Personal Tutoring Guide

**PRESENTATION**

**PERSONAL TUTORING IN THE UCAM**

Dear student, this guide has been designed with you in mind. With this guide we want to welcome you to the UCAM and to introduce to you a personalised support and orientation plan, which will be very useful for the university stage that is about to start: PERSONAL TUTORING.

This document is intended to explain to you what a support plan is, as well as the reasons why it is important for you to use it. In the different annexes, we have wanted to convey to you relevant and useful information. We recommend that you read it and save it, since you might need to reread it in some other occasion.

Our wish is that the University will not be a simple step in your life but that it will rather become a key stage of it. We hope that with your will and effort you will be able to reach the goals and dreams you have at the beginning of your university studies. Ever since now, you can count on our help.

The Group of Personal Tutors

**WHAT IS PERSONAL TUTORING?**

It’s a help offered by this University. It’s about putting at your disposal a person, a tutor, devoted to accompanying you during your university studies. Your tutor is a member of the teaching body of the degree, and his/her participation in it is real and effective.

You will have a series of recurrent personal interviews with your tutor. Such interviews are not compulsory. They are a right, not a duty. They will only take place it you want it.

During the first year of your stay in the University, your tutor will take the first step and he/she will contact you, although you can go to see him/her whenever you want. During the second and following years, the initiative to arrange personal tutoring sessions will be mainly up to you. Therefore, you will have to go to your tutor whenever you deem it appropriate and plan with him/her the interviews.

Such tutoring sessions are personalised and they take place in a climate of trust and absolute confidentiality.

Although the personal tutoring is voluntary, your participation in it can be counted as a part of the attendance requested to pursue the degree in the continuous assessment modality, in the subjects of your own choice, with a maximum of two hours per term.

This personalised support and orientation plan is intended for all the students of the University, with no exception, since it aims at complementing your training with contents that are not offered in class.

The Personal Tutoring Sessions go beyond the academic aspect and they try to favour your personal growth. The Personal Tutoring aims at:

*Optimising your performance*, since:

* It favours your adaptation and integration in the University.
* It advises you and guides you in the management of your academic career.
* It allows you to develop learning strategies and techniques of intellectual work.
* It helps you to manage your time in an efficient way by improving your organisational and planning capacity.
* It motivates you to make decisions and discover your professional interests.

*Promoting your personal development*, since:

* It guides you in the acquisition of healthy lifestyles: sleep, exercise, rest...
* It promotes self-knowledge and it fosters your responsibility.
* It works with you to develop personal and social abilities that facilitate your human and personal development.
* It encourages you to base your life on strong values.

**WHAT IS NOT PERSONAL TUTORING?**

* Personal Tutoring is not as it was in your secondary school. Here, the attention is individual and continuous throughout time.
* Personal Tutoring is not the same as the timetable for the support of the students of the subjects, or as the teaching or academic tutoring. They are two different things. Each one has its own field of application.
* Personal Tutoring is not used to control you. Your tutor is not a police officer who monitors what you do.
* Your tutor is not there to justify you before your teacher for your lack of attendance or the lack of participation in the course.
* The tutor is not in charge of carrying out administrative tasks related to the secretariat or to the academic management for you.
* Your tutor is not a “trouble-shooter” for the issues that you shall assume and resolve.
* Your tutor does not decide for you.

**WHAT IS PERSONAL TUTORING FOR?**

**Why does the UCAM provide a personal tutor to each student?**

Because you, as a student, and especially as a person, are unique and important. Ever since its beginning, the UCAM established the Personal Tutoring as an answer to the academic and personal needs that the students generally have when they start their university studies. With this personal attention, it will be easier for you to approach your university stage.

**What are the difficulties that the students face when they start the University?**

Among others, the lack of knowledge regarding the University as an educative institution, its functioning, the superficial information on the degree you are studying, the lack of knowledge on the scholarship system, the insufficient study techniques, knowledge and managements of credits, lack of knowledge on continuous assessment, the obligatory nature of attendance, which entails a new way of life due to the fact of moving, to the modifications in your family environment, friends...

**How do the Personal Tutoring Sessions help us?**

Your tutor knows well the functioning of your University and of your studies.

He/she helps you recognise your abilities, interests, motivations, values and aptitudes.

**How can I contact my tutor?**

At the beginning of your studies, you will find out who your tutor is. He/she is the person who will be in charge of accompanying you throughout your entire stay in the University. He/she will contact you to introduce himself/herself and he/she will explain how the Personal Tutoring Sessions work.

In any case, you can always find your tutor through the secretariat of the degree you belong to.

**If I handle all the subjects well and I have no problem... why should I need a tutor?**

A shared happiness is an even bigger happiness. We seek your integral education and your training at all levels. The education process is something that never ends.

**And if everything I want is to be a good professional in my career?**

This is an additional reason. If you want to be a good professional, a fluent relationship with your tutor will help you accomplish that.

**WHAT’S THE WORKING METHOD OF PERSONAL TUTORING?**

**How does the tutor contribute to my training?**

By using two tools: the personalised interviews that you can have with him/her and the freely-definable seminars that we offer.

**What does the tutor do in the personalised interviews?**

Your tutor guides and advises you on the issues you might raise to him/her by seeking to meet your expectations and he/she will ensure that your training is complete and that you set for yourself wider objectives and goals. But you will be in charge of your own decisions.

The competences developed in the tutoring sessions are your adaptation and integration in the University, your ability to study, your organisational and planning capacity, your ability in interpersonal relationships and your attitudes, values and personal abilities. With the personal tutoring sessions, you will acquire more easily and better those general competences that any degree student must have acquired at the end of his/her studies.

**What is expected from me in the Personal Tutoring?**

That you attend frequently the interviews with your tutor to define which aspects you can improve and how to do it.

For your tutor to advise you well, you must let him/her know you and your needs, concerns, fears, expectations... The success of the Personal Tutoring depends on you and on your interest in using this personalised help.

**So, what should I expect from an interview?**

You will find a space in which you can express yourself freely, and a qualified person to help you and listen to you, with whom you can share opinions in a relaxed and confidential environment.

**Does the attendance to Personal Tutoring Sessions get any academic recognition?**

Yes, it does. At the end of the term, you can count up to a maximum of two hours as hours attending a theoretical class of a subject of your choice.

For this reason, the time spent in each personal tutoring session will be recorded. You can receive a certificate, signed by your tutor, specifying the dates and hours of the personal tutoring sessions you have attended. In the last week of lessons of each term, you shall communicate to your tutor, in writing or with an e-mail, the subject for which you want those hours to count.

**What are the freely-definable seminars offered by the Group of Tutors?**

These seminars address issues of general interest such as the modality to successfully deal with your studies, the way to benefit as effectively as possible from your time in the University, the importance of learning to think with accuracy to shape your own opinions...

**ORGANISATION AND PLANNING**

Once finished the baccalaureate studies, the fact of starting the university studies leads to new life patterns and to the need to organise and plan in a better way your time in order to enjoy all the possibilities that the university life offers.

Time is a “non-renewable” resource and, because of this, it is important to plan and organise the activities that you wish to carry out. The ability to organise and plan your time is one of the necessary competences to be successful in this new phase that begins. Furthermore, it is highly valued in the work field.

As you can see, it is necessary to change your mind set; the university studies are different and, apparently, you are going to have more time and more freedom.

The access to university life might seem challenging (the lessons, the pace of study and works, etc.) and different from the things you were used to until now. Don’t worry, it is normal, give yourself some time to gradually adapt to the new academic needs.

The organisation and planning of time is something that you must learn as well. The effectiveness with which you are going to face such studies will largely depend on how long it takes for you to develop this habit. Like all habits, it requires some training, and it must be acquired gradually, without getting discouraged at the drop of a hat because you have not “kept to the plan". You can always start over.

It might also be the first time you live outside from your parents’ house (in a shared flat, or in a university residence, etc.) and you must manage your money (it is important to establish a monthly budget and to stay within the limits). These facts require a bigger commitment and a greater personal responsibility.

The Group of Personal Tutors provides you with some *recommendations to help you better organise and plan your time.*

* *The use of an agenda* is very important.In it you shall record the date of the exams, the appointments with your tutor, the delivery date of your works, etc. You shall check it daily and learn to prioritise based on the dates and on the activities concerned. For the students, it is advisable that the Agenda has a view of the current week, since it is helpful for a better planning and organisation of time. The agendas that only include the view of each individual day are not as useful.
* It is essential *to have your own weekly schedule of the lessons* specifying the place in which they take place, as well as to study, whenever possible, every day at the same hours.
* It is important *to organise the year from the beginning until the end.* This is done by planning in a proper way the delivery of works, the study-time for each subject, the leisure activities, etc. The best way to avoid stress during the exams is to study regularly before you run out of time.
* *Learn to say “no”.* In the University, all types of activities arise constantly, but you need to take into account the priorities of your agenda, whether they are leisure or study activities.
* *Be wary of leaving all work for the long holidays periods.* In order to plan you time, it is necessary to be as realistic as possible. Christmas Holidays and the Holy Week tend to be a perfect period for self-deception. If you do not study the rest of the weeks, you will study even less during holidays.
* *Let your classmates and friends know your schedule.* It is equally important for you to comply with your plan and for your friends to respect it.
* *Learn to live in the present*, it is the best way to prevent stress. Comply with your resting and sleeping schedule, with your meal breaks, etc. Is it worth worrying for something that has already happened? Is it possible to change it? Is it worth worrying for something that you do not know that is going to happen?

Do not worry about things, just take care of them.

* *Do not lose the perspective of your studies*. After all, they are your priority and all the other activities should be subordinated to them.

After the first weeks of lessons you have already had the occasion to see how work and study function in the University. In order to help you with the organisation of your time, we suggest you develop your own *weekly planning* in which, next to the lessons and study hours, you can record the dates with your friends, the leisure activities, etc. By planning the activities that you usually carry out, you will notice that time seems to increase.

We suggest some questions which might help you organise a “standard week”:

Do I have practices this week? When is my next exam? What is the delivery date for my next work? Do I have to meet some friend? Is there any birthday upcoming? Do I have to buy something specific? Do I have any activity at the university? Do I have any family event planned? Am I going to the cinema or somewhere else this weekend?

**Weekly planning model.**

1º to elaborate it, it would be convenient to have an agenda in which you have a view of the entire week. It can also be useful to have a model as the one of the example. In it, you must plan your time for each hour: your time for lessons, for studying, your leisure time and the delivery date for your works, etc. It is important to develop a realistic, flexible and revisable schedule, and it must be in writing (these are the characteristics of any good schedule).

2º Start by filling out all the hours of lessons that you have (with the name of the subject), without forgetting the practical lessons and the seminars. The theoretical classes change from one term to the other and the practical lessons are different based on the week. If during that specific week you have to submit some work or you have some exam, highlight it with some colour in the planning.

3º Establish your study time. It must be that time of the day in which you know you can obtain the best performance from your intellectual work. For a university student, it should not be less than three hours of study per day and, whenever possible, every day at the same time. You must comply with this study schedule and it must become a lifestyle; after all, studying is your main activity.

4º After that, write down in the planning all the leisure and sporting activities that you generally carry out every week. For example, on Mondays and Fridays: painting workshop (or gym) at 08.00 p.m. On Wednesdays: Cinema at 10.00 p.m., etc.

5º Do not forget to write down the occasional events or activities you have that week (wedding, shopping, hairdresser...)

6º Use the spare time between lessons to study in the Library.

7º Once established the fixed study schedule, you shall plan the things you are going to study during those hours.

In order to do this, it is very important:

* + To see the priorities of that week (exams, works...). To organise the tasks you have to do based on their importance and to organise your time from that perspective.
	+ To plan your study based on the difficulty of each subject outside from the exam sessions. The hours of study you must dedicate to it are proportional to the complexity of the subject.
	+ To divide more complex tasks into smaller tasks and to establish time limits to complete such tasks.
	+ To plan time to revise and for weekly reviews.
	+ To leave some free hours for unexpected events.

The aim of this working draft is for you to properly value study. In this moment, studying occupies a big portion of your time, therefore it is necessary to be able to include it in your daily life.

At the beginning of the year, your tutor can help you to establish your expectations for the year and to plan it, but you must acquire the habit of planning your own time at least weekly or fortnightly.

**Weekly planning**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *MONDAY* | *TUESDAY* | *WEDNESDAY* | *THURSDAY* | *FRIDAY* | *SATURDAY* | *SUNDAY* |
| 8 - 9 a.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 - 10 a.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 - 11 a.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 - 11.30 a.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11.30 - 12.30 a.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12.30 a.m. - 1.30 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.30 - 2.30 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.30 - 3.30 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3.30 - 4.30 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.30 - 5.30 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5.30 - 6.30 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6.30 - 7 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 - 8 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 - 9 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 - 10 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 - 11 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 - 12 p.m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**STUDY TECHNIQUES IN THE UNIVERSITY**

In the university, studying is your main task. Generally, from Baccalaureate Studies or Professional Training to University there’s a qualitative change in the circumstances that surround the student and that, to a greater or lesser extent, will affect the way of conceiving and addressing the intellectual work, for example:

* There’s a greater personal independence and less external control. The time has come for you to study for yourself, thinking about your future, not only to please your parents.
* It is the previous preparation for the labour market. It's the time to elaborate your future. Studying, until your entrance in the professional world, is an actual job and we must see it, or at least try to see it, as something innate in ourselves, something that is going to facilitate, with all certainty, our following work life.
* The world of personal relationships opens. Very likely you will have to include in your agenda, together with studying, your activities outside from the university, your leisure activities and your meetings with friends.

Remember that studying and the rest of your activities should not become enemies but rather collaborators.

For this reason, it is necessary to organise, develop and review this task in a flexible, active and regular way, so that your preparation can be as qualified as possible in accordance with your personal possibilities. Furthermore, since you must make the most of the time you have, *knowing and practising techniques and strategies will facilitate your study and it will help you improve your academic performance.*

**PREPARATION TO STUDY**

Before you start studying, some specific conditions that just cannot be ignored are necessary:

**Attention and concentration**

They are fundamental to make the most out of the hours of study and of the explanation given by the professor in class. The need to pay attention and to concentrate on the intellectual work is something basic, but for many students it constitutes a real problem. There are various elements that affect attention:

* Motivation and the interest in the subject.
* Worries: they cause a lot of anxiety and they distract our mind when we must study and follow classes. They might be family issues, problems with classmates, friends, issues related to love life, money, etc.
* The place in which you study and its conditions.
* Tiredness: you cannot study while being tired and sleepy.

*Remember: Attention and concentration improve with training. If you train your mind every day, you will be amazed by the gradual increase in your concentration, which will become faster and will have a greater quality.*

**Motivation and interest**

* Why do you study? What to do want to become? What contribution can study give to your training as a person? Answer to these questions and act based on the answers. Think about yourself, your future, your ideas, your dreams, do not let the adverse situations that surround you bring you down, nor other people’s comments, nor the idea of unemployment; fight, struggle, go ahead. You must also try to solve your problems and worries.

*– Face the problems.* Find a solution. There is always a solution. Look for advise, seek help from your teachers, the tutor, your friends... Do not let things bring you down.

* To eliminate boredom, *study in an active and dynamic way:* with a pen and a piece of paper. Take notes, underline, make schemes, look up in the dictionary the words you do not understand.
* When you are in the classroom, *take notes*, look at the professor, make questions when you don’t understand something. Following the explanations given in the classroom is one of the moments from which you can obtain the most. Some key advices may be:
	+ Adopt a positive attitude before the professor and the subject.
	+ Listen and understand (posture).
	+ Look at the professor: To effectively listen, you must look with attention.
	+ Identify the main ideas of the explanation.
	+ Ask what you don’t understand (after letting the teacher complete the explanation): your aim is not to go out of the classroom once you know everything, but once you have understood everything. We must ensure that we will not have problems once we start studying.
	+ Control your attention: the best way to do so is to take notes, because it keeps us physically active and intellectually attentive. Furthermore, if you take your notes properly in class, you will not have to copy them later. It is advisable to write annotations on the margins of your notes, whenever you have doubts regarding some idea or if you need to complete them with further information. Later, these notes are very useful since they facilitate the comprehension and they expand your knowledge.

*– Be positive* both with the professor and with the subject. Do not give in to despair for the adversities you might find. All of this will grant the later learning of that content.

*Remember: It is important for you to be intellectually active.*

**The place of study**

You might think that in the University, issues such as the place of study, the illumination, the furniture or the noise are things of minor importance. Nevertheless, this is not true. We should not forget that we have a body that has its own rules, and we cannot mess with them. Taking care of certain physical and environmental conditions will help you focus better and faster when you need to study, and it will avoid mental fatigue. Some guidelines are:

* Try to have a room or a specific place to study. The novel stimuli do not favour concentration.
* The place of study must be comfortable –although not so comfortable as to cause drowsiness–, with a big, smooth, not too short table where you can draw, make exercises and study.
* Sufficient illumination, not reduced nor excessive, because it reduces visual fatigue.
* A comfortable temperature, not too cold nor too hot – as close as possible to 18º C–.
* Enough air circulation as to impede a loaded atmosphere –the brain needs oxygen–.
* In order to study effectively, it is necessary to rest enough time every day, both during the night –

between 7 hours and a half and 8 hours of sleep, and when we have been focusing on the same issue for a long time – 10 minutes of break for each hour of study–.

* Be wary of the distracting factors: Mobile, Internet, television... They are great communication tools but they can become a problem for your university work and study. When the exam session arrives, often there is not enough time to prepare oneself in the most adequate way. For this reason, it is a good idea, during the year, to ask yourself every once in a while: Where does my time go?

**STUDYING IN ITSELF**

**Learn to think: the search for main ideas, schemes, summaries and reviews**

It is very important that you do not study exclusively to pass the exams or to obtain a diploma. This is necessary, of course, but *the main task of the university student is to learn how to think, learn to be a responsible person*, who is able to reflect on his/her opinions and expose his/her knowledge, a person who is able to analyse and make decisions among various alternatives... For this reason, it is necessary for the students:

* To reflect and question the things they are taught.
* To compare new information to previous information.
* To elaborate new structures of knowledge. That is, you must *elaborate, organise and integrate the things you learn,* which means to create new mental structures.

The best way to favour this process is to use learning strategies. Let’s briefly develop some of them:

* *Always look for and highlight the essential ideas of the text to study*, by underlining and marking the keywords. There are psychological theories on human perception that are the base of these techniques, since it has been demonstrated that *memory remembers better the things that are highlighted.* For this reason, it is necessary not only to know this technique, but also to use it.
* *Give a structure to the contents through schemes and overview tables:* The scheme is a technique that we have forgotten but it is very useful. It is not a simple strategy since it depends directly on how the text has been underlined and read.

A scheme must show the main ideas of the text, clearly highlighted. It shows in a simple and logical way the structure of the text. It must be neat and clear. In the scheme you must highlight the main elements of the text and the sub-sections that you consider as interesting. Signs and underlining are used to highlight ideas, etc.

* *Synthesis process:* In the University, one of the tools that you must be able to use the most is the ability to synthesise into fundamental ideas a big quantity of information. Summarising is one of the most important and key activities in your studies. The summary must be short but complete and it must include the fundamental ideas by using your own vocabulary and your own way of structuring sentences. It is clear that a good summary depends a lot on your comprehension and reading of the text. With a good mixture of summaries of different topics, you can make a very positive final review of everything you have studied.

**The use of memory**

It is clear that in the entire study process, memory is one of the fundamental elements, but the important thing is to understand memory correctly.

*Memory functions as a big filing cabinet. The fact of placing the information in the corresponding place allows to make the process of selection and recovery of the material faster.*

Our memory is like a big wardrobe or filing cabinet in which it is clear that *we will find things easier is we keep them organised in a logical way.* It has also been demonstrated that we remember more and better the things we’ve understood.

Memory and the memory process are composed by three phases: *Recording, Retaining and Remembering.*

* *Recording:* In this phase we have our first contact with the elements that we will memorise later. This is the first reading. To better understand these concepts, we underline them, we make schemes or summaries...
* *Retaining:* After a second reading and by understanding what we are reading, we start creating in our own memory –both visual and cognitive –, the contents. It is very important for them to be well structured – divided based on titles, chapters, areas..., – which will make their recovery easier. In this phase, it will be very useful to use the above mentioned strategies: to localise the main ideas, the schemes or the summaries.
* *Remembering:* The greater the comprehension and organisation of the learning contents, the easier for us to remember them. It will also be easier, of course, based on the frequency *of the reviews of the subject.*

**The reviews**

We can try to put a lot of contents in our heads, but if we do not review the things we are learning, we will always feel that unpleasant feeling of having troubles retaining such contents. Because every review of the things studied *helps absorbing, organising and consolidating* in our head the knowledge acquired. The reason we fail our exams is to be found in the lack of good reviews, due to some mental gaps or confusion of terms.

**Interesting web pages:** <http://www.psicopedagogia.com/tecnicas-de-estudio/> <http://comoestudiar.iespana.es/index.htm> <http://www.educaweb.com/esp/secciones/seccion.asp?sec=4>

<http://www.estudiantes.info/tecnicas_de_estudio/tecnicas_de_estudio.htm>

**HOW TO APPROACH THE EXAMS?**

In this section you will find a series of basic recommendations which must be taken into account in order to obtain satisfactory results in the exams. First of all, we should remember that the greater guarantee for success is a good preparation. For this reason, everything we have specified before about the study techniques (in the corresponding annex) is especially relevant now, in relation to a better performance, which reflects in the mark of the exam. Generally, the mark is the result of a large period of profitable study and effective work.

In the UCAM, as well as in the rest of Spanish universities, the exam sessions are generally established based on the division of the academic year into terms. Throughout them are distributed the two types of most common exams: midterm and final exams. The final exams take place in February and in June. It is important to take into account the importance of both types of exams because, since they are done in Continuous Assessment, if you comply with the class attendance requirements, you can eliminate contents if you pass them. On the other hand, the marks of the midterm exams imply a percentage, sometimes a big one, of the final mark of the subject in June, as it happens with the mark of the final exam. It might happen that you pass the final exam and you do not pass the subject in the exam call of June because the rest of percentages (midterm exams and works) is very low. For this reason, you should not stop attending them, unless by justified reason of force majeure (illness, hospitalisation, death of a close relative...). We also remind you that the first time you take a subject, the exam call of June is done with Continuous Assessment and that exam call is always considered as used although you do not attend the final exam.

Let’s now consider a series of patterns or practical advices that we have differentiated based on their use in time.

**BEFORE THE EXAM**

* You must know well in advance the dates of each exam to make a good temporal planning of your study.
* Get clear information regarding the contents of the exam, as well as on the exam technique that the professor is going to use and on the marking criteria.
* Make sure that you have all the necessary study material (notes, books, atlases...).
* Study enough time to carry out all the tasks you need to do before the exam: review the material, make schemes, review the topics, etc.
* You can increase your self-confidence by frequently reviewing the material.
* The day before the exam is the time to make a last review of the schemes and summaries you have already elaborated.
* If you feel nervous try to calm down with some relaxation technique.
* Think positive about yourself and your possibilities.
* Rest enough time the night before and have a light breakfast.
* Avoid anxiety by arriving in advance to the exam so that you can sit in a place where you feel comfortable.
* Do not exchange views with people you think that might make you doubtful about your own preparation.
* Go to the exam with the necessary material and tools.

**DURING THE EXAM**

* Read the instructions a couple of times and organise your time efficiently.
* Focus on the exam and not on your classmates.
* If you feel nervous, try to calm down with some relaxation technique.
* Act accordingly to the technique of the exam:
1. **WRITTEN EXAM**
	1. *Objective Exam (Test):*
* Check if it is a test where you should complete sentences or answer to short questions or a test where you have to choose among various options, or a true-false test.
* You must know if incorrect answers affect negatively your mark and, if so, you shall ask yourself to what extent you can take the risk.
* Read the sentence carefully and think about the answer before you read the possible solutions.
* Start from the beginning and answer to the questions you know. When you have a doubt between two answers, put a mark on those options. In the second read you will focus on them and choose your final answer.
* Answer relatively quickly and do not spend too much time on certain options, in order to avoid losing the opportunity to see all the questions.
* Try to answer to as many questions as you can, starting from the easiest ones and continuing with the ones you know less.
* Always answer by using as a criterion the things explained by the teacher in the classroom and the texts used.
* Underline the keywords that can provide clues (all, the majority, none, always, generally, sometimes, never, usually, large part, many, few, nothing, more, equal, less, good, bad, is, is not...).
* Translate the ambiguous terms into your own words.
* Be careful with long answers and jargon, they might be misleading.
* Use your previous knowledge on prefixes, suffixes, roots to guess the meaning of the words you don’t know.
* Pay attention to grammar because it generally gives clues to find the correct item. For example, the answer to a question that ends with “to” or “in” frequently starts with an article.
* After reading the exam for the first time, review it, and If you think that you have chosen a wrong answer and you are sure about it, change it; but if you are not sure, the first impression is generally the right one.
* Be careful when you copy the answer on the marking sheet.
	1. *Approaching an Essay Exam:*
* Read all the questions before you start and, in case you do not have to follow a fixed order established by the teacher, start from the ones you know better and that give you the highest score. Finish as well with an answer you know well.
* Calculate the time you have and the time you are going to spend for each question, always preserving some time for the review.
* Follow the instructions of the questions, that is, if they ask you to make a list, do not give excessively detailed answers.
* There are some keywords in these exams that help us elaborate our answer in a specific way, for example: analyse, compare, define, describe, explain, relate, interpret...
* Develop a previous scheme of the ideas you are going to develop to expose it in the most organised way possible.
* In your writing, try to be neat and clear and try to give the complete information, without going off topic.
* Leave a blank space in case you want to add something else later.
	1. *When approaching a numeric problem:*
* Indicate separately and with clarity the data, the equations, the substitutions and the result.
* Do not confuse the problem statement with the numerical calculations that you must carry out separately.
* Always specify the units.
* If you solve a problem in an orderly way, it will be easier to correct its statement and result.
* When correcting these types of problems, do not look at the exercise, try to do it again and then compare.

*In all cases:*

* Write in legible writing and try to avoid spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes. Take care of the presentation.
* Ask the teacher any question you may have during the exam.
* Spend the last minutes to review, complete or correct the possible mistakes.
* Do not hurry nor worry if you see that your classmates finish before you, work at your own pace.
1. **ORAL EXAM**
* Make sure you have understood the question well. In case of doubt, rephrase the question with your own words to verify if you have understood the question.
* Do not hurry: Take your time to reflect and to mentally outline the answer.
* Start your exposition by presenting the different aspects that you are going to develop; after that, develop them in a systematic way.
* In your speech, highlight the fundamental elements: emphasise the important words (concepts that must be defined, transition sentences...). Emphasise the sentences: do not be monotonous.
* Express yourself correctly: build your sentences well; carefully choose the terms.
* Be prudent: use only those words whose meaning you know well; do not introduce elements you do not know well.
* Use well the help received from your teacher and listen carefully to his/her suggestions or comments.
* If you do know the topic well, you can ask the teacher if he/she wants you to develop with more details some aspect of it.

**AFTER THE EXAM**

* It is advisable to disconnect from it. Therefore, avoid commenting with your classmates the correct or wrong answers to the test because this might lead you to hasty conclusions, which might be too optimistic or pessimistic.
* After finding out the mark, try to attend the review of the exam to discover the parts you did not do well in order to analyse your study method.
* Do not forget the positive nature of mistake: it gives you an experience which will help you to act in a more adequate way in the future.

**VITALLY IMPORTANT BASIC ISSUES: DIET, REST AND PHYSICAL**

**EXERCISE**

If you want to be healthy, feel good, have a good academic performance...you must acquire as soon as possible some good habits: follow an order in your life, eat correctly, sleep during the necessary amount of hours and avoid a sedentary lifestyle by practising some physical activity.

Although we all know the importance of these issues, we frequently forget them and we easily acquire habits that are not beneficial for us. As tutors, we want to see with you some bad habits that are very frequent among university students and that are not beneficial, or even harmful, and we want to help you acquire a healthy lifestyle.

**Let's talk about diet**

When you start the University, one of various changes that you can experiment is related to your diet, especially if you live alone or in a shared flat with other classmates.

Now you are the one who decides what, when and where to eat... That’s great! But, what happens? The lack of time or money, lack of habit, convenience, the fact of not knowing how to cook or the lack of information can lead you to adopt certain counter-productive habits: Not eating breakfast, not eating four meals per day, skipping meals and substituting them with fries, sweets, cookies or fizzy drinks, abusing of fast foods and sandwiches, excessive consumption of stimulant drinks (coffee, tea, coke). All these habits, apart from being harmful to your health, have a negative effect on your academic performance since they don’t provide your brain with the nutrients necessary to maintain complex mental activities of attention, concentration, analysis and learning.

For example, when you don't eat breakfast, you don't give to your brain the “fuel” necessary for it to work and it must use the stored energy (glucose), which causes fatigue and mental exhaustion. Therefore, you will have difficulty focusing, concentrating, your muscular strength will be lower and your overall performance capabilities will be reduced. When you don't eat four meals per day and you skip them or substitute them with fizzy drinks or snacks, since you don’t have a constant level of glucose in your brain, your brain works less easily and you will feel more tired and drowsy. If your diet is not varied and healthy, you will suffer a lack of certain nutrients (vitamins, minerals, trace elements) and an excess of others (fats, refined sugars), which will harm your health and will affect negatively your intellectual performance.

As tutors, we recommend you follow some simple patterns in your diet if you want to achieve a full academic performance and to be healthy:

* *Nourish your brain with your breakfast.* Breakfast is one of the most important meals, in which you shall consume 25% of the recommended daily calories. It is important for it to include proteins (milk, yoghurt, cheese) and more complex carbohydrates (cereals, bread...) than the simple ones (fruits).
* *Organise yourself so that you can have four or five meals a day.* Organisation is one of the main keys so that you can successfully face this new challenge that begins and for which you are the main responsible. Establish a fixed schedule for your meals, as well as you do with your lessons or study hours. It is also important for you to organise the grocery shopping (make a general weekly grocery shopping so that you don’t have to lose time every day).
* *Eat healthily:*
	+ Your diet must be balanced and varied. You must eat every day all the food groups, since none of them meets by itself your dietary needs.
	+ Half of the daily calories you consume must derive from cereals and carbohydrates such as bread, pasta, potatoes, rice, legumes...
	+ Eat dairy products every day (milk, cheese, yoghurt).
	+ Fruits and vegetables cannot be absent from your diet (three fruits per day and two plates of vegetables).
	+ Proteins are necessary for your diet: meat, fish, eggs (eat each of them three or four times a week).
	+ Do not substitute on a regular basis your meals with sandwiches, hamburgers, pizzas. If you do that, do not do that more than one or two times a week.
	+ Learn simple and healthy ways of cooking your food (boiling, roasting, baking, microwaving or grilling and avoid frying).
	+ Drink enough water and do not abuse of carbonated and sweet soft drinks. You should better drink fruit juices or infusions.
	+ Do not abuse of ready meals, canned foods, fried foods, cold meat, bacon or viscera.
* Do not abuse of stimulating drinks (coffee, tea, coke). During the exam sessions you must curtail the consumption of stimulating drinks since they can reduce your concentration during the previous days and your performance during the exam. During the week, do not consume any alcohol since it substantially reduces your performance. You shouldn’t drink either during the weekends, but if you do that, do it moderately.
* *During the exam sessions, take care of your diet.* Do not neglect it and do not pay attention to the “miracle products” advertised in herbal shops and parapharmacies. A varied and balanced diet gives you the nutrients necessary for the mental activities that you have to carry out. During this period, you should cook more meals and they should be smaller (in order to avoid difficult digestions) and, most importantly, they should include foods that are rich in carbohydrates and proteins and that give you energy.
* *Do not follow any slimming diet during the year since it can affect your academic performance.* If you need to lose weight, always search for the advice of a nutritionist who teaches you how to eat healthily and to create an eating plan that meets your nutritional requirements, but do not follow miracle diets found on magazines nor follow your own diet without any professional advice. As you know, the nutritional behaviour problems (*anorexia and bulimia*) are becoming more and more frequent among your peers and sometimes they begin insidiously and in an underhand form with the acquisition of bad habits, until they become a dangerous illness with serious consequences for your physical and psychical health. Do not forget that you are more important than your weight or your size.

– Lastly, we recommend you frequently reread these simple norms so that if you stop following them you can solve the problem as soon as possible. You must be aware of the fact that your health largely depends on your diet, and not only your current health but also your future one. The tutors will be pleased to help you in case you have any problem in this very important aspect of your life. You can count on us.



**Portions recommended for adults (Dapcich et al., 2004)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Food groups* | *Recommended frequency* | *Weight of each portion (raw and cooked)* | *Home-made measurements* |
| Bread, cereals, whole grains, rice, pasta, potatoes | 4-6 portions/day (increase whole grain food) | 40-60 g. of bread60-80 g. of pasta 150-200 g. of potatoes | 3-4 slices or a roll 1 normal plate1 big potato or two small ones |
| Milk and dairy products | 2-4 portions/day | 200-250 ml. milk200-250 g. yoghurt40-60 g. hard cheese 80-125 g. fresh cheese | 1 glass/cup of milk 2 units of yoghurt 2-3 slices of cheese 1 individual portion |
| Vegetables | At least 2 portions/day | 150-200 g. | 1. Plate of mixed salad 1 plate of steamed vegetables 1 big tomato
2. carrots
 |
| Fruits | At least 3 portions/day | 120-200 g. | 1 medium piece1 cup of cherries, strawberries 2 slices of melon |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Olive oil | 3-6 portions/day | 10 ml. | 1 tablespoon |
| Legumes | 2-4 portions/day | 60-80 g. | 1 individual normal plate |
| Dried fruits | 3-7 portions/day | 20-30 g. | 1 handful or individual portion |
| Fish and seafood | 3-4 portions/day | 125-150 g. | 1 individual fillet |
| Lean meats, poultry. | 3-4 portions/day. Alternate their consumption | 100-125 g. | 1 small fillet 1 quarter chicken1 quarter rabbit |
| Eggs | 3-4 portions/day | Medium (53-63 g.) | 1-2 eggs |
| Cold meat and fat meats | Occasional and moderate |  |  |
| Sweets, snacks, fizzy drinks | Occasional and moderate |  |  |
| Margarine, butter, bakery | Occasional and moderate |  |  |
| Drinking water | 4-8 portions/day | 200 ml. | 1 glass or small bottle |
| Wine/beer | Optional and moderate consume in adults | Wine: 100 ml.Beer: 200 ml. | 1 glass1 cup |
| Physical activity | Daily | At least 30 minutes of moderate activity |  |

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**Portions recommended for adults (Dapcich et al., 2004)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Food groups* | *Medium weight of each portion (raw and cooked)* | *Portions / day or week* |
| Milk and dairy products | 2 - 4 / day |
| – Milk | 200 - 250 ml. | 1 glass / cup |
| – Yoghurt (2) | 200 - 250 g. | 2 units |
| – Fresh cheese | 80 - 125 g. | Individual portion |
| – Semi-hard or hard cheese | 40 - 60 g. | 2 - 3 slices |
| Bread, whole grains, rice, pasta, potatoes | 4 - 6 / day |
| – Bread | 40 - 60 g. | 3 - 4 slices/ 1 roll |
| – Home-made bakery or cookies | 40 - 50 g. | small unit / 4 - 5 cookies |
| – Cereals for breakfast | 30 - 40 g. | 1 bowl |
| – Rice, pasta (macaroni, ...) | 60 - 80 g. raw | 1 normal plate |
| – Potatoes | 150 - 200 g. raw | 1 big / 2 small |
| Vegetables | At least 2 / day |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| – Chard, spinach, green beans, etc. | 150 - 200 g. raw | 1 plate of steamed vegetables |
| – Salad (lettuce, tomato, ...) | 150 - 200 g. raw | 1 plate of mixed salad1 big tomato, 2 carrots |
| Fruits | At least 3 / day |
| – Pear, apple, banana, orange, strawberry, ... | 120 - 200 g. | 1 medium piece , 1 cup of cherries, 2 slices of melon |
| Olive oil | 3 - 6 / day |
| – Olive oil | 10 ml. | 1 tablespoon |
| Water | 4 - 8 / day |
| – Water | 200 ml. | 1 glass / small bottle |
| Legume | 2 - 4 / week |
| – Lentils, chickpeas, beans, ... | 60 - 80 g. raw | 1 normal plate |
| Dried fruits | 3 - 7 / week |
| – Peanuts, almonds, hazelnuts, ... | 20 - 30 g. | 1 handful or portion |
| Fish and seafood | 3 - 4 / week |
| – Lean and fat meat | 125 - 150 g. | 1 individual fillet |
| Lean meats, poultry. | Alternate their consumption | 3 - 4 / week |
|  | 100 - 125 g. | 1 small fillet1 quarter chicken, rabbit |
| Eggs | 3 - 4 / week |
|  | Medium (53-63 g.) | 1 - 2 eggs |
| Cold meat and fat meats | Occasional and moderate |
| Butter, margarine and industrial bakery | Occasional and moderate |
| Sweets, snacks and fizzy drinks | Occasional and moderate |

Dapcich V, Salvador Castell G, Ribas Barba L, Pérez Rodrigo C, Aranceta Bartrina J, Serra Majem Ll. Guía de la alimentación saludable. Edited by Sociedad Española de Nutrición Comunitaria (SENC). Madrid, 2004.

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**Rest and physical exercise**

In order to maintain your physical and mental health and optimise your academic performance, it is not enough that you have balanced nutrition. You also need to enjoy yourself, take the necessary rest and carry out some physical activity.

The fact of being a university student does not mean that your whole life is devoted to studying. Not at all, your life is much richer so you must also learn to disconnect from work, have other incentives, enjoy and rest. To do this, it is extremely important that you plan your activities well so that you have enough time for everything. The day has many hours and you will see that you have enough time to do many things if you organise yourself.

To begin with, *it is essential that you respect the time of sleep.* You need to sleep at least 7 or 8 hours a night in order to be able to face the day. If you do not rest the necessary hours, the mental and physical exhaustion will prevent you from performing academically. Furthermore, in the long run, your physical and mental health will be affected by the accumulated fatigue.

*When studying it is also necessary that you take short breaks* to clear your mind and better perform. Many students do not take these short breaks because they think this way they can optimise the time, but the opposite is the case, since tiredness considerably reduces the level of performance as it diminishes the capacity of reflection, concentration, memory and learning consolidation. Every hour you can take a brief five-minute break. During these breaks you should change your activity and position in order to relax your mind and body, but do not carry out activities you especially like since it will be harder for you to go back to study.

Often, especially during exam periods, you will be *tempted to sacrifice sleeping hours in order to study more and make up for lost time.* And to keep you awake, you may even have the crazy idea of taking high doses of caffeine or other stimulants. Believe us when we tell you not to do this, that this is one of the most counter-productive practices for your health and your academic performance. These stimulants do not increase your learning capacity, neither your memory, but they rather prevent you from feeling tired. Your brain and your organism continue to accumulate fatigue, so your attention and knowledge retention will decrease. Later, when your resistance capacity is saturated, you will become physically and mentally exhausted. This exhaustion can happen at any time: your mind can go blank or you can fall asleep during the exam. In order to avoid this temptation, it is essential that you study throughout the year and not only during the exam periods.

*Practising physical exercise on a regular basis will also bring you great physical and mental benefits.* Your life as a student involves spending many hours a day sitting at the university or at home, so you need to devote some time to physical activity. Exercise helps you relax your muscles, activates your blood circulation and cerebral perfusion, helps you keep your body agile and strong and clears your mind. In addition, you should know that physical exercise also helps you fight stress and is the best antidote to depression because, when you exercise, your organism releases endorphins, substances that increase your vital tone and produce a feeling of well-being.

The *Sports Service* *can inform you* of what you need to be part of any team of our university, as well as of the gyms with which the UCAM has signed agreements so that they are cheaper for its students. But physical exercise does not have to be limited to going to a gym or being an athletic person, you can also walk to the University, jog, go to the swimming pool, play football with friends... You will surely find some activity that you like to do on a regular basis.

**RELATIONAL ASPECT. SOCIAL SKILLS**

**How to make your relationships with others satisfying?**

- You must listen more than talking.

*- “We only value what we know”.* Do not criticise anyone without knowing them. Do not stand against someone on the advice of others. Know your prejudices and analyse them.

* Keep confidential what people tell you. Be loyal.
* Worthwhile critiques must be told to the person concerned. Other critiques just betray the relationship and impoverish you.
* Face the different circumstances in life with serenity. Observe, reflect, meditate.
* You must accept yourself and others as they are. Do not generate exaggerated and unrealistic expectations that end up frustrating you.
* Clarify any misconception or misunderstanding, accepting your mistakes and assuming your obligations.
* Be able to disagree openly when necessary and learn to say “yes” or “no” when it has to be said.
* Recognise and defend your own rights and duties as well as those of others.
* When you talk about your own tastes and interests, do it in a relaxed and honest way, without challenges.
* Do not consider yourself inferior or superior to others.
* Learn to forget yourself and think about others.

**What do you need to know about yourself in order to get to know those around you better?**

* Learn to live in the present. In the here and now. Learn to forgive. Keep the learning of the past and be free to live in the present.
* Live with courage. Do not let fear lead you to take wrong decisions in your life. Strengthen confidence in yourself and in Providence, so that you can face any difficult and unexpected situation you have to deal with. Remember that most of the time fears exist only in your mind.
* Set goals that give meaning to your daily efforts. Who do you want to be? How do you want to live? What would you like to devote the rest of your life to? Try to live with enthusiasm whatever you do and have the will, discipline and determination to achieve your goals.
* Sow peace and love around you. Give and share the best of yourself: a smile, a kind gesture, an act of kindness, a detail, a friendly and optimistic sentence; this can be enough to soften, refresh or strengthen someone’s life.
* Take responsibility for your own life. Stop blaming others for what happens to you; avoid considering yourself a victim of others; do not complain all the time. Remember that you are the main actor of your life. If you want to improve or transform your lifestyle you need to change some of your beliefs, improve your attitude, overcome some of your fears and adjust your behaviour so that it is a reflection of your core values.

**How can I resolve a conflict with other person? Do they dislike me?**

Some conflicts are originated by misunderstandings. They occur because there is no quality listening between the two opposing parties. Sometimes we hear what people tell us but we do not understand the feeling behind the conflict.

We react quickly by defending ourselves from what we consider an attack on ourselves and so the confrontation takes on greater dimensions. Why not breathe and meditate on the situation you are living? Try to find out what are the feelings behind the disputes. And, as far as possible, talk again with the other person, this time to listen carefully to his/her internal demand. Do not rush into the path of judgement and disqualifications.

Other conflicts, most of them, are produced by our pride, selfishness, and so on. Pay attention that the origin of the dispute is not in yourself.

Once you have verified your responsibility and, where appropriate, once you have been able to understand the feeling and the true demand of the other, you will surely see the controversy in a different way. You have made enough progress to be part of the solution instead of being part of the problem.

**What should I bear in mind when I decide to live in a flat with other people?**

You may have many friends with whom you get along well enough to spend some of your time, but it may not be so easy to live with them. You must take into account some factors when choosing the person with whom you are going to share a flat: if he/she is tidy or messy, if he/she smokes or if he/she is bothered by other people smoking, if he/she is punctual or unpunctual, how he/she likes to listen to music, watch television, if he/she is a night bird or, on the contrary, an early bird, if he/she likes sports, if he/she likes to meet with many people to throw parties at home...

* The key to succeed cohabitation is to establish from the beginning some rules regarding the house, to agree on the space and time of each one.
* And especially, to talk and talk about all the difficulties that arise.
* Money-related issues must always be clear.
* Be tolerant of others. And ask for what you need.
* Things should not be said through reproaches. Nor should one submissively shut things up.
* It is very important to make a distribution of domestic chores.
* Acknowledge your mistakes and apologise when you have made a mistake.

**What are the necessary social skills you have to be aware of when relating to others?**

* *First social skills:* to listen, to start and maintain a conversation, to ask a question, to thank, to introduce yourself, to introduce others.
* *Advanced social skills:* to ask for help, to participate, to give and follow instructions, to apologise, to persuade others, to refuse requests, to resist temptation, to ask for a change of annoying behaviour, to disagree with others, to resist the interruption of others, to acknowledge a mistake, to admit ignorance, to accept or reject company.
* *Skills related to feelings:* to know one’s own feelings, to express one’s feelings, to understand others’ feelings, to deal with others’ anger, to express affection, to resolve fear.
* *Alternative skills to aggression:* to ask permission, to share something, to help others, to negotiate, to use self-control, to defend one’s rights, to respond to jokes, to avoid problems with others, not to get into fights.
* *Skills for dealing with stress:* to make a complaint, to respond to a complaint, to resolve shame, to cope when left aside, to defend a friend, to respond to persuasion, to respond to failure, to respond to an accusation, to prepare oneself for a difficult conversation, to deal with peer pressures.
* *Planning skills:* to take initiatives, to discern the causes of a problem, to set a goal, to gather information, to solve problems according to their importance, to take a decision, to focus on a task.

**What social skills are involved in teamwork?**

From now on, you will find many occasions in which you will have to work in a team.

All team members should know that you are all part of a group; therefore, you should fulfil each role without losing touch with the notion of team. To do so, each of you must have the following characteristics:

* To be able to establish satisfactory relationships with the members of the group.
* Good interpersonal communication. The others must be listened to and respected and there must be affection among the members.
* To be loyal to oneself and to others. There must be interest in reaching the common goal and agreeing on it, considering the motivation of each member of the group.
* The functions that each person will perform must be defined, the operational rules, how the direction will be and who will exercise it must be made known, and the calendar of meetings must be established. Moreover, the specific functions of each member must be respected.
* To have a spirit of self-criticism and constructive criticism. Consensus must be exercised in decision-making. To the extent that everyone’s opinions are heard, the maximum amount of information is obtained before deciding, and the members are convinced by arguments rather than votes.
* To have a sense of responsibility to meet the objectives. It is necessary to clearly establish the situation, the issue or the problem in which you are going to work; prepare an objective programme, with a clear and precise definition of objectives and with achievable goals.
* To create a democratic climate, where people can express themselves freely without being judged by their peers, and where each idea becomes an idea of the group, therefore, rejecting an idea does not mean rejecting a person.
* To have the capacity for determination, optimism, initiative and tenacity. To have willingness to collaborate and exchange knowledge and skills. This implies having the necessary time so that each member can show to the others what he/she knows and that he/she is willing to give the knowledge he/she has so that others can learn it as well.
* To have a concern for constant improvement, for overcoming.

With all this, it would be good for you to start thinking about the social skills you have to take care of and train with care in order to better develop yourself in your professional career.

**ADDICTIONS**



Much has been said about what an addiction is but, do you know what is meant by addiction? To find out we will consult the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy. We have found that an addiction is: a habit of those who allow themselves to be dominated by the use of substances or by excessive adherence to certain behaviours.

Drug and alcohol addictions are not the only ones. These are the best known but not the only ones. Here you will find the kinds of addictions that exist.

Think before you read on, how many addictions do you know? Count them mentally. Once you have made your list, check with the one given to you.

Read them and pay attention, you will see that they are more than you imagined. Let us show you some of them.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *BEHAVIOURAL ADDICTIONS* | *SUBSTANCE ADDICTIONS* |
| – Gambling Addiction | – Alcohol and Drug Addiction |
| – Addiction to New Technologies | – Food Addiction |
| – Addiction to Physical Exercise |  |
| – Sex Addiction |  |
| – Shopping Addiction |  |
| – Relationship Addiction |  |
| – Sect Addiction |  |
| – Work Addiction |  |

Everyone talks about drugs and alcohol, but not everything that is said and believed about addictions is true. There are many myths that you have discussed with your friends or that they have told you but they are not true. Let us look at some of them.

**ADDICTIONS**

*MYTH / MISTAKE*

*REALITY / TRUTH*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Addictions: Danger!** | **Stop addictions** |
| – Only people with little will or no personality have addictions. | – NO. Dependence is not linked to lack of will. People with great will and strong personality or character may have an addiction. |
| – Addictions are only present in developed countries, therefore it is a cultural problem. | – NO. It is not just a social or cultural problem, but a personal one. |
| – Addictions last forever. Addicts will never stop being so. | – NO. With your collaboration and the help of professionals it is possible to stop an addiction. |
| – Addictions can be controlled and stopped at will. | – NO. Addictions always control you, they command you. |
| – People who have problems and difficulties are the ones who have addictions. | – NO. Curiosity, the fact that your friends do it, not knowing how to say “no”, an invitation, can eventually lead to an addiction. |
| – I can stop being an addict just if I decide so. | – NO. Addictions make you dependent and you stop having the will and freedom to quit. |

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| **DRUG ADDICTION** |
| *MYTH / MISTAKE* | *REALITY / TRUTH* |
| **Drugs: Toxic** | **Give Way to Drugs** |
| – All drugs produce the same effects. | – NO. Some drugs stimulate, others cause depression, others alter perception, others produce personality changes... |
| – The same drug produces the same effect in all people. | – NO. It depends on the frequency of consumption, the amount, purity, diseases the person may have... |
| – All my friends have used drugs. Everybody does it at some point. | – NO. It is not a majority who uses drugs, it is a minority. There are many people who have never tried drugs. |
| – Drugs make you have fun and laugh, they give you a pleasant feeling. | – NO. Everything is fake; it is neither true nor real. Some drugs do not have a pleasant effect, quite the contrary. |
| – Drugs take you out of sadness, loneliness, they help you fight stress. | – NO. They increase problems, they do not solve them, they create new ones. They take you out of the situation for a while, then everything is as it was before. |

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| --- | --- |
| – I know some people who use drugs and it does not mean they are dependent. | – NO. If they use drugs, they are dependent. |
| – Drugs are used only when there are problems. | – NO. They can also be used for fun, to look cool with your friends, to seek new experiences... |
| – If I do not have a physical problem, drugs will not harm me. | – NO. Even if you don't have a disease or you are strong, if you use drugs they will end up killing you. |
| – Drugs are not as dangerous as some people would have us believe. I know people who use them and nothing has happened to them. | – NO. They are dangerous and have short-term and long-term effects that are sure to appear on the person using them. |
| – If I use drugs only on weekends, nothing will happen to me. | – NO. Drug acts on our body even if you use it on weekends. |
| – I can stop using drugs whenever I want. | – NO. You need the right help from professionals. You cannot do it on your own. |
| – Whoever uses drugs will always be a drug addict. | – NO. Full recovery is possible if you want it. |

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| **ALCOHOL ADDICTION** |
| *MYTH / MISTAKE* | *REALITY / TRUTH* |
| **Alcohol: Poison** | **Alcohol is a Dead End** |
| – Alcohol is not a drug. | – NO. Alcohol is a legal drug. |
| – People who drink a lot and don’t get drunk are not affected by alcohol. | – NO. Their tolerance level has risen because of the high use they do. They are seriously affected by it. |
| – It is good to have a glass of cognac or another alcoholic beverage for certain pains or aches. | – NO. If you feel pain or aches you should go to the doctor and tell him/her what happens to you to solve your problem and never drink alcohol. |
| – Alcohol is good to warm up when the weather is cold. | – NO. If it is cold you must take the appropriate actions to protect yourself from the cold but not solve it by drinking alcohol. |
| – If I drink only beer I will never become an alcoholic. | – NO. You can become an alcoholic just by drinking beer as long as you need it. Beer contains alcohol and if you drink it in an abusive manner it damages your organism. |
| – Alcoholics are always people older than me. | – NO. Someone becomes an alcoholic when he/she is alcohol-dependent regardless of his/her age. |
| – If I only drink on weekends and at parties I am not an alcoholic. | – NO. If you depend on alcohol even if only on weekends or at parties, you are an alcoholic. |

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| --- | --- |
| – Drug use is worse than alcohol use. | – NO. Alcohol is not illegal in our country and this may lead you to believe that it is healthier than drugs, which are illegal in a large majority. The consequences of alcohol use are disastrous. |
| – Drinking alcohol on weekends is not harmful since it gives our body time to eliminate toxins. | – NO. It all depends on how much you drink and whether or not you drink until you get drunk. If you drink large amounts of alcohol on weekends, you are at great risk. |
| – When I drink alcohol I become more attractive and more talkative. I get along better with others. | – NO. Attractiveness does not change by drinking or not alcohol. You are more uninhibited and it makes you more talkative but in an irrational and meaningless way. Alcohol makes you more violent. |

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| **TOBACCO ADDICTION** |
| *MYTH / MISTAKE* | *REALITY / TRUTH* |
| **Tobacco: Harmful** | **Tobacco: Stopping and Parking Forbidden** |
| – People are free to decide whether they want to smoke or not. | – NO. True freedom is to say no to what is harmful to our health. |
| – If I smoke a few cigarettes a day it is not bad. | – NO. Each cigarette contains nicotine that is addictive and thousands of harmful substances. Any dose contains substances that are not good for your health. |
| – My grandfather smoked his whole life and so did many people and nothing happened to him because of that. | – NO. He probably had lung problems, coughed... Still, it may be the case, but it would be an exception. Tobacco use increases the risk for lung cancer among many other diseases. |
| – If tobacco were so harmful it would be immediately withdrawn from sale. | – NO. Despite the diseases it produces, it is still sold as a legal drug, not because it is good for people. In fact, tobacco packets warn of health risks. |
| – Light cigarettes are not that harmful and I can smoke them with confidence. | – NO. Light cigarettes contain a higher concentration of some substances that are equally harmful and the rest are harmful to health. |
| – Tobacco relaxes me when I am nervous. | – NO. Tobacco does not have a relaxing effect, it is the association you make. |
| – If I stop smoking I will gain weight. | – NO. If you place yourself in the hands of professionals this should not happen. They will guide you on how to deal with anxiety. |
| – I have been smoking for a short time, now it is not the right time to consider quitting. | – NO. It is always a good time to quit. The important thing is not how long you have been smoking, but whether or not you smoke. The sooner you quit the better. |

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| – I will stop smoking whenever I want, I already know how bad tobacco is. | – NO. You have received information about the health consequences, but you have not become truly aware of the issue. Stop smoking right now. |
| – I don’t notice the negative effects of tobacco. | – NO. It is possible that they are not appearing yet, but they will appear if you smoke. |

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| **GAMBLING ADDICTION** |
| *MYTH / MISTAKE* | *REALITY / TRUTH* |
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| **FOOD ADDICTION** |
| *MYTH / MISTAKE* | *REALITY / TRUTH* |
| **Food: Caution** | **Diets and Feasts have Restricted Access** |
| – To eliminate meals helps you lose weight. | – NO. Meals should be organised. One of the causes of obesity is skipping main meals. |
| – I am not anorexic or bulimic. | – NO. You may say this because someone around you has told you. If someone has given you reasons you should consult a professional. |
| – I only eat because I am hungry. | – NO. We all eat because we feel hungry, but if you eat without measure you have a problem. You are not just satiating hunger. |
| – The best diet is vegetarian. | – NO. The best diet is the balanced one, it is the one that includes a great variety of food. |
| – If I eat a lot after a strict diet nothing happens. So I am compensating and I can have the physique I like. | – NO. If you have periods of fasting and then you stuff yourself you have a bad relationship with food that you have to solve. |
| – Despite having the right weight I look extremely fat. | – NO. If you have the right weight you are not fat. You rather have a distortion of your own body image. |
| – Eating disorders are women’s business. | – NO. Eating disorders happen in men and women, children, teenagers and adults. |
| – The best thing is to take laxatives in order to keep the diet and not to gain weight. | – NO. Improper use of laxatives is harmful. |
| – I can have the weight I want by drinking a lot of water. | – NO. The weight I want is not a good criterion. There is a weight proportionate to your height and physical constitution. Weight should not be regulated by drinking water. |
| – The important thing is to exercise right after eating, so I won’t gain weight. | – NO. Physical exercise should not be done after eating. It is not healthy. Exercise along with a healthy diet is part of a healthy life. |

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| **Gambling: Slippery Road** | **Gambling is a Road Narrowing** |
| – If I play cards, poker or dice for a while with my classmates, I do not do anything wrong. | – NO. If you play with your classmates when you should be studying, in class or fulfilling another obligation it is not appropriate, you like too much playing. |
| – People who need to gamble have a vice. | – NO. If what happens to them is that they cannot stop gambling, they have an addiction and an addiction is an illness. |
| – I gamble to earn some money. | – NO. Gambling will always take the money from you. In the long run you always loose even if you win one day. |
| –I know I have a problem with gambling but I can solve it myself. I don’t need anyone. | – NO. The only thing you will do is continue gambling. Place yourself in the hands of professionals. |
| –Only occasionally have I spent more than I had. | – NO. If you have spent more than you had to gamble you should ask for help to solve your problem. |
| I gamble frequently because it is fun and entertaining. | – NO. If you gamble frequently it is not for fun or entertainment, but because you need it. There are other ways different from gambling to while away your time. |
| – I have gambling under control, I can stop whenever I want. | – NO. If you are not able to stop gambling, gambling is controlling you and you spend your days saying that tomorrow will be the last day but that last day never arrives. |
| – I gamble so I don’t get bored, my mates play and I don’t want just to stand and watch them. | – NO. You gamble because you like it, don’t blame others for your actions. If you did not like gambling, you would do something else. |
| – I have enough money and I calculate what I spend gambling so I don’t end up in need. | – NO. The one who has the most money is not the one who can gamble the most. You start by calculating and spending little money until you lose control and end up spending all your money. |
| – If I say that I gamble and everything I have spent no one will trust me and I will make a big fuss. | – NO. The most important thing is not what you have spent, but what you can continue spending and the trouble you are going to get into. Resolve this as soon as possible. |

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| **SEX ADDICTION** |
| *MYTH / MISTAKE* | *REALITY / TRUTH* |
| **Sex: Moderate your Speed** | **Sex has its Lane, Respect it** |

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| – Sex is the most important thing for a relationship to succeed. | – NO. A relationship does not depend solely on sex. A relationship is more than just sex. |
| – Sex is always appropriate since it is natural. | – NO. There are deviant behaviours within sexuality. Not everything is appropriated just because it is something natural for men and woman. |
| – People know how to handle their sexuality. | – NO. There is a normalised sexuality. Not everything is valid or acceptable. |
| – Alcohol and drugs are aphrodisiacs. | – NO. Alcohol and drugs have a negative effect on sexuality. |
| – I think about sex all day, but this is something normal that happens to all of us. | – NO. Thinking about sex all day is an exaggeration and it does not happen to everyone. If you think about sex all day, it has become an obsession in your life. |
| – Without sex you cannot be happy or have a good life. | – NO. Your happiness cannot depend on one facet of human reality. You have problems if you believe that. |
| – Everything I do with others by mutual agreement and if they have reached their majority is acceptable. | – NO. Normality is not given by the age of majority or mutual agreement. There is a regulated form of sexuality in which certain behaviours have no place. |
| – The one who is sick is the one who says that he/she can live without having sex. | – NO. The fact that it is unthinkable for you does not mean they are not right. Probably those who think this way do not depend on sex to live and make rational use of their sexuality. |
| – No matter how I exercise my sexuality, I am free. | – NO. You can become a slave if you don’t have control over your sexuality. |
| – Disorders related to sexuality do not exist, they are prejudices. | – NO. Prejudices are one thing and disorders are quite another. Sexual disorders exist and are diagnosed by professionals. |

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| **CAFFEINE ADDICTION** |
| *MYTH / MISTAKE* | *REALITY / TRUTH* |
| **Coffee: Danger Reduced Visibility** | **Coffee is a Rise with a Strong Slope**  |
| – Coffee increases my ability to concentrate and learn. | – NO. You won’t feel tired, but in fact when you don’t sleep, the brain has low attention and knowledge retention. |
| – I can drink as much coffee as I want because it is harmless. | – NO. You must make a rational use. An abuse in the consumption of coffee can cause diseases such as hypertension, coronary damage... |

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| – I have to drink coffee to be someone. | – NO. If you need coffee to perk you up, you depend on caffeine, which means that you drink coffee in an abusive way. Reduce the number of coffees you drink. |
| – When I want to study all night I need to drink coffee. | – NO. If you need to study all night you should plan your study correctly instead of spending the night drinking coffee to stay awake. |
| – If I drink coffee I study better. | – NO. There is no link between drinking caffeine and improving your academic performance. Study does not depend on coffee. |
| – Drinking coffee makes me feel relaxed and better. | – NO. Coffee is not relaxing since it contains caffeine and caffeine is a stimulant. |
| – When I drink coffee I feel less tired. | – NO. Coffee makes you not to feel tired but your brain and your organism continue to accumulate tiredness. |

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| **ADDICTION TO NEW TECHNOLOGIES** |
| *MYTH / MISTAKE* | *REALITY / TRUTH* |
| **Internet: Irregular Profile** | **Internet has Dangerous Curves** |
| – I chat to meet people. | – NO. The best way to meet people is by relating to them on a one-to-one basis. |
| – I spend hours surfing the Internet to entertain myself. | – NO. There are other forms of entertainment than human-machine. Look for them. |
| – It is not possible to be informed without surfing the Internet. | – NO. The Net is a good tool, but not the only one. |
| – Without my mobile I am disconnected from my friends. | – NO. Your mobile helps you to contact others but you cannot live always keeping an eye on it. |
| – The computer is essential to study. | – NO. The computer is just a working tool and it is dispensable in most cases. |
| – With the computer I can study better. | – NO. Sometimes, with the computer you deceive yourself believing you are studying. |
| – At my age video games are harmless. | – NO. Many young people are addicted to the virtual world. |

**LEISURE AND FREE TIME**

**Let us reflect a little bit first**

One of the essential characteristics of human beings is their capacity to project or to shape their own training, that is to say, their capacity to create a unique and unrepeatable project that helps them to develop personally and professionally. In order to do so, they should not only respond to impulses, desires, tastes or whatever gives them immediate pleasure, but rather, they should make an effort to create real encounters with the different areas of their lives, that is, to offer all their potentialities in order to expect gratification in the medium and long-term. A clear example can be found in that student who devotes many hours of study and work to pass the subject and apply what he/she has learned in his/her future professional life. For this purpose, the student will use complementary activities that help him/her to study, and this is where an adequate use of leisure and free time comes into play. If these complementary activities become the protagonists of the daily action of this student, we could affirm that this student has not understood well what the concept of leisure and free time means.

When we use free time in a creative and responsible way, we give meaning to everything we do, that is, we enrich ourselves personally because we feel better, think better and, consequently, we live better.

Therefore, regardless of these initial assessments, it is necessary that we look for some time for ourselves, for our rest, to do what we like. But this liking must be justified to the extent that it really develops my goals.

According to a philosophical approach, we are the result or what would remain of us if everything we have were taken away from us. Therefore, the more we worry about cultivating what we are and the less we care about accumulating things, the closer we will be to building a personality that does not depend on the irrational and frenetic accumulation of goods. To this end, we make the following suggestions so that you can reflect on what is best for you:

1. Bet decidedly for an active and positive concept of leisure, which favours your personal development and your creativity.
2. Reject the simplistic concept that leisure is about doing anything. Leisure should have a projection of recreation, rest, disconnection from routine with the premise that it helps you with your personal and professional development.
3. Learn to value leisure as a factor of balance to achieve a harmonious development of your personality.
4. With your example, encourage your friends to make good use of their leisure and free time.
5. Look in private or public institutions for the activities with which you identify yourself and which provide you with knowledge, skills and healthy entertainment. You will find at the UCAM an assorted programme of leisure and free time.

**Organising time to enjoy free time**

* Plan. Make a list of activities to develop. You should bear in mind unexpected events, since there is always one.
* Prioritise the activities, from greater to lesser importance.
* What is said, must be done. If you have decided to do something, do it. Otherwise you will only deceive yourself.
* Balance your efforts before works that require many hours. It would be good for you to set small goals every day.
* Assess yourself, that is, know how your progress is in everything you initially planned.
* Know yourself and learn to say “no”. Do not commit to tasks you know can cause a headache if you want to do all of them. This is a good suggestion when it comes to registering for your university studies.
* Elaborate your leisure and free time activities. This will allow you to have the time to relax and to recover strength to undertake the study.
* Set the planned times for each activity and be rigorous in complying with them.
* And adapt the changes that may arise to your schedule of study and of free time.

**Suggestions for the enjoyment of leisure and free time**

*Reading:*

Conceived as a discovery of the new facets of reality and knowledge of the historical, literary and scientific legacy of Humanity.

*Outdoor activities:*

* Hiking.
* Mountaineering.
* Visits to Natural Parks.
* Camping.
* Ecological routes.
* Plant care and domestic gardening.

*Cultural visits:*

* Museums.
* Exhibitions.
* Sites of historical, artistic and cultural interest.

*Attending shows:*

* Theatre.
* Cinema.
* Music concerts.
* Circus.
* Intercultural events.
* Sports competitions.

*Participation in cultural events:*

* Talks.
* Lectures.
* Conferences.
* Symposiums.
* Debates.
* Video-forum.
* Film-forum.
* Theatre-forum.

*Promotion of creativity:*

* Painting and drawing.
* Photography.
* Theatre - Literature.
* Playing musical instruments.

*Board games:*

* Chess.
* Ludo.
* Draughts.
* Dominoes.
* Cards.

*Sport practice and physical activities:*

* Individual: athletics, skiing, swimming, etc.
* Collective: basketball, football, water polo.

*Parlour games:*

* Cue sports.
* Table football.

*Collections:*

* Pins.
* Lead figures.
* Antiquities.
* Match boxes.
* Ceramics.
* Art.
* Lighters.
* Philately.
* Numismatics.

*Recovery of traditional activities:*

* Music.
* Dance.
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* Crafts.
* Gastronomy.

*Handicrafts:*

* Do-it-yourself projects.
* Miniatures.
* Ceramics.

*Selective use of media and computers:*

* Computer games: individual, collective.
* Television, Radio, Press.

*Cultivation of friendship:*

* Dialogue with friends.
* Social gathering.

*Parish activities and volunteering:*

* Youth activities.
* Support for the Third World countries.
* Catechesis.
* Pro-LIFE.
* Integration: physically and mentally disabled people, ethnic minorities.

**VALUES**

Dear Student, we could address this topic of values from different perspectives, give you some definitions, make a sociological analysis of the values that encourage young people today or explain in detail which are the values we would like to transmit to you as a Catholic University. However, in this brief letter we only intend to open up a space in which you can raise the questions that have always accompanied all men and women throughout history: who am I? What is the meaning of human existence?...

From this existential approach we are going to speak of Values that are more than concepts, that are the core of our life, the framework in which we build ourselves as persons.

The life we receive every day as a *gift*, as we grow, becomes a *task*, the central task of our existence:

*TO BE MEN AND WOMEN WHO LIVE LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS*

This task is carried out over time and is adjusted to the specific circumstances of each person, thus turning the whole life into a process of maturation towards fullness, which has different connotations and characteristics at each stage of life.

As a mystic of our time says, *“at every stage of life a person seeks and finds a new task to fulfil, a particular way of being, of serving and loving”*.

**Ask yourself some questions with us!**

*Who am I? And who are you?*

These and other questions reappear in our lives from time to time. They seemed resolved at some point, but when a widening of the person we are comes on this path of maturity, when we deepen the knowledge of ourselves and establish relationships, we all ask ourselves the same questions about life, death, love, family, friendship...

Faced with these approaches we do not intend to give you closed answers or easy solutions, but rather to

*join you on your search for truth* and open small slits through which a little light can filter.

This guidance will become real (effective) through the personal interviews and the sharing of daily life but... *only if you want to.*

When I ask myself who am I, the first thing that should appear in me is *Gratitude*:I did not give life to myself, I cannot begin to be if others do not let me be in them. Through the act of generosity of my parents I can come to exist. Then their ideas and their values have been making me become a being, they have been shaping me. Although I may not agree with them or with their ideas later, it is thanks to them and through them the only way to become myself.

But is it enough for you to exist? No, neither for you nor anyone else, because we all need to be confirmed in our being by *love*, we need to feel loved in order to grow and we need to love in order to live in fullness. That is why the measure of who I am is given to me by my relationship with the other: Who is the other for me? Am I able to love? Am I able to love others for themselves?

You, who are you? I should live and show you that you are for me more than what you have, that I am aware that you are much more than what I can perceive from you, more than your strengths and more than your weaknesses.

I should show you and let you know that it is beautiful that you exist and that you are *yourself*, not if you have money, beauty... Not your character or your intelligence... Just YOU.

From this fact of considering others by themselves, and not by the attributes that make them perfect or not, spontaneously arises the recognition of the dignity of every man and woman, whether healthy or ill, young or adult, in their mothers’ womb or at the end of their lives and with their capacities diminished.

Other questions that will help you to know who you are the following: *What do you wish? What do you look for in life? What do you love?* since Saint Augustine used to say that *every man is what he loves*.

Every person, even if weak, yearns for something. It is important to have great and noble desires that motivate us in life and drive us towards the true essence of things; noble desires help us to get into the mystery of being, they help us not to remain on the surface, in the brightness or the image but to get to the bottom of the issues and situations.

The criterion of maturity is precisely maturity in the real things. Depending on how we understand the cores of our existence, so will be the criterion of our action. This understanding of ourselves, of others and of what we live shall determine the way in which we live and the meaning we give to things.

In this university stage I invite you to start having great desires, I invite you to be not only a person who knows things, but a wise person. Do not remain in knowledge, *seek wisdom!*

*Wisdom* is the good sense of the heart, is to combine one’s personality with knowledge, to assimilate, to acquire a “forma mentis”, letting the thought take shape in you. Otherwise, what José Ortega y Gasset said may happen:

*“Underneath this culture –received but not truly assimilated– man will remain intact as he was; that is to say, he will remain uncultured”.*

Systematic study is very important. In a world full of opinions, we need content because it is through content that our intelligence and affectivity are organised. Study generates in us structures in which we can grow and develop as people. University must not only train experts but also people who admire each other, who ask themselves questions: *tireless seekers of truth.*

The necessary dispositions to discover the *Truth* are humility and goodness.

*Humility* is a way of functioning wisely in life, it is, as St. Teresa said, “to walk in truth in the presence of the Truth itself”, it is:

* *To know God* as the source of all life, from whom all Good, all Truth and all Love come.
* *To know myself*, to recognise myself as a creature. The quality of being has been given to me and along with it all things.
* *To know the other*, to recognise his/her Dignity, Goodness, Truth, Beauty. The other: my brother. And if you seek the truth... “*The Truth will set you free!*”.

The discovery of the truth leads us to freedom and becomes for each one a path of maturation. Truth is worthy of being loved, it is beautiful and attractive and the coherent use of our freedom leads us to commit ourselves to it and to be faithful to this commitment even if it entails renunciation, demand and even suffering.

In short, *maturity* means being able to project oneself into the future from *LOVE*, to commit oneself to

*FREEDOM* in order to carry out this project and to maintain this commitment to *FAITHFULNESS*.

Your tutor can be your support, your companion for the path you now begin if you want to. Each one must make his/her own way, process and search.

YOU too, like every man and woman, you ask yourself questions and will continue to do so beyond any question and any answer you find.

Do not lose sight of the fact that in every search for truth, in every effort to reach beauty, in every desire for freedom and justice, there is implicit a search for God which is the most important thing of everything man seeks. *God is the fullness* man yearns for, the perfection he pursues and the love he craves for. St. Augustine enlightened us in his *Confessions*:

*“YOU HAVE MADE US FOR YOURSELF, O LORD, AND OUR HEART IS RESTLESS UNTIL IT RESTS IN YOU”.*

I am looking forward to discussing these and many other things with you. See you whenever you want to!

Your Tutor.