

DRIVER programme



We want to introduce you to a problem-solving method called the DRIVER method. The original method was the DRIVE method developed by Oakland (1993) to which we have added the important element of Reflection. The process is easy to remember if you can imagine that you are the DRIVER of your life or your destiny. It implies that when you use the method you are in control and you point your life in the direction that you want it to go.

DRIVER and your exam failure

We want to illustrate how you can apply the DRIVER method to solve your problem of not passing your examination. Once you start actively DRIVING your own life instead of being DRIVEN by outside influences you will experience a sense of control and you will feel better about yourself, apart from being able to resolve most of the issues that come your way.

What does DRIVER mean?

DRIVER is an acronym and each letter means the following :

D Define the problem

R Review and reflect on the information available

I Investigate the problem further and identify possible solutions

V Verify the most likely solution and develop a project plan.

E Execute the chosen solution

R Reflect on the outcome and revise the actions as necessary

Step 1: Define the problem

This step requires you to acknowledge that there is a problem (after all you have the results which you can not ignore) and to describe it as clearly as possible. For now you must not only state the problem (for example, "I have failed my examination"). You should also point out the implications of the failure. The implications will indicate how serious the problem is and will provide the motivation for you to do something about it. Implications may vary in their impact, for example, if the failure means that you will not get the increase that you have been promised and that you have to repay the loan from your employer, the impact will be much more severe than if you can merely rewrite the examination without any penalties.

Self-assessment

Answer the following statements by ticking “yes” or “no”. You will return to the assessment during Step 2 of this programme.

		YES	NO
P1-Q1	My personal relationships made it easy for me to study		
P1-Q2	My employment circumstances made it easy for me to study		
P1-Q3	My health made it easy for me to study		
P1-Q4	I exercised regularly		
P1-Q5	I ate as healthily as I could		
P1-Q6	I engaged regularly in activities to help me relax		
P1-Q7	I was motivated to study		
P1-Q8	I had a positive attitude towards this module		
P1-Q9	I was interested in this module		
P1-Q10	I started with my studies on time		
P1-Q11	I spent enough time on my studies during the semester		
P1-Q12	I used the brochure My Studies @ Unisa to master all the different aspects of being an effective student		
P1-Q13	I bought all my prescribed textbooks		
P1-Q14	I used the time that I had effectively		
P1-Q15	I handed in all my assignments on time		
P1-Q16	I used the learning outcomes in the study guides to guide my studies		
P1-Q17	I used the learning outcomes in the study guides to test my knowledge		
P1-Q18	I made effective notes		
P1-Q19	I covered all the work at least once during the semester		
P1-Q20	I covered all the work more than once during the semester		
P1-Q21	I did my best during the semester		
P2-Q1	I was calm on the day of the exam		
P2-Q2	I was well-prepared for the exam		
P2-Q3	I was upset about something that had happened before writing the examination		
P2-Q4	I was worried about something that had happened before writing the examination		
P2-Q5	I was anxious on the day of the exam		
P2-Q6	I was still studying just before the exam		
P2-Q7	I believed in my ability to write the exam		
P2-Q8	I believed in my ability to pass the exam		
P2-Q9	I know where I made errors (eg. did not understand question, did not read question correctly, left out questions)		
P2-Q10	I did my best on the day of the exam		
P2-Q11	I completed the exam		
P2-Q12	I know where most of the exam questions came from (eg. Textbook, study guide, assignments)		

Activity 1

Think about the following questions to help you describe your problem (that is, failing the exam) and also the impact that it has or will have on you and your future.

What effect will it have on my career?

How will it effect my study progress?

What may be the financial implications?

What do people close to me think of me and my failure?

How do I feel about myself?

How do I think about myself?

What do I think of my ability as a student?

What do I think of my course?

What do I think of my lecturers?

What do I think of my university?

Have I noticed any strange behaviours on my part as a result of my failure?

Step 2: Review the information and identify the root causes of the problem

Review means that you have to consider all the available information related to the problem in a structured way – all the possible reasons why the problem occurred. The review will also point towards the possible causes of the problem. While you review the information you may find that there are gaps in your knowledge or information. In order to fill the gaps you will have to do more research which we will introduce in the next slide.

In step one we indicated that the reasons or causes of the failure can lie very deeply buried and now you have to start digging for the information that will help you understand the situation better. One of the important tools that you will use is the self assessment questionnaire that you completed before you started with the programme.

In this activity we take you back to the self-reflection assessment because it contains known information .

There are three ways to deal with the information from the self-assessment. They are as follows:

1. Look at the overall picture, for example, the total number of negative answers you have given which are the No answers;
2. Look for patterns or clusters of negative answers;
3. Ask for help if you are unable to make sense of the information.

If you had a large number of NO answers, you probably had a rough time to prepare properly for your examination because there were many pressures and demands on you and your time. It means that you will have to make considerable changes in how you approach the examination the next time. The number of issues that you have to attend to is large and the number of possible solutions as well.

Identification of possible patterns or clusters of causes

A pattern or a cluster of causes more or less relate to the same issue. For example, if time management was a problem you will find that several statements that refer to your use of time were answered negatively. If this is the case a pattern emerges which points to time management as a serious issue that has to be attended to.

In the assessment tool we have grouped the questions or statements to focus on specific

issues that relate to successful study. The items indicated with P1 refer to the period leading up to the examination, for example, your preparation. The items indicated with P2 refer to your experiences when you wrote the examination.

Groups/clusters in Part 1 (P1) of the Self Assessment Questionnaire

- Relationships Q1 – Q2
- Healthy life style Q3 – Q6
- Motivation and attitude Q7 – Q9
- Time management Q10 – Q11; Q14 – Q15
- Student identity Q12 – Q13
- Effective use of study material Q15 – Q17
- Study techniques Q18 – Q20
- Belief in your capability to be successful Q21 – Q23

Groups/clusters in Part 2 (P2) of the Self Assessment Questionnaire

- Emotional state on the day of the exam Q1 – Q5
- Study method Q6
- Belief in own capability to be successful Q7 – Q8
- Reflective ability Q9 – Q12

If you find it difficult to make sense out of the reflection you may find it helpful to ask an outside person to assist you in the interpretation. It may be a friend, a colleague or a counsellor. They may be able to see connections that you miss and they may be able to point you in the direction of sources of help. We will get back to this later.

Step 3: Investigate the possible causes, gather more information if required and identify possible solutions

While you reviewed the information you may have found that you need more information to help you understand a particular issue. Perhaps you need to talk to more people, or do some additional reading or reflection. As you gather more information you will reach a better understanding of the problem areas and you will be able to develop possible solutions to deal with them. List the solutions as you go over because in the next step you will have to narrow them down and decide which of the solutions have the best chance of solving the problem areas for you.

Activity 3:

1. Write down the root cause or the pattern of causes you have identified in the exam self-reflection assessment.
2. List all the possible ways to address it/them (see example below).
3. Use your creativity and do not ignore any possible solution. If a possible solution requires

more research or investigation do it and enlist any possible help that you may need.

ROOT CAUSE	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Example: Lack of study time	Negotiate for more study leave Take vacation leave Cancel social commitments and use time for study Study on way to work Use lunch hour to study Plan study time better

Step 4: Develop a project plan

In this step you have to choose a solution or a series of solutions and develop a plan of action. A plan of action is a very potent motivator because it will specify certain goals to be achieved and also allow you to monitor your progress. Your solution to the problem usually is not a single action but rather a series of actions which together will help you to resolve the dilemma.

Activity 4:

1. Return to the solutions you identified in Activity 3 and add specific activities that will help you to address each of the root causes of your problem. See the example below.
2. Add when you will start and end each activity; the resources that you require; the risks involved with your plan and what you hope to achieve by completing specific actions.

OBJECTIVE					
Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources	Risks	Deliverables
Approach supervisor and enquire about the possibility of more study leave.	21 June	Me	None	Supervisor can decline leave.	More study leave granted.
Save some vacation leave and keep for examination time. Negotiate with family that study success is a priority at this stage.	Whole of 2015	Me	Vacation leave saved	May want to take leave due to family pressure and expectations.	More vacation leave to study. Family members understand pressures of work and study. Will give time off during weekends which are normal family time.
Cancel membership of sports club for one year. Use the four hours per week freed up in this way to study.	30 June	Me	None	Contract may prohibit temporary suspension. Will still need to do some exercise.	More time to study.
During lunch hours go to quiet place and do some studying	1-31 July	Me	None	May have to complete urgent tasks during lunch hours. May also have to rest a bit and refresh my mind.	More time to study if I cannot do it at home.

OBJECTIVE					
Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources	Riskjs	Deliverables

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Step 5: Execute your plan

This is the step where you apply or put into practice what you have identified as the possible solutions. You now need to take action to make sure that you do what you have planned. If you need help in executing the actions you ask for it. No short cuts and no putting off of actions that are important to your task!

Activity 5:

1. Apply the actions listed in your project plan to the problem.
2. You may not have been able to experience the solution in practice but do an analysis of what you think will happen in a simulated situation.

Step 6: Reflect on your experience

In this step you will think back to the experience and make a judgement on how successful you have been in solving the problem. There may be a number of clues that will help you to decide if you were successful or not. These clues could be external or internal. External clues include: Did you pass or not? How well did you pass? How do you feel about your performance? What did you do right? What could you have done differently? What have you learnt about yourself? What have you learnt about the problem?

Success is also dependent on an internal evaluation and a sense of whether you are in full control of the situation or whether more work needs to be done to achieve full control.

Activity 6:

Answer the following questions:

What was the physical evidence of my actions, for example, has my problem been solved?

Did I receive a pass mark instead of another failure?

What are my thoughts about the outcome of the project plan?

How do I feel about the outcome?

How do I act as a result of the outcome?

What do I intend to do as a result of the outcome?

Thank you and good luck.

Thank you for working through the programme. We trust that you have gained significantly from the process.

Counselling and Career Development

E-mail: counselling@unisa.ac.za

Website: <http://www.unisa.ac.za/counselling>