



Perfectionism and Academic Work

What is perfectionism?

Perfectionism is when you set very high standards for yourself that are often demanding and unrealistic.

How may it make you feel?

- You may judge your self-worth based on how well you perform.
- You may struggle to feel satisfied, even when you achieve success.
- You may be highly self-critical or feel pressure to meet others' expectations.
- You may feel guilty that you cannot meet the standards.
- You may start to doubt your abilities.
- It may affect your mental and physical wellbeing.

What may perfectionism look like in academic work?

- Struggling to make decisions.
- Procrastinating or delaying tasks.
- Not knowing when to stop or consider work finished.
- Setting unrealistic standards.
- Overworking at the expense of other areas of life.
- Over checking or repeatedly reviewing work.
- Struggling to meet deadlines.
- Comparing yourself to others.
- Dwelling on feedback and grades.
- Struggling to prioritise tasks.
- Struggling to delegate in group work.



- Not enjoying your studies.
- Submitting nothing rather than submitting something you deem imperfect.

What can help with perfectionism?

Re-establish your expectations

- Identify your unmanageable expectations. You could do this in a thought diary:
 - What do you expect from yourself?
 - How does this expectation make you feel?
 - Is the expectation realistic and achievable?
 - What could happen if you do not meet the expectation? How likely could that happen?
 - Can you adjust the expectation to make it more manageable?

Gain perspective

- Focus on the learning process, not just the outcome.
- Reflect on your strengths and the qualities you bring to all aspects of your life, not just assignments.
- See mistakes as part of the learning process and a sign of growth and progress.
- Look at the bigger picture and think about your long-term goals, not just grades.

Make it more manageable

- Set time limits for studying, such as using the [Pomodoro technique](#), to stay focused and avoid overworking.
- Break up tasks into smaller ones.
- Set realistic goals that are achievable and manageable. Adjust and reassess as needed.
- Use planning to prioritise tasks and allocate study time effectively.



Show self-compassion

- Allow yourself to take breaks.
- Celebrate your achievements.
- Avoid comparing yourself to others.
- Think about whether you would expect the same from your friends and family.
- Speak kindly to yourself, such as using positive affirmations, and reflecting on how you are feeling.
- Do something relaxing when it's time to move on from a piece, to distract you from any anxiety.

For support with study skills that can help with perfectionism, please [access the Study Development Team](#).

If perfectionism with your academic work is affecting your wellbeing, please [access our wellbeing and welfare services](#).