Time Management

Student Learning Advisory Service
ValueMaP Workshop
Time Management

So much to do, so little time.

Reflection Activity

- Think of a situation where you are/were best organised. What did you do?

- Think of a situation where you are/were badly organised. What did you do?
The ‘Eff’ Words…

The three "Eff" words for Time Management:

- **Effective**
  - Focused on a definite or desired effect
- **Efficient**
  - Productive with minimum waste or effort
- **Effortless**
  - Seemingly without effort (!); natural, easy

Personal

- Time Management is about making these ‘eff’ words apply to your daily study routine
- Effective Time Management requires self-discipline
Managing Self

- Effective Time Management requires self-discipline
- This is driven by a number of factors:
  - Commitment to the overall course
    - How much do I want this qualification?
  - Enthusiasm for the particular task
    - How do I feel about this particular assignment, module, etc.
  - Perceived skill and experience
    - Do I feel able to do the job or do I feel overwhelmed?
  - Emotional and physical state
    - Difficult to concentrate if tired or unwell
- If persistently distracted, ask why?
  - What am I trying to avoid?
Personal Time Management

- Time Management is about controlling a valuable (and undervalued) resource
  - What would happen if you spent money as carelessly as we tend to spend time?
  - When was the last time you reviewed your use of time?
- Symptoms of poor Time Management include:
  - Last minute rushes to meet (or miss) deadlines
  - Poor results for (rushed) assignments
  - Meetings which achieve nothing or are double booked
  - Days which seem somehow to slip by unproductively
  - Being overtaken with ‘unexpected’ crises
Poor Time Management

This is often a symptom of...

- Over confidence:
  - Techniques which worked previously are simply reused
  - Demands in HE are significantly greater than school/college
  - Students are expected to be ‘independent learners’

- Under confidence:
  - Overwhelmed by the demands/size of the job
  - Lacking academic self-esteem

- Lack of motivation:
  - HE is (for most people) hard work
  - Why are you doing this? What do you want to achieve?

- Boredom:
  - Lack of basic interest in the topic
Good Time Management

This is basically about:

- Careful Planning
- Prioritising: organising the task step-by-step
- Defining the task: be clear about the job to be done
  - Breaking up large tasks into smaller units
- Setting daily/weekly/monthly/ etc. quotas
- Being disciplined – sticking to targets
- Making sure smaller routine tasks are not avoided
- Planning for problems: Plan B, C, D, etc....
- Being flexible – ready to adapt as events unfold
Procrastination

- Deliberately avoiding work – evasive
  - I’ll do it at the right time (which is never…)
  - Finding other ‘more important’/pleasurable activities
- Can be due to several causes
  - Laziness
  - Lack of interest in subject
  - BUT most often…
    - Anxiety over doing the work
    - Memories of previous academic ‘failures’
- Can also be self-reinforcing – it becomes a habit…
- Can be changed: but needs energy & determination
  - Recognizing problem – games we play to avoid work
  - Positive self-talk, setting realistic goals
Improving Concentration

Key: develop an efficient pattern
• Become aware of normal concentration-span
  • Try to extend this gradually
• Break work down into smaller manageable tasks
• Set personal target
  • In the next 2 hours I will do x..
• Reward yourself with a break or small treat
  • BUT only after you have completed each task
• Then do something completely different
  • Shopping, leisure, housework, exercise, etc
• Come back later when you feel more refreshed
• Then do some more academic work
Key Rules for Time Management

- Eliminate wastage: use time productively
- Think ahead and prepare carefully
- Avoid building up excessive workloads
- Say no to other unnecessary commitments
  - Key question: is ‘down time’ proper rest or avoidance?
- Monitor progress
- Allocate appropriate time to task-importance
- Adopt a sensible daily step-by-step approach
- Ensure other long term projects are not neglected
- Plan each day efficiently
- Plan each week effectively
Exercise: Planning Ahead

- Make a list of the modules you will study this year
  - Basic expectation: 1 credit = 10 hours study
  - Only a few hours of this will be in lectures-seminars
  - Rest of the week is NOT ‘free’ time: it is *study* time
- List any other commitments you think you will have:
  - Paid employment
  - Sporting activities
  - Social commitments
  - Family commitments
  - Other regular and predictable events
- Enter them in a year planner
- Note how much time is left for study
# Study Planner

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Effective Planning

Also include in your schedule:

- Preparation time for lecture/seminars, tutorials, etc.
- Guesstimate how long it will take to:
  - Read and prepare notes on topics
  - Organise key points into a coherent structure
  - Draw up and review the assignment plan
  - Draft and edit the assignment *in good time*
  - Allow for Murphy’s Law: unexpected problems…
- Be aware of your own limits: concentration, etc.
- Allocate a reasonable workload for:
  - Strategic planning (e.g. per term, per week, per day)
  - Build in ‘thinking time’ to process ideas & theories
Managing Relationships

Students are also part of larger social networks:

- Family and friends
- Work commitments and colleagues
- Personal relationships

Negotiate ‘contract’ with self and ‘significant others’:

- Time – and space – to study quietly
- Rules on background noise
- ‘Do not Disturb’ signals: doors, phones, emails, etc.
- Agreed times to be available to others
- Be disciplined: stick to the negotiated rules...
Eliminate Waste

- Draw up a time log – on MyFolio?
  - identify periods which might have been better used
- Consider distractions/interruptions – commonly:
  - Facebook and/or Twitter, etc.
  - Phone calls
  - Friends dropping by
  - Conversations around coffee
  - SOME of this is good: but is it becoming a problem?
- Assess each work activity in your time log
  - How much time did it actually take?
  - How much time did I actually waste?
  - Was it worth the time I spent (or wasted)?
Eliminate Waste

- Perfectionism – over-anxiety over quality of work
  - Adopt ‘good enough’ approach
  - Allow yourself to make some mistakes
  - Don’t aim at a Pulitzer Prize for every piece of work..
- Delaying work which is considered unpleasant
  - Endless opportunity for more interesting distractions
  - Develop Reflective Practice: why am I wasting time..?
- Use ‘in-between’ time productively for…
  - Rest and recovery
  - Thinking through key issues
  - Catching up with the small bitty jobs
Organisation

- Organise your study space efficiently
  - Writing and computing space
  - Bookshelves
  - Filing Cabinet: develop effective system for Notes
  - Noticeboard, etc.
  - *Remove* potential distractions

- Organise access to resources
  - Access to libraries
  - Access to electronic resources

- Monitor and review own performance
  - Am I being as effective as I could/should be?
Organisation

A. Northledge Good Study Guide (OU)
Prioritise

Organise list of tasks into three categories:

1. Absolutely MUST do ALL of these…
   - Set reasonable daily work allocation (so many hours)
   - Set personal deadline to complete these jobs

2. Must do SOME of these (e.g. additional reading)
   - Weave *some* of these tasks into work schedule

3. Less important small/bitty tasks
   - Often neglected: then pile up to become a problem
   - Allocate daily quota: I will do 2/3 of these per day…
   - OR adopt the ‘one-touch’ approach
Planning an Assignment

Activity

- Choose an assignment

- Prepare an action plan:
  - What are the main tasks/sub-tasks (organisation, research, writing, completion ...)?
  - How much time should you allow for each?

- **When** will you tackle these jobs?
Time Stealers and Time Wasters

- **Time stealers:** What are main things that necessarily take time? (e.g. shopping, work)

- **Time wasters:** What are the main things we do to distract ourselves? (i.e. activities designed to put off having to study)?

  How could you limit the damage....?
Tackling Large Assignments

For example: a 2000-word essay due in 3 weeks time.

- Make a list of all the tasks involved, e.g.
  - Re-read lecture notes
  - Research in library
  - Read 3 journal articles
  - Take notes (including references)
  - Draft initial outline
  - Consult tutor (as necessary)
  - Design charts etc.
- Break down these sub-tasks further
  - e.g. read first journal article
- Estimate the time you would need to complete each ‘mini-task’ (be specific and realistic!)
- Get started and finish it!

http://www.kent.ac.uk/ai/ask/index.php