

**THE
[UNOFFICIAL]
HASS
DECLASSIFIED
SWOTVAC
SURVIVAL
GUIDE**

**A FIRST YEAR'S GUIDE TO
SWOTVAC**

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Hello freshers!

Welcome to the first ever *HASS Student Declassified SWOTVAC Survival Guide*!

This guide was designed by four seasoned UQ HASS students to help first years navigate the examination period. This is our 'How to Guide' for getting through your first End of Semester Exams, complete with everything you need to know from an explanation of what the SWOTVAC abbreviation means to tips and tricks on how to destress!

We hope you will find this useful to your exam preparations now and in future semesters :)

Best of luck for your exams!

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(HASS students and DSSG designers)

GUIDE CONTENTS

- Introduction to SWOTVAC
 - Defining "SWOTVAC"
 - SWOTVAC & Exam Period: What's the Difference?
 - How to Get the Best out of SWOTVAC
- Study Tips!
 - How to Study
 - Time Management
 - Successful Cramming
- Self Care
 - Staying Active
 - Healthy Eating
 - Stress Relief
- What Not To Do During the Exam Period
- Final Thoughts from Seasoned Students

INTRO TO SWOTVAC

- What is "SWOTVAC"?

To define the term "SWOTVAC" is a confusing and complicated process. Most students go through their entire degree without learning what the abbreviation actually stands for. Below is a step-by-step breakdown of what SWOTVAC means:

- SWOTVAC is short for "swot vacation"
- the definition of "swot" is "the intense study of a subject in preparation for something"
- therefore, the literal meaning of "swot vacation" is "an intensive break period used for studying subject content"

So, SWOTVAC = a short break in the academic calendar for students to study in preparation for the end of semester examinations.

*It is important to note that UQ doesn't use the term "SWOTVAC" on the academic calendar. Instead, the five-days (Monday to Friday) after Week 13 is referred to by UQ as "the revision period".

In conclusion, all you need to know is that SWOTVAC is a five-day interlude between the end of Week 13 and the beginning of the exam period, which is designed to give students extra time to study subject content before sitting exams.

- SWOTVAC vs Exam Period?

- The Difference Between SWOTVAC and Examination Period

SWOTVAC is a five-day period that students use to intensely revise subject content in preparation for exams. The examination period is the final 14 days in the academic calendar where exams for each subject are scheduled.

- Making the most out of SWOTVAC

Using the SWOTVAC week effectively is difficult. But "effective" is an ambiguous term that means different things to different people. So here's a breakdown of the common ways students perceive an effective use of SWTOVAC. Some see it as a holy grail for catching up on the whole semester of content you've neglected to read/watch/absorb information from; others use the five days to sleep and rejuvenate for the exam period. The following categories can be used as indicators to help you navigate your first few semesters of SWOTVAC.

- Student 1: "Preparation is my middle name"

If you're one of the rare breeds among us who actually do their work consistently throughout the semester and have actually completed most, if not all, of the coursework (you are a superstar), then use SWOTVAC as week to revise the subject matter. Refer to previous exams for your courses as a guide to assess how much you know or concepts you may need to go over again.

- Student 2: "I wOrK bEsT uNdEr PrEsSuRe"

Ahhh yes, the "leave it all to the last minute" student. No judgement, most students are one of these in one way or another...or completely (yes College people I'm looking at you). If you've recently realised you haven't watched a lecture since Week 3, then be prepared to go into full grind send for SWOTVAC Week. Peruse the last five years of exam papers for your course/s through the library website to see which topics make a frequent and grand appearance; this will help you cram strategically. See sections two, three, and four of this guide for more help in successful cramming.

- Student 3: "What does a normal sleeping pattern look like?"

If you haven't gone to bed before 1 AM or had more than four hours of sleep since mid-sems, use SWOTVAC to rest and rejuvenate. You're already on the brink of being completely burnt out, which won't do you any favours with exam stress. Use your phone timer to help you have shorter but sharper study sessions, which break up the day and are a better use of your time. You can rest, exercise or nap in between.

- Student 4: "I only need [insert marginal % here] to get a 7"

If this is you, your peers are both terrified and in awe of you. How do you do this? What superfoods do you eat? How many hours of sunlight do you see? But most of all – good on you! With such a small percentage required to get a high distinction or distinction, use this week to be kind to yourself. If you haven't seen sunlight in weeks because your grind has been so intense, then go outside and breathe some fresh air. Definitely still study for your exam/s however, because there have been cases where overconfidence has cost students a 7. Direct your attention to past exam papers and practice doing a couple. If you need clarity on how to best approach any questions or feel that you're not answering to the lecturer's standard, you'll have plenty of time to email your course coordinator or tutor for assistance.

*If you're a mix of all four student SWOTVAC types, examine the past four years of exam papers to direct your study plan for the week. And if you get really stuck with what to do, email your course coordinator and tutor, especially if you're aiming for a particular mark and are unsure of how best to achieve this final score.

The last piece of advice, if you've had a really rough semester in your personal life or have been struggling with a course and need more time to prepare, the last resort option is deferring the exam. Each student is awarded a single discretionary deferral for their whole degree, which can be used for extenuating circumstances and the uni does not require any further explanation. Older students will caution you against using your discretionary in your first year. If you need more time, students can apply for a deferral on medical grounds or personal circumstances such as loss. Students are allocated up to five days to submit a deferral request after the exam has taken place (e.g. if your exam took place on Monday, you have until Friday to request an extension). If you're going to defer an exam because you think you need more time to prepare, ask yourself if you will properly use the extra time. You'll have to use a few weeks of your break studying, extending your semester by a couple of weeks and reducing your resting time. Consider this before submitting a deferral request.

STUDY TIPS

- How to Study

Online learning can take away the motivation to study, but SWOTVAC and the exam period are a last push before a long break. Getting to the end of semester and having 13 weeks of content to revise can be daunting and overwhelming. Here are some ways of breaking down the tasks and finding help through avenues you may not have already considered.

- Memorisation

Flashcards have been proven to help memory! If you don't have time to visit Officeworks and write out a whole deck of 13 weeks of subject content, there are plenty of online flashcard websites you can use to store your notes for free! Just google "online flashcards" and pick whichever one takes your fancy. (Pro tip: QUIZLET is fantastic, arranging your notes in different quiz formats to really test your knowledge!). Discussion boards on Facebook (UQ Coursespace) and Blackboard can be useful resources, and Youtube has some great cramming content for most subject topics as well!

- Calculation

Watch lecture recordings, go over tutorial worksheets and consult Youtube for help if you need something explained or clarified. Reaching out to peers through subject-specific Facebook groups is also super helpful.

- Essay Writing

Student Services is a fantastic resource to utilise for essay writing if you're struggling with extended writing assessment pieces. Student Services also offer referencing help. Google "UQ Student Services" for a full list of the classes they provide free of charge to all UQ students. There are also several student study groups within the HASS Faculty, including Chinese-speaking students who provide assignment help. Additionally, websites such as Grammarly (grammar check), ozdic (preposition check), Macmillan Dictionary (synonyms and antonyms) can also be an effective tool when writing an essay.

- Build your Study Timetable

[This advice also applies to pre-semester study planning!]

It is very important to balance study and leisure time. For those who don't know how to arrange study time, there are several ways to help.

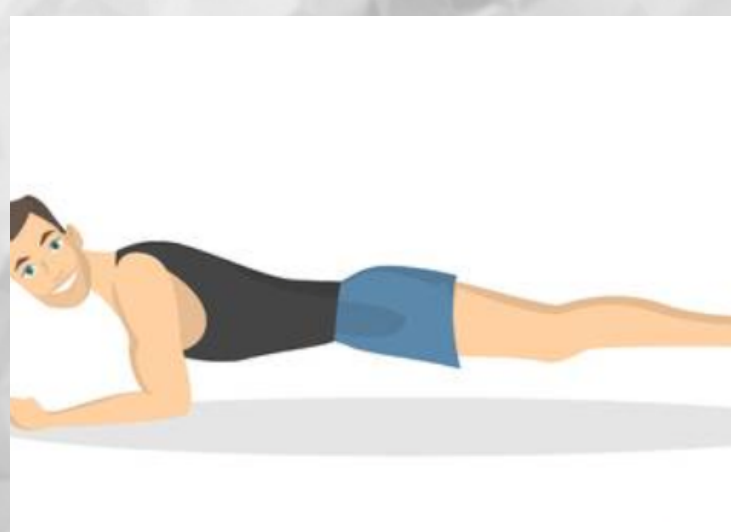
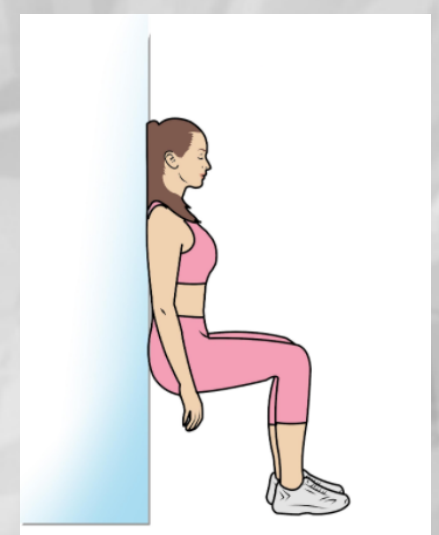
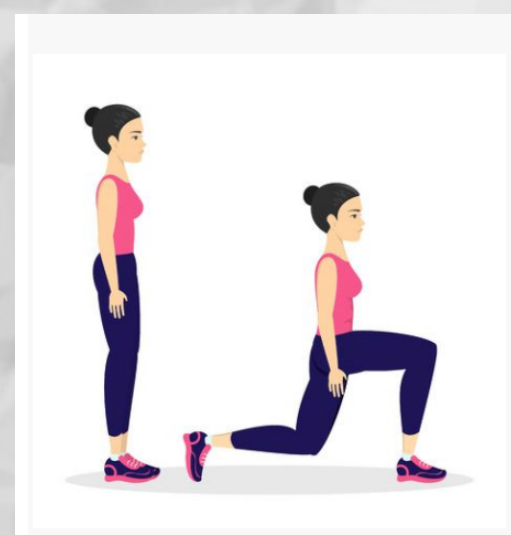
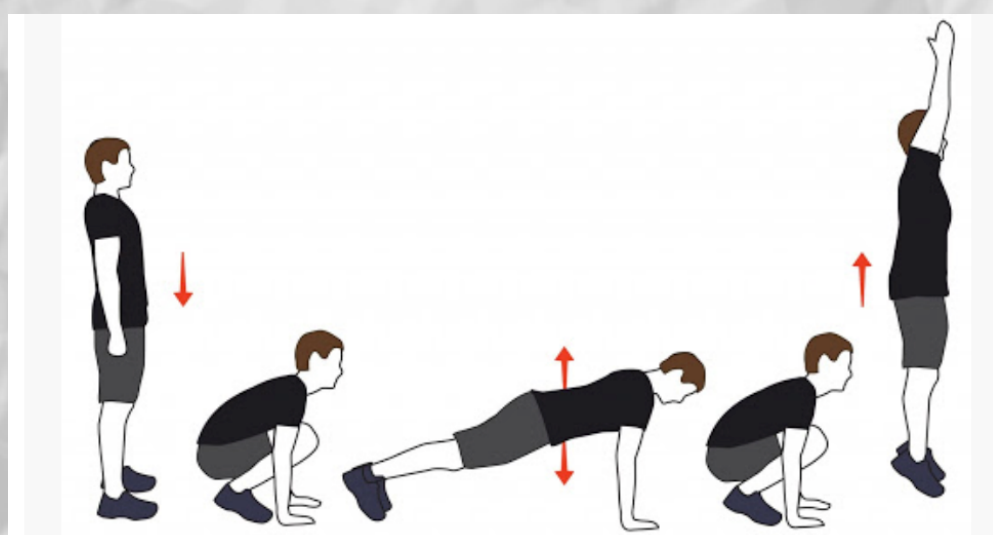
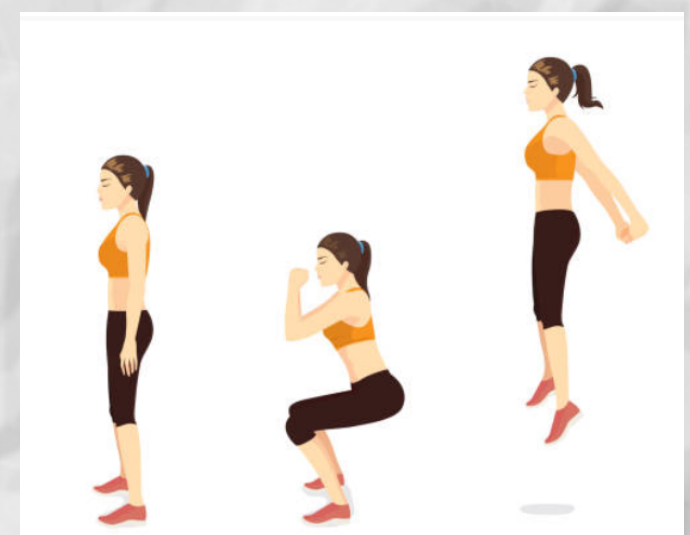
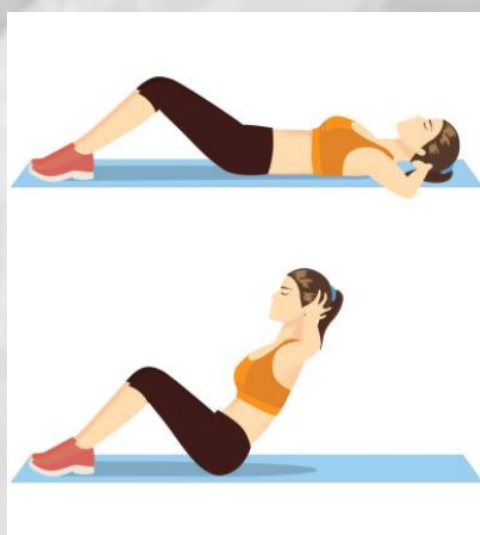
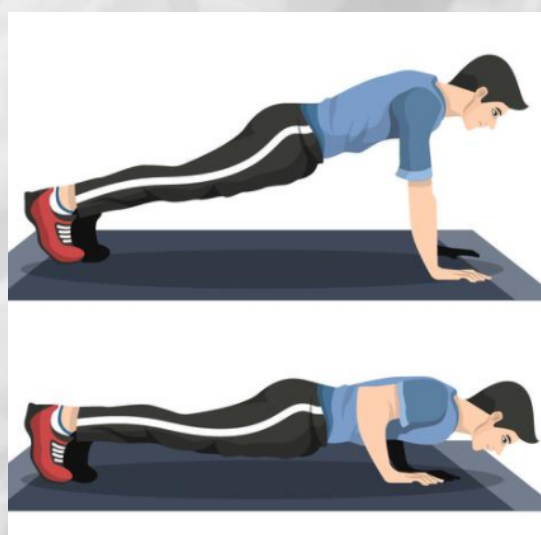
- Take notes of all assessment due dates in notebooks or calendars so that you'll never miss a due date and have advance warning of when an assessment item is approaching. The app "BlockyTime Lite" is helpful in separating study and leisure time if you need help in better arranging your time and external commitments around assessment due dates.
- Arrange every day "to-do lists" to help arrange what needs to be done and assist in visually prioritising tasks that need to be completed more urgently. You can do this by highlighting certain tasks or marking them with symbols that draw your attention. You can also schedule in break times to help use your time effectively.
- The app "Flora" is great for helping you keep motivated and limiting procrastination! Flora is a study timing app that prevents you from using your phone while you study.

SELF CARE

Even though exams are nearing and it is normal to feel stressed out, it is important to make sure we take care of ourselves and make our health and well-being our first priority. Listed below are some ways to try and minimise your stress!

- Exercising

Exam time is stressful and a fantastic way to relieve stress is through exercise. If you're not a gym junkie or don't regularly attend yoga or pilates classes, you don't need to try and squeeze establishing a routine like this into your study schedule! Simple and easy exercise is just as good! Below are a range of quick and easy exercise examples you can do to get away from your desk for 15 minutes or so.



There are many more exercises and sports, such as pulling weights, dancing, doing crunches, roller skating, basketball, etc. Don't know where to start? You can use the above suggestions to create a simple circuit training exercise routine that relieves stress, keeps you in shape and helps regulate dopamine (happy feelings)! The @uqhasslife also has a simple 15 minute yoga/stretching routine for beginners that is great for relieving tension all over your body. If you're spending long periods of time at your desk, definitely check this out!

- Healthy Eating

Sometimes while studying we might feel a little tired or hungry. Here are some simple snacks or drinks you can make to give you a little boost.

Recipe 1: Lemon & Blueberry Frozen Greek Yogurt Bites

Ingredients: 1 cup of lemon Greek yogurt, 2/3 cup of plain Greek yogurt, 2 tablespoons of honey, 1 teaspoon of vanilla, 1 ¼ cup of fresh blueberries

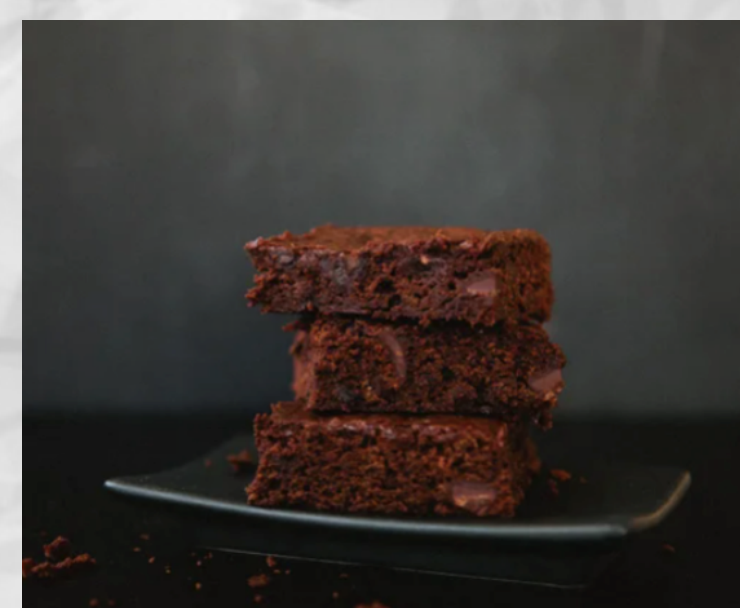
Steps: Combine both cups of yogurts, honey and vanilla in a large bowl. Mix until all ingredients are well combined. Add in blueberries and mix until incorporated. Prepare cupcake liners to be placed in 12 regular-sized cupcake cavities (Make more if you would like!!) Fill each with equal amounts of the yogurt mixture. Freeze the Greek yogurt bites for at least 4 hours before serving. Let the yogurt bites sit at room temperature for 1-2 minutes before removing from the pan and liners. If you have any difficulty removing the bites, run a little lukewarm water on the bottom of the tray.



Recipe 2: Fudge Yogurt Brownies

Ingredients: 1 cup all-purpose flour, 1/2 tablespoon baking powder, 1/4 tablespoon salt, 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips, 6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) unsalted butter, 1 cup granulated sugar, 1/2 cup cocoa powder, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, 1 cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt.

Steps: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter and flour a 9 x 9 x 2 inch metal baking pan. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a large bowl. Combine a 1/2 cup of chocolate chips and butter in a large stainless-steel bowl. Set the bowl of chocolate chips and butter over a saucepan of simmering water and stir until all ingredients in it are melted and smooth. Remove bowl from heat; whisk in sugar, cocoa powder, vanilla, and yogurt. Fold wet ingredients into dry ingredients. Fold in remaining 1/2 cup chocolate chips. Pour mixture into the metal baking pan. Bake until a tester inserted into the centre of the brownie comes out with a few moist crumbs attached. After 25-28 minutes, let the brownie cool completely. Cut it into squares with a sharp knife.



Recipe 3: Cheesecake Stuffed Strawberries

Ingredients: 1 pound large strawberries, 8 ounce block cream cheese (room temperature), 1/4 cup powdered sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste (or extract), cracker crumbs

Steps: Rinse the strawberries and cut around the top of the strawberry, leaving a nice hole to fill the strawberry with filling. (If the inside of the strawberry isn't hollow, you can use a small knife to clean out some of the inside. Large strawberries tend to be hollow in the middle.) [*Optional: If you would like the strawberries to stand upright slice a tiny section off of the bottom. I normally skip this step and just let them rest on their side.] Continue until all the strawberries have been prepped. After the strawberries are prepped add cream cheese, powdered sugar and vanilla bean paste to the bowl of a stand mixer. Mix together until smooth and fully combined. Add the mixture to a piping bag and fill the inside of the strawberries until the filling reaches the top of the strawberry. Dip the top of the strawberry in graham cracker crumbs. [*Optional: Feel free to add mix-ins to the cream cheese - lemon zest, flavoured extract or even mini-chocolate chips.]



Recipe 4: Strawberry Banana Smoothie

Ingredients: 1-8 fl. Oz. bottle of boost Vanilla or Strawberry drink, ½ banana (sliced), ½ cup of strawberries (sliced), ¼ cup of vanilla ice cream or low-fat frozen yogurt.

Steps: Place all ingredients in a blender and mix until smooth. Serve immediately. Take note: This recipe makes a large serving of smoothie. If not all smoothie can be consumed at once, store it in the refrigerator for up to 4 hours.



Recipe 5: P & B Shake

Ingredients: 1 - 8 fl. oz. bottle of boost vanilla drink, 2 tablespoons of creamy peanut butter, 2 tablespoons of grape jam, ½ cup of vanilla or peanut butter swirl ice cream

Steps: Place all ingredients in a blender and mix until smooth. Serve immediately.



- Fun Activities!

Aaaand another list of fun things to do that you should include in your day to break up your studies.

- Music
- Dance
- Group sports
- Arts and crafts (painting, drawing, origami)
- Socialising with friends (in person or over social media platforms such as Skype, Facetime, Messenger)
- Journalling
- Visual entertainment (TV, Netflix, TikTok etc.)

WHAT NOT TO DO

There are a lot of ways to make the most of the SWOTVAC study week. Everyone an ideal SWOTVAC where everything goes to plan; you study consistently and effectively, and come out ready for finals. However, more often than not your study week doesn't play out like this. We always think, "All I need is one good day, that'll do it", but that tomorrow never comes. Instead of reading about how to get the most out of this time, we have created a brief What Not To Do guide to SWOTVAC.

- **Don't: Start a new TV series**

Starting a new TV series in SWOTVAC is a sure-fire way to lose at least 2 days binge watching. Whether it is Putlocker, 123movies or Netflix most new or old series are accessible in HD in some way; no matter the pop-up ads or sketchy links we will watch that show. It's a slippery slope from watching something over lunch to one more episode at 11pm.

Worst case: the series has 5 seasons, with 20 episodes in per season and each episode runs for 40 minutes - (e.g. Prison Break).

Best case: lose interest on the pilot.

- **Don't: Start a New Video Game**

Since we have gone into learning at home, many people would have invested in a PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo Switch or some sort of system. Purchasing a new game in or near SWOTVAC will lose you some serious time. Immersive games like No Mans Sky or Sims will take away at least 4 days of your week. Other sort of games can cause less time damage, but can still be addictive and attractive when compared to studying. It's never just one more game.

Worst case: you buy an immersive game where you literally lose 3 days at once while playing it.

Best case: you only like playing online with friends and get bored rather quickly.

- **Don't: Overplan**

More often than not it pays off to plan. In particular, if you plan your SWOTVAC you put yourself in a good position for finals. However, it can be detrimental to over-plan. Over-planning is distinct from a clear and distinct plan. Planning everything in meticulous detail can make everything seem daunting and be debilitating. It's important to understand everything you need to know and do, but not to overbear yourself and keep in the best headspace possible.

Worst case: you spend a day and a half planning and half a day revising the plan.

Best case: you make a clear and efficient plan with time to switch off.

- **Don't: Do Nothing**

Doing nothing is arguably to do something, but it is far from ideal in SWOTVAC. To sit and stare at a wall in this time can be blissful or dissociative; you're either feeling good about finals or thinking about the supplementary exam already. Either way it's important to do something to put yourself in the best position possible.

Worst case: you know how much the grass in your yard has grown.

Best case: you spontaneously find motivation.

We hope this gives you have a better idea of what not to do or do less of during your SWOTVAC. Good luck for your exams and watch out for the Jacaranda trees!

FINAL COMMENTS

- BAILEY SAYS:

"It's okay to fail, change your mind or do something else. It's important to be authentic and do what you want to do. Your studies might not always turn out the way you plan for them to and that's totally fine. What matters most is how you deal with those setbacks and conquer the obstacles thrown your way."

- COURTNEY SAYS:

"Remove yourself from stressful environments, it makes a huge difference to your emotions during study time. For example, if you live in one of the residential colleges, consider returning home (if you can) in the lead up to your exams, as it can be overwhelming and add extra (unnecessary) stress to your emotional load during this time due to different coping mechanisms, routines, and study techniques. Be in a comfortable space during SWOTVAC and exam period, it will make such a difference to your personal headspace and emotions related to exams."

- JODI SAYS:

"It can be really easy to be unmotivated especially during difficult times like these, but I really hope that this guide has given you ideas on how to cope during the SWOTVAC period. Remember to set goals, take breaks and know that if you need any help, UQ has resources available to assist you as well!"

- JOLIN SAYS:

"Online learning can be stressful and hard to motivate yourself, however, to set a deadline and schedule for study and relax can be the first step to start. HASS faculty had provide plenty resources to assist you. Uni is full of learning news things and skills that will be useful in the future!"

GOOD LUCK!

FINAL ADVICE