Should I stay or Should I go from University?

Why are you considering leaving? There are many possible reasons for thinking about changing your university study plans such:

- Study material is not holding my interest
- Personal problems, including family or relationship difficulties
- Study problems, keeping up to date and not understanding what is required of me
- Financial difficulties
- Study less priority than my other commitments
- Physical and mental health problems (or supporting others with these)
- Programs and course not suited to my interests or career needs
- Problems living away from family and friends who are overseas or interstate

The following these 4 steps will help you explore your options in making a decision......

Step 1: Becoming informed
Who can help me make the right decision? Within the University, there are many people who are able to help explore the issues associated with your decision to change courses or to leave. While it can sometimes be daunting to go and speak with someone about your concerns, it can often be extremely beneficial. Remember decisions are individual and there is no one right decision that fits everyone or all situations rather there is the best/better decision for you at a particular time during your period of study. Best/better decisions are made when you have all the facts in front of you so that you can make an informed decision.

Academic and administrative concerns:
Within your faculty/school/centre there are people able to help you directly with queries relating to your program, or specific courses. The most appropriate people to start with are:
- your tutor or demonstrator,
- the lecturer in charge of the subject,
- the sub-dean or secretary of your faculty (program convenor or administrator for graduate students)
- Student Administration and Student Fees staff
The Undergraduate Handbook or graduate Coursework Guide, are also valuable resources. The Student Enrolment and Administrative Procedures Guide can help you with the procedures that you need to follow and important dates.

Specific program and career concerns:
The Careers Centre provides careers counsellors who are available to talk through the issues with you and provide information about the career implications of your decision. If you wish to change

ANU Counselling - ANU, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia
Telephone (02)61780455; Email: Counselling.Centre@anu.edu.au Web: http://counselling.anu.edu.au/
programs, obtaining accurate information about selection into another university and TAFE courses is vital for weighing up your options. Remember you may no longer be considered in the school leaver category by university and TAFE selection officers once into your degree. The Careers Centre can also give you independent advice on the possible career directions of particular programs.

Adjustment during the first year of university concerns:

Adjusting to the first year of university is eased with time and some support by friends/family/services to get though the first semester and the year. It helps to break down the year by measuring steps of study completion and familiarity with student life. See: au.reachout.com/Wellbeing/School-Uni-and-Study/Starting-out

Motivation in the later parts of your degree concerns:

Keeping up motivation through the degree can be challenging. Keep in mind quick decisions can be influenced by appearances of ‘greener grass on the other side’ when entry/progression into many employment fields can slow down without the formal qualification you are part way through. A degree is not a life sentence rather it’s a concentrated period of time you focused and applied yourself.

Personal concerns (other than above):

The University is well aware that personal, relationship, health, adjustment, motivation and a range of practical problems can arise that can impact on your study. The University provides a range of services to assist you at such times through counselling, medical, academic, careers and other services. See: https://services.anu.edu.au/business-units/division-of-student-administration-and-academic-services

Step 2: Explore All the Options Available

How can I make my decision? Remember every decision has advantages even though the process of making a decision is stressful. Most students will question their study at some point in their degree. However if the doubt and questioning is constant exploring all options for the best/better decision is assisted by these options:

Option of “Continuing” your current load of study:

Having reviewed your difficulties, through using the student support services of the University and your own personal support networks, you may decide that you can continue your program without any changes with a focus upon continuing to complete your degree.

Option of “Reducing” from a course of study or “reducing” workload:

Reducing your workload by withdrawing from one or a few courses of study may be possible within your faculty. This can then give you the time to deal with your current situation. Remember that there are time-limits for withdrawing without listing on your transcript withdrawing without fail, so check the dates for the current year with Student Administration. Withdrawing after the Census dates (usually 31 March and 31 August) means that you will still incur a HECS-HELP and SLE debt. Check how a withdrawal affects Centrelink allowances (if you are an International Student see below).

Option of “Changing” programs:

This is possible within the university however check procedures with Student Administration. Remember that your marks in your current program may significantly influence your chances of
being accepted. It is helpful to get support from your current faculty for the move (if you are an International Student see below).

**Option of taking “Leave of absence” from study:**

This means you take time out from your program, but you keep your place with the option of returning at a later date. This period of leave is usually limited to one year. You need to apply for this at Student Admin or your Faculty/School/Centre office (if you are an International Student see below).

**Option of “Discontinuing” your program:**

If you discontinue and withdraw from your study, you give up your place in that program altogether. So if you then wished to return to the same program after some time out, you would need to re-apply for admission.

This is a major step to take, and if you are considering this option you are strongly advised to talk with your faculty academic staff, advisors and the various student support services available to you.

Make sure you leave properly. Don’t just disappear – as Fails instead of Withdrawals, outstanding fee or library debts, etc. may make it more difficult to return to University, to enrol elsewhere, or to qualify for Centrelink/scholarship payments if you return to study in the future (if you are an International Student see below).

See: au.reachout.com/all-about-making-decisions

**Important note - options are different for International students:**

If you are an international student you may not be able to study part-time or remain in Australia if you take a leave of absence. It is vital for you to check up on your options with your international scholarship office or relevant Government department, being aware you may need to apply to extend your student visa and electronic Confirmation of Enrolment (eCOE) if your course of study is delayed.

**Step 3: Follow Through Carefully Administratively on your Decision**

**Are there administrative requirements and specific dates for changing/leaving?** Whatever you decide, it is important to follow the appropriate procedures so that you are able to re-enrol at ANU or elsewhere at a later date. If you have reached the point where you think you will leave your study, either temporarily or permanently, follow through the checklist below to make sure you have completed all the necessary stages. Forgetting to do any of these can cause a lot of hassles for you in the future!

**Checklist:** Have you:

- been to Student Administration to complete all paperwork required?
- notified Centrelink/Scholarships/Visa services of your decision and filled out the relevant forms?
- paid all outstanding debts, library fines or others requirements?
- kept all the appropriate records of your study?

See: services.anu.edu.au/education-support/student-administration
Step 4: Emotional support

Once you have the best/better decision for you to continue, change or leave there will be many advantageous outcomes and impacts of your decision. Although there will also be some disadvantages to adjust to. You may feel varying degrees of:

- relief that a decision has been made and you can move on to a different plan
- excitement about the new opportunities with your new plan
- achievement for the learning you have taken away from your study subjects
- disappointment or loss of parts of your study and parts of student life
- curiosity and wondering about other unexplored options.

These emotions are all normal reactions that require time to adjust to your best/better individual decision. See: www.mindhealthconnect.org.au/resilience

Further support services for ANU Students:

Student Central 6125 3339
www.anu.edu.au/students/contacts

ANU Counselling 6178 0455
www.anu.edu.au/students/health-safety-wellbeing/counselling

Academic Skills and Learning 6125 2972
www.anu.edu.au/students/academic-skills

Student Welfare Officer 6125 5849
ANUSA (Undergraduate Students Association) 6125 2444
anusa.com.au

PARSA (Postgraduate Students Association) 6125 4187
parsa.anu.edu.au

Access and Inclusion 6125 5036
www.anu.edu.au/students/contacts/access-inclusion

Dean of Students 6125 4184
www.anu.edu.au/students/contacts/dean-of-students

Tjabal Centre (for indigenous students) 6125 2363
www.anu.edu.au/students/contacts/tjabal-indigenous-higher-education-centre

Chaplaincy 6125 4246
www.anu.edu.au/students/contacts/chaplaincy