.

Keeping a **list of your resources** as you find and use them can **help demonstrate you've carried out appropriate research**, as well as help you articulate the information you find. It can also help when it comes time to create your **reference list**.

### Stage 3: Evaluate

Once you have found your information, you will need to **evaluate** it to determine how accurate, reliable, trustworthy and current it is. Developing **critical thinking skills** takes practice but really helps ensure your academic work is based on credible evidence.

Useful tips:

- **Check** the information is accurate and from a reliable source.
- **Consider** who created the source, what is their expertise or authority.
- **Be cautious** with [Generative Artificial Intelligence \(GenAI\)](#) tools.
- **Always follow your tutor's guidance.**

### Stage 4: Apply

Once you've found and evaluated all your reliable information, you'll need to **read it** and **organise it** to make the best use of it. Different strategies work for different people, but there's plenty of support to help you find what works best for you in the following [UniSkills Toolkits](#):

- [Academic Reading Toolkit](#) - for strategies to extract useful information from sources.
- [Academic Writing Toolkit](#) - for support with planning, structuring and drafting.

### Summary

You have just explored a simplified example of a research process. You will strengthen your research skills and confidence over time and with practice, and there's lots of support available to help you.

A great place to start exploring and developing your research skills is with your [Finding Academic Information Toolkit](#).

## What is academic reading?

**Reading is an essential part of your research** and will usually account for the biggest chunk of your independent study time. Reading should be carried out in advance of writing and carefully factored into your planning time, but all your **reading will benefit your learning**.

Academic reading can help you **identify** different arguments, **consider** research methods and findings and **recognise** patterns or themes. This enables you to **make connections** between writers and sources, which can help you to **form your arguments** and **reach conclusions**.

## When will I need to read academically?

You may be asked to complete **reading before a lecture or seminar**, this type of reading will help you understand more about the topic you are studying and allow you to contribute to classroom discussions. You will also need to **read to complete your assignments**, this type of reading demonstrates evidence of how you have engaged in wider research.

Your [Academic Reading Toolkit](#) can help you:

- **Read** more **effectively** and **critically** at university.
- **Understand** key **arguments** and **identify** relevant **information**.
- **Learn** techniques for **skimming**, **scanning** and **deep reading**.
- Make **notes** and **question** what you read to **develop your critical thinking**.

## Check your learning

**Activity:** Match the words below to the correct definition, when you're happy with your choices check the answers below the table to find out if you got it right!

Word	Definition
1. Finding academic information	A. Where you can search your University Library's collection of resources.
2. Academic reading	B. A skill you will develop as you learn to critically evaluate your sources.
3. Discover More	C. Your essential and recommended reading from

	your tutors.
4. Critical thinking	D. An essential part of your independent learning and can take up most of your study time.
5. Journal articles	E. A great place to engage with wider research and reading on your subject area.
6. Subject resources	F. The second stage of your research process, once you've established what it is you're being asked to do.
7. Online reading list	G. Up to date, peer-reviewed research on your topic or area of study.
<b>ANSWERS: 1F, 2D, 3A, 4B, 5G, 6E, 7C</b>	

## Writing and referencing skills

**Academic writing** may seem different to other writing experiences you've encountered before starting at university, however, it is important to recognise that **writing** is a **process** and **skill** you will **develop over time**.

In this section of the toolkit you can explore **definitions of academic writing**, learn more about **referencing** and explore some of the **common challenges** undergraduates face.

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*Engaging with **feedback** is a great way to **learn more** about your academic writing **strengths** and where you can **improve**.*

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### What is academic writing?

Academic writing is based on academic English, which is **formal in tone**, **evidence-based** and typically written in a **third-person perspective**. Academic writing is how you will **present your ideas**, **research** and **arguments** in a written format. Like any system, it has rules and conventions to learn and follow.

### When will I use academic writing?

You are likely to use academic writing in **written assignments** such as **essays** and **reports** as well as in **other formats** such as **oral presentations** and **exams**.

It may feel daunting when you first start to write academically, but no one expects you to write perfectly when you're starting out. As an undergraduate, you will be **introduced to the basics** of academic writing, focus on **understanding structure, use of citations and referencing** and how to **develop clear, concise arguments**.

Your [Academic Writing Toolkit](#) can help you to:

- Understand **assignment briefs**.
- Effectively **plan** and **structure essays, reports** and **reflective** pieces.
- **Write clearly** and **critically** to develop **persuasive arguments**.
- Use appropriate academic **style** and **tone**.
- **Quote** and **paraphrase** accurately, with practical tips for concise paraphrasing.
- Develop strong **editing** and **proofreading** skills.

### What is referencing?

Academic writing is **evidence-based** and **referencing** is how you **demonstrate** your evidence. Referencing is the **acknowledgment** of all the sources that have been **cited** in your assignment, whether you have **quoted** them directly (*writing them exactly as they appear in the original source*) or **paraphrased** (*writing someone else's ideas in your own words*).

There are **various referencing styles** available and **your tutor will let you know** which one they want you to use in your work. Referencing information is also usually available in your module or year of study handbook. The majority of programmes at Edge Hill use the **Edge Hill Harvard referencing style**, but you can explore the different styles by visiting the [UniSkills Referencing web page](#) or the referencing tab on your [Subject Resources web pages](#).

### When will I use referencing?

You need to reference **any time you use, or refer to, another person's work** within your own work. All styles of referencing generally consist of two parts:

- A **citation** in the **main text** of your assignment.
- A complete list of **references**, or a **bibliography**, at the **end** of your work.

You can explore the differences between a **reference** list and **bibliography** in the tabs below and should **always check which style your tutor requires** for each assignment you complete.

## REFERENCE LIST

**A reference list is an explicit list of sources cited in your assignment.**

A reference list is a list of sources you cited, which is presented at the end of an assignment such as an essay or presentation. In an essay, it appears under a heading of *Reference List* or *References* beginning on a fresh page. It is formatted depending on the referencing style you use on your programme.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**A bibliography includes any wider materials that has informed your assignment.**

Although the terms reference list and bibliography are often used interchangeably, a bibliography is technically a list at the end of an assignment such as an essay which includes all the sources cited in the text as well as any background reading. It starts on a fresh page under a heading *Bibliography*. The sources will be formatted according to the referencing style you use on your programme.

There is lots of support available to help you develop your referencing skills, including guides to toolkits. Two particular toolkits you might find useful to explore further are your [Academic Integrity Toolkit](#) and your [Referencing Toolkit](#).

Your [Academic Integrity Toolkit](#) can help you to:

- Understand what **academic integrity** means and why it is essential at university.
- Learn key principles such as **honesty, fairness** and **responsibility** and demonstrate how these apply to your academic work.
- **Avoid plagiarism**, use sources **ethically** and follow **university guidelines** to maintain integrity in your assignments and research.
- Develop the skills and awareness needed to **produce work that is original, credible** and meets academic standards.

Your [Referencing Toolkit](#) can help you to:

- Understand **why referencing is important** and how to avoid plagiarism.
- Determine the **key principles** behind different **referencing styles**.
- Learn **how to cite sources accurately** in-text and **compile reference lists**, as well as how to use **tools** and **techniques** to manage your references efficiently.

- Develop the skills needed to acknowledge sources properly, **enhance the credibility of your work** and meet academic integrity standards.

### Common concerns

We asked your Academic Skills Advisors what the most common concerns were raised by first year students when it came to academic writing and referencing. Read on to learn more about real life student concerns and how UniSkills can help reassure and support.

#### Essay structure

**Concern:** *Not sure how to structure an essay.*

**Reassurance:** Planning is a **crucial part** of your overall approach to academic writing, as it ensures a **consistent, balanced structure** and a **logical flow** of arguments in relation to the **assignment question**.

By clearly **understanding what the assignment is asking**, using key direction words and factoring in learning outcomes into a plan that suits you, you can **stay focused** and **meet the required learning outcomes** within your writing.

**Resource:** [Academic Writing Toolkit](#)

#### Paragraph structure

**Concern:** *Not sure how to structure a paragraph.*

**Reassurance:** The bulk of your writing should be presented in the main body of your assignment. This usually makes up **approximately 80% of your word count**, clearly answering your assignment brief and learning outcomes.

Using the **SEED structure** (Statement, Expand, Evidence, Develop) helps ensure each paragraph is **clear** and **concise**, **focuses** on one point at a time and **develops a logical, well-supported academic argument**.

Resource: [Academic Writing Toolkit](#)

## Paraphrasing

**Concern:** *Not knowing how to paraphrase evidence from your reading.*

**Reassurance:** Paraphrasing is a key academic skill that **demonstrates your understanding** of what you have read by expressing the meaning of source material **in your own words**, while still referencing the original author.

Unlike direct quotations, **effective paraphrasing** goes beyond changing a few words or using synonyms, helping you **develop your own academic voice, avoid plagiarism** and **bring together ideas from different sources** in your discussion.

Resources: [Academic Writing Toolkit](#) | [Referencing Toolkit](#)

## Critical writing

**Concern:** *Struggling to write critically.*

**Reassurance:** Critical writing is about communicating your **critical thinking** and **critical reading** by not accepting ideas at face value.

**Don't just describe** what an author says, **evaluate** it and **ask why it matters**, how strong the evidence is and whether there are other possible interpretations, then explain your judgement clearly and cautiously.

Resources: [Academic Writing Toolkit](#) | [Being Critical Toolkit](#)

## Referencing

**Concern:** *Struggling to apply accurate referencing.*

**Reassurance: Academic integrity** means working with honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage by ensuring that all ideas and work of others are **acknowledged** and their **original sources are clearly credited**.

This includes **referencing all sources** you use or refer to, whether quoted or paraphrased, to **demonstrate the scope of your research**, support your arguments and avoid academic malpractice.

**Resources:** [Referencing Toolkit](#) | [Academic Integrity Toolkit](#)

### Summary

All of these academic skills do become easier the more you use them, and there's lots of support available from your tutors and UniSkills to help you practice and develop.

### Check your learning

**Activity:** Match the words below to the correct definition, when you're happy with your choices check the answers below the table to find out if you got it right!

Word	Definition
1. Academic writing	A. Useful learning opportunity to reflect on and identify your strengths and how you could improve next time.
2. Feedback	B. Formal, evidence-based writing style used at university.
3. Citation	C. Style of referencing most commonly used at Edge Hill University.
4. Edge Hill Harvard	D. A reference in your writing to demonstrate the scope of your academic research and reading.
5. Reference list	E. An explicit list of sources at the end of your document to acknowledge all citations used in your work.
6. Being critical	F. Being honest and responsible in your studies by producing your own work, using sources correctly and following university guidelines.

7. Academic integrity

G. Reading, thinking and writing carefully to understand ideas, question their value and use them thoughtfully in your own work.

**ANSWERS: 1B, 2A, 3D, 4C, 5E, 6G, 7F**

## How to access your support

### Congratulations on completing this toolkit

By exploring this toolkit you have learned more about the **foundational academic skills** you will use as an undergraduate student. All of the skills discussed are **introductory** and you'll have **plenty of opportunity to practise and develop** them throughout your student journey.

There is also **lots of support available** to you, both in-person and online, bookable and self-directed, so **however you prefer to access** there's something for you.

### Access your support

#### UniSkills

**Whatever your subject or level of study, UniSkills is your key to academic success.**

UniSkills provide a comprehensive programme of [workshops](#), [online resources](#) and [one-to-one support](#) tailored to **enhance your academic abilities** and **boost your confidence** at university and beyond.

[Access a wealth of online academic skills resources](#), including video tutorials, digital guides and [interactive toolkits](#), all **available 24/7** via the UniSkills web pages. From finding academic information, to critical thinking, academic reading and writing, referencing, preparing for assessments, presenting with confidence and much more!

#### Disability Support

[Additional study skills support is also available](#) if you have a **Specific Learning Differences (SpLD)** or disability, such as **dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia** and **ADHD**.

## Edge Hill University | UniSkills Toolkit Alternative Format

Your SpLD team offer [access to support](#) and [technologies](#) to develop **effective study strategies** and mitigate the impact of any challenges. If you have any other conditions you can also access a range of support from your [Inclusion team](#).

### Academic Resilience

Academic resilience is about developing your **skills** and **mindset** to **cope with challenges** and **thrive in your studies**. Understanding what resilience means in an academic context can help you adopt practical strategies to **manage stress, stay motivated, respond to feedback** and **adapt to setbacks** such as disappointing marks, mistakes or lack of confidence.

By maintaining your **wellbeing**, taking a positive approach to **problem-solving** and accessing **support networks** effectively, you can strengthen your ability to stay focused and succeed, even when faced with challenges. **Academic resilience can be learned** and a great place to learn more is your [Academic Resilience Toolkit](#).

### Digital Skills

Access a range of support, resources and short courses to help you **build your confidence, independence** and **digital skills** at your own pace:

- Explore a range of self-help guides and video tutorials to support your studies on your [Digital skills web pages](#).
- All students have full, free access to thousands of high-quality online courses and video tutorials written by industry experts on [LinkedIn Learning](#).
- If you need help with your digital skills, or have any questions about using university systems, you can [contact the Catalyst Helpdesk](#).
- Access year-round [targeted support campaigns](#) to help settle in, find your study-happy-balance and ace your assessments.

### Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

At university, GenAI can support your studying by helping you explore ideas, understand complex concepts, plan or draft work and gain feedback, but it **must be used ethically** and **in line with the University's guidance**.

You can learn more about GenAI, including how to access your **Student Guide to Ethical Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence** and related resources on the [UniSkills GenAI web page](#).

### Learning Communities

In addition to your timetabled studies, **engaging in learning communities with your peers** can be valuable, enriching and help you build a **stronger sense of belonging**.

There are lots of ways to engage with learning communities at Edge Hill, from [UniSkills Workshops](#) to [Students' Union Societies](#) and even [events provided by your Student Life team](#).

### Productive Mornings

There's lots of ways you can **maximise your mornings** to support your studies. Whether you're commuting to or from the **Ormskirk** or **Manchester St. James'** campuses, or getting ready for the day in your residential accommodation.

[Play the video to learn more about how Student Advisor, Ivy, ensures a productive morning](#) by:

- Logging into **Outlook emails, calendar** and **Blackboard** to check for any **updates, announcements** or **prep work**.
- Accessing eBooks and listening to **lecture recordings** or **academic podcasts**.
- **Converting documents into audio files** to listen to while travelling or getting ready.
- **Visiting Catalyst** when it's open 24/7, during term time, using UniCard swipe access.

### Commuter Breakfasts

[Play the video to join your Student Advisor, Dan, as he enjoys catching up with friends, picking up a free pastry and hot drink and learning more about specialist support at a commuter breakfast event.](#)

**Commuter breakfasts** are available at both **Ormskirk** and **Manchester St James'** campuses, and you can find out more about upcoming events by exploring your [Student Life portal](#).

### Study-Life Balance

It's important to find a **happy and healthy study-life balance** that works for you. It helps you **avoid burnout** and can give your **mental health and wellbeing a much needed boost**.

[Play the video to find out how Student Advisor, Ivy, embraces her study-life balance](#) by:

- Using the [Libby app](#) or picking up a **fiction book** from the University Library.
- Accessing **free mental health and wellbeing support** through the [Edge Well 24/7 app](#).

- Making use of **quiet** and **reflective spaces** available on **Ormskirk** and **Manchester St. James'** campuses.

### Catalyst Specialist Support

Learn all about who and what Catalyst is, how Catalyst specialist support can help you thrive on your student journey and how to access everything you need in your [Catalyst Induction Toolkit](#). This toolkit provides a condensed overview of all the support available to you and is available 365 days a year for you to revisit whenever you need.

And remember, you don't have to know *who* can support you, as you can always [contact the Catalyst Helpdesk](#) and they will triage you to the right support.

### Final farewell

[Play the video for a final message of good luck from your Student Engagement Officer, Christine.](#)

### Video transcript

*Hello again. We hope you've enjoyed exploring your Preparing to Study toolkit. Starting university is an exciting adventure and a big transition, so it's only natural to feel a little daunted at first. The good news is you'll continue to develop the skills you've explored in this toolkit throughout your time at university. And don't forget, there's lots of support available to help you succeed. From UniSkills toolkits, online resources, one-to-one appointments and a range of academic skills workshops you can book on throughout the year. My colleagues and I wish you every success and look forward to supporting you again soon!*

## Your experience matters

### How could we improve your toolkit?

Thank you for engaging with this alternative format of the toolkit, we hope you've found it useful learning more about your foundational academic skills and how you'll study at Edge Hill University. We'd love to know what you thought of the content and [invite you to share your feedback](#) with us in a very quick survey, which should take you no longer than five minutes to complete.