



Adjusting to University: How You Can Help

Starting at MSVU is a big change. One of the biggest challenges is not knowing what to expect. Here are some things to note and tips on how you can help support your student during their first year at MSVU!

The Academic Year

The academic year follows a particular pattern. Things start slowly during the first couple weeks of the term but then assignments and midterms pick up quickly around the end of the first month. The second month (October and February) are when students often have midterms. The last month of the term (November & March) is a particularly busy time as final papers are due and exam preparations begin. At the end of the Winter term there can be additional demands of looking for summer work or housing.

How you can help:

- Be understanding of your student's availability and commitments, especially during the busy points of the term. Encourage them to reach out to Counselling Services or Peer Support if they are feeling overwhelmed.
- Help your student plan for the term. Encourage your student to read their course outline (a document given out in each course on the first day of class that lists all the tests, assignments, readings, course schedule and other requirements) and use that to manage their time. One piece of advice to give them: write all the deadlines for the year in one spot so they can see what their term will look like and not have any surprises when it comes to deadlines and busy points of the term.
- Teach your student how to use a calendar app (or an agenda) to help track all their deadlines and appointments.
- Encourage your student to reach out for support at any point in the term. Be aware of some of the important resources and support services for all students. Not sure who to contact? Your student can reach out to a Mount Mentor who can help them navigate the academic year and support services.

The Daily Schedule

Your student's daily schedule will look different at MSVU than it did in high school. Your student will have classes at different times of the day, and they may have long breaks between classes. Just because a student isn't in class, doesn't mean they aren't working on the class. In fact, the amount of independent work required for each class is a lot more than in high school. For example, there is no class time to work on assignments. With that in mind, we recommend that they aim to spend 2-3 hours per week studying for every hour spent in class (or more if there are accessibility challenges).

How you can help:

- Be aware of the different demands on your student's schedule, particularly during the busier times of the year.
- Encourage your student to use resources to support their study skills and time management, including the Learning Strategist (academic learning support available for all students), Mount 101, the Mount Mentors, and Supplemental Instruction.



- Don't expect your student to be working more than 15-20 hours per week in paid employment. Being a full-time student should take as many hours as a full-time job.

Independence

Students have a greater degree of independence in the classroom, even if they're not living on their own for the first time. Learning how to manage that independence (particularly when it comes to time management) is a common first-year challenge.

How you can help:

- Recognize the transition for everyone. Try to have a discussion before school starts about everyone's concerns and expectations.
- If your student is living at home, the greater degree of independence may affect family relationships and dynamics. Discuss what the adjusted relationship might look like (e.g., expectations for participation in family activities, clear agreement on responsibilities at home, dedicated study space and time).
- Not sure what to expect? Reach out to the Mount Mentors (mount.mentor@msvu.ca). This group of upper-year students can answer questions, reassure students, and help students manage the transition to university.
- Reassure your student that they don't need to figure out everything themselves. Encourage them to reach out to Counselling Services, the Learning Strategist, their Mount Mentors, and other support services.

New Ways of Thinking & Doing

What worked in high school might not work in university – and that's okay! University is about trying and learning new things, including how to study, write, and engage with new ideas.

How you can help:

- Be realistic with expectations. The first term is a time of adjustment, particularly after receiving the first set of assignments back.
- Help your student identify what is working for them and where they need more support.
- Encourage your student to contact their professors and the different academic supports to help develop more effective learning skills, strategies, and habits.

Life outside the classroom

Even if your student knows other people at MSVU, their first year at university is a chance for them to meet people and make new friends. Your student is at MSVU to learn, but some of their most rewarding experiences will take place outside of the classroom. There is a vibrant student life on campus, but your student will need to make some effort to engage.

How you can help:

- Encourage your student to get involved and engage with the campus community. Orientation Week is a great way to meet new people, but it's just the beginning. Your student can join a society, attend a Campus Rec or Residence event, look for a job on campus, volunteer, or get involved with the MSVUSU. Find out more about getting involved and what's happening on campus by looking at Captain's Calendar (www.msvu.ca/hangout).
- Acknowledge that it can be challenging to meet new people and make new friends. Discuss small ways to make connections from saying hi to someone in class, starting a study group, or just being present on campus.



Other Things to Consider

Privacy and Consent

One of the biggest changes you will face as support systems for your student will be around the access to their academic information. Student records at MSVU are protected under strict confidentiality laws. We cannot share information about our students unless we have the student's written consent to do so. This information includes the following:

- Academic: High school transcripts, grades obtained at MSVU, academic references, marks and test scores
- Personal: Current and former address, resumes, award applications, medical information, Counselling referrals, Co-curricular record
- Financial: Tuition owing, tuition paid, detailed student fees, scholarships and bursaries, employment and salary

Your student can provide consent for you to access their information by completing the Student Information Release form, which can be found at www.msvu.ca/regofficeforms.

Student Loans

Many students apply for student loans to assist in funding their education. It is important to apply early. Eligibility considers a variety of factors but is primarily based on need, so a student's resources – including parental income – will be considered in determining how much loan they receive. For eligible students, the first loan instalment will be received in the fall term. Not every student will receive a winter loan instalment, so students should budget their funds to ensure they are able to pay their tuition fees and other expenses in the winter term. There are staff at MSVU to help assist with your questions about student loan. You should also ensure you connect regularly with your loan agency and monitor the progress of your loan through the tools they provide (i.e., MyPath for NS students).