

Strategies for Academic Success in an English-Based University

Workshop Objectives

- Address challenges faced by students learning in an additional language at an English-medium university.
- Provide immediately usable strategies for vocabulary, reading, writing, and speaking.

Key Terms (quick glossary)

First Language / Native Language: The language a person learns first.

Additional Language: Any language learned in addition to your first language.

English-Based University: A university where the main language of instruction and academic activity is English.

Your Experience & Common Challenges

Rate how challenging each item is for you (0 = none, 10 = extremely challenging).

Area	Examples	Rating (0–10)
Academic Vocabulary	Field-specific terms, jargon, terminology	_____
Understanding Lectures/Discussions	Speed, accents, dense content	_____
Academic Writing & Expressing Ideas	Clarity, structure, audience expectations	_____
Participation & Communication Norms	When/how to participate; level of formality	_____
Adjusting to Learning Environment	Course structure, assessment styles, feedback	_____
Community & Belonging	Relationships with profs/peers; making friends	_____

Practical Tips for Success

1) Improve Your Academic Vocabulary

- Use a vocabulary notebook or spaced-repetition apps (Quizlet, Anki).
- Preview slides/readings to flag terms ahead of class.
- Read short discipline-specific pieces; capture 5–10 terms with examples.
- Study with a classmate and compare definitions in your own words.

Vocabulary mini-template:

Term	My definition	Example/Context	Source
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2) Reading Strategies

- Break readings into chunks; set a purpose for each pass.
- Skim for structure → scan for details → carefully read the relevant parts.
- Use context clues for unfamiliar words; check concise sources (WordReference, Linguee).
- Adopt a note-taking system (Cornell, outline, map) for claims, evidence, and implications.

Cornell Notes template:

Cues / Questions	Notes

Summary (2–3 sentences): _____

3) Writing Strategies

- Outline first; draft quickly; revise for clarity and coherence.
- Use clear sentences and transition phrases to signal logic.
- Visit the Writing Support Centre and seek peer feedback.
- Use tools to check common errors and readability (Hemingway Editor, Grammarly).

4) Speaking & Presentation Skills

- Record your voice to track progress and build confidence.
- Practice aloud; use YouGlish to hear pronunciation in context.
- Join discussions/study groups; do low-stakes practice presentations.
- Aim for progress, not perfection; focus on clarity of message.

Using University Resources (match-up)

Match each scenario to the most relevant Western resource. Fill in the right column and explain why.

Scenario	Best resource to contact	Why this resource?
Unsure about assignment expectations / participation norms		
Need feedback on writing or structure		
Struggling with study strategies, time management, or exams		
Want to improve pronunciation and speaking confidence		

Seeking community, conversation groups, or social support		
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Examples: professors/TAs; Writing Support Centre; Learning Development & Success; Western International (language programs); peer study groups/student clubs.

Wrap Up

What are two skills you will practice this week to succeed at Western?

1) _____

2) _____

Key Takeaways

- Success is possible across languages—keep going.
- Use available resources; ask for clarity early.
- Value the linguistic, academic, and cultural skills you are building.
- Commit to continuous improvement with small, regular actions.

References & Further Reading

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