Time and Project Management

Who Is This For?
This session is aimed at developing your academic skills and improve your knowledge of the key skills needed to succeed at University. You will be able to apply this advice and information directly to any essays/assignments/research projects you will be given during your time at University.

What are we going to cover?
1. Planning
2. Prioritising
3. Organising
4. Avoiding distractions
5. Project Management

Aims and Objectives

Aim of session:
You will learn the skills needed in order to manage your time more effectively and productively.

Objectives:
By the end of the session, you will have:
- Created a prioritisation matrix (this will be done when you complete the activity sheet
- Demonstrated the ability to manage your time effectively using time management tools

What is Time Management?
Time Management is essentially, planning your time to enhance productivity and efficiency. The skill of time management is vital across all aspects of your academic studies.

Some common obstacles to managing your time:
- Leaving things until the last minute
• Difficulty prioritising tasks
• Easily distracted (social media, tv, friends etc.)
• Can’t find a good place to work
• Feeling overwhelmed with work
• Not knowing how to get started

Write a list/keep a note of anything you feel will be an obstacle when managing your time. It is important to reflect on what distractions you will encounter whilst doing your research.

Planning
Planning is an essential component of managing your time well at University. One of the main areas you will have to manage your time with is when working on an essay/research project. It is suggested that you spend the following amount of your time on these areas:

10% of time: planning of research question and strategies for tackling

60% of time: research, research, research

20% of time: writing the final work (including drafting and proofreading)

10% of time: Preparing and delivering presentation

It may come as a surprise that you spend so much time on the research element of your essay/project. It is essential that you have enough research material and have a range of sources to support your arguments. Strong research will lead to clear and in-depth arguments within your writing.

Reading Strategies
There are four main reading strategies we can use when researching for your essay/project. You will need to consider how your time will be best spent with each article/book/chapter you come across. Planning how you will read a text will make the experience more efficient.

Predicting: guessing what a text is from the title
**Scanning:** looking through a text for a specific piece of information.

**Skimming:** reading very quickly to pick out the main ideas of a text.

**Reading Intensively:** reading in detail to fully understand the meaning of a text.

Useful tools and methods to manage your time

- Study diaries
- Planners
- Timetables
- To-do lists
- Post-its
- Wall planners

**Time Management Boards**

Uses post it notes to prioritise/categorise tasks.

The first image shows short term, mid-term and long-term goals/tasks.

The second images show’s how it could be organised as a post-it board.

Good visual tool – ideal for your designated study space area.
Gantt Charts

- Takes a project aim and breaks it down into smaller, more manageable tasks
- A planning tool that can help you organise your time
- Helps with forward planning and project management: enabling you to meet deadlines
- A flexible document that can be altered during the project course
- Can be created using online software or on excel

Prioritising

You will need to prioritise different tasks as you juggle everything that's going on, especially at busy times when you have a lot of deadlines. If you make a list of the things you need to do, then decide whether they are important, urgent or both. This will help you decide what to do straight away.

Prioritise your tasks as follows:

- Important and urgent? Do it now.
- Not important but urgent? Do it soon.
- Important but not urgent? Do it later.
- Not important and not urgent? Don’t do it.
Organising

It is important that you set yourself clear and manageable objectives to work towards. Have a benchmark to measure against; a clear target will help you manage your time and organise your workload effectively. The targets you said should be SMART:

**Specific** Ensure your aims aren’t too broad or vague

**Measurable** Think about how you will know when you have achieved your aims

**Attainable** Make sure goals are not overly ambitious and you are capable of achieving them

**Realistic** Take into account the time and available resources you have

**Time-bound** Set a deadline so you know when you want to have achieved it by
Example of Task Setting

**Specific** Clarifies what the task is

**Measurable** Can use this as a tick list

**Attainable** Manageable tasks in time given

**Realistic** All resources are readily available

**Time-bound** Dates/times given

Dealing with Distractions

Where and When to Research

Begin your task at a time when you work best. Work where you work best. Take regular breaks.

Turn off your phone/email/social media alerts. Set yourself a time in the day when you deal with these alerts (i.e. lunchtime) otherwise, block them out!

Keep a research diary – what have I achieved today? Can I do better tomorrow?

Pomodoro Technique

**Decide** on a task to be done

**Stick to the task** (ideally for approx. 25 mins)

**Work on the task** until the time rings. If a distraction pops into your head, write it down, but immediately get back on task.

Take a **short break** (5 mins) and then return to your work (either the same task or a new task)

After every four 25-minute sessions, take a **longer break**.

Weblink: https://cirillocompany.de/pages/pomodoro-technique
Project Management

Utilise all your time management skills for a particular project/task/assignment.

Achieving specific goals i.e. completing that essay, starting the research project.

You will need to incorporate SMART goals.

Keeping to Task (Digital Software)

If you have access to a smartphone, a particular management support tool you can use is a project management-based app. The below apps are just a few of the many excellent software available which can keep you organised and on task.

From the App Store (all free):

Toggl
Workflow
Shift
Rescuetime
Timely
MyLifeOrganized
Reflection

It is important to remember these top tips for effective time management:

- Structuring your time is a great way to break down a big task like an essay/research project.
- If you develop your time management skills, this is essential to A-Level and university study.
- Use digital software to help structure time and projects – don’t feel overwhelmed!
- Set yourself SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed.
- Don’t forget! It is important to reflect on how you are managing your time. It will be useful to reflect on how well you are managing time as you develop your time management skills during your time in Higher Education.

Further Reading

1. University of Leeds Skills @ Library page - [https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1401/academic_skills/84/time_management/2](https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1401/academic_skills/84/time_management/2)

2. University of Kent Assignment Survival Kit - [https://www.kent.ac.uk/ai/ask](https://www.kent.ac.uk/ai/ask)

3. How to Make a Gantt Chart video - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hnAnwDABmU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hnAnwDABmU)