Time Management
VALUE MaP
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The Student Learning Advisory Service
Aims of this workshop

- To consider the implications of University study for time management and organisation
- To introduce some specific methods and techniques for time management
- To start the process of introducing time management methods and techniques into your programme of study
Discussion

• Combining ‘life’ and university study, what problems do you see for managing your time?
• What has helped you manage your time before? Tips and techniques?
Independent study

• There are many demands on your time:
  – study
  – leisure
  – paid work
  – family commitments
• Many decisions ("Is this journal article worth reading?", "When should I start that assignment?") are guided…
• But – ultimately – rest with you
• You are responsible for organising your learning
Time and task management

- Establish key deadlines
  - From course literature, handbooks, module convenors
- Draw up schedules
- Use term and weekly schedules to organise your day-to-day work
- Remember the key rules of successful time-management: 1. schedules; 2. priorities; 3. using ‘gap-time’ effectively; 4. setting targets
Schedules

Four basic principles

• 1. Schedules
  – You always need to know what’s happening across
    • The year
    • The term
    • The month
    • The week
  – Record assessment times in particular
    • Coursework + exams
  – Record & set personal milestones
    • “By this time…”
  – Record other commitments & breaks
  – **Use** all this information to **plan**
Schedules

• Note that schedules must be inclusive and comprehensive
• They will not work if they just include academic study, and you use some other form of diary for the rest of your life!
• ‘other commitments’ = friends, family, work, clubs, societies, community involvement etc.
• Use schedules to record everything that needs doing!
Schedules

• At the start of the year/term/vacation draw up an overall schedule
  – Make it visible!
• Each week (just before the week starts) draw up a weekly schedule
  – Again, make it visible!
• From this, monitor your daily time and task management
• Quick end-of-day review
• Re-adjust the schedule
2. Priorities

- You need to make continual judgements about the tasks your schedules identify
- What needs doing now; what can be left until later; what will need doing eventually but can be left until much later
- Priorities shift over time across the year/term/month/week
- For example exams
  - Perhaps not a high priority now?
  - But more so at the end of Term 1.
  - Time to start thinking & planning for exams at the end of this term?
Gap-time

3. ‘Gap-time’
   - Much can be gained by exploiting short periods of time
     - e.g. gaps between lectures/commitments
   - Combine this with activities that vary in intensity and concentration
     - So, for example, within a one-hour break between lectures spend 20/30 minutes reviewing recent lecture notes…
   - The combination of lots of short periods used effectively delivers a big time-gain!
   - It also varies activities
   - Try not to ‘drift’ from one thing to another across the day
Targets

• 4. Targets
  – Always have specific targets
  – Try to be precise
  – But not restrictive
  – Examples
    • “Revision” = too vague
    • “9.00-9.15 sub-topic one; 9.15-9.30 sub-topic two etc” = too restrictive
    • “9.00-10.00 Revise topic one + 10 mins self-check on formula/data” = about right
Targets

– Use SMART targets (see below)
– As with schedules, get into the habit of reviewing your targets
– Get into the habit of setting realistic targets
SMART Targets

• SMART targets:
  – Specific
  – Manageable
  – Accurate
  – Realistic
  – Time-defined
Time management: broader issues

- Time management won’t work if it is too rigid
- Constructive flexibility!
- Spread tasks/activities over several time slots
- Vary activities between high concentration, lower concentration and routine/necessary
- Contingency planning: allow time for things to go wrong!
Time management: broader issues

- Always be generous with time allocations
- Work backwards from a deadline?
- Allow time for review/consolidation
  - 1.5 hrs. = read and process one ‘block’ of text? E.g. Journal article for assignment
  - Or 45 minutes concentrated reading; 30 minutes review & note taking; 15 minutes review/revision: spread over 1-2 days?
- **Build in breaks and relaxation!**
Time management: broader issues

- Work with your ‘body clock’, where you can
- Stick to (self)agreed start times!
- Don’t push concentration too hard
  - Cut-off point in the evening?
  - Try and ‘squeeze’ some extra time in the morning?
Organisation and information retrieval

• Organise your desk-top
• Organise your computer use
  – Files & directories
• Organise your notes: e.g. keep dated/numbered files for lectures/practical work & fieldwork etc./assignment preparation
• Don’t delay! Check, date & file notes as soon as possible
• Make sure that all the information and ideas you process can be retrieved later!
Managing the work-life balance

- Time management, as discussed
- Short breaks + longer breaks
- Flexible breaks
- Clear decisions about not working
  - Some days/evenings for relaxation only
- Controlling/planning paid work
- Eating healthily
- Varying activities
GOOD LUCK

for all your time management and organisation!

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http://www.kent.ac.uk/uelt/about/slas.html