



Managing Your Time

Effective time management is a vital skill for anyone hoping to succeed at university. Most students have many roles in life apart from being a student and all of them require a time commitment. If you are a full time student your study time expectation during semester will be similar to a full time job – around 40 hours a week. If you are part time your study hours will be less but you will also need to fit in your various other commitments. In order to make the most of your time it is important that you manage it well. This guide will give you some useful strategies to achieve this.

Goal setting

Time management becomes easier if you have clear goals to work towards. If you have made the decision to become a student at the University it is likely that you also have a goal to complete your studies and receive your award. In order to do this successfully you will need to apply yourself to your studies consistently, keeping up with the work and the assessment tasks. This may mean that you need to make some changes in your life. You may not have as much time as before to be available to friends and family. This will require careful negotiation and communication. You may need to withdraw from some committees and reduce time spent on hobbies during semester.

You will also need to set some mini goals on a weekly basis about what you need to achieve in order to keep up with the work in each course. These goals will change from week to week as some work is completed and new projects begin.

Managing on a semester basis

It is important that at the beginning of each semester or study period you map out all of your commitments for that time period. This way you will have a clear picture of what needs to be achieved. The University of Adelaide Planning Calendar available from: http://www.adelaide.edu.au/governance/principal_dates.html is a useful resource for this. There is also a Calendar Planner in the front of your student diary. Each semester contains 13 teaching weeks followed by an exam period and mid semester or mid year breaks (when there are no lectures).

- Go through the course information book for each course you are enrolled in for the semester and write down the due dates and percentages for each of the assessment tasks. Do this as soon as you receive the course outline. This way you will have an overview of your assessment commitments for the semester.
- Note any other commitments you may have for your course such as a block of professional practice or a field trip.
- Sometimes assessment tasks such as tutorial presentations have dates negotiated once lectures begin. If you have a clear idea of your overall assessment commitments you can choose a date that suits you, perhaps when you have a week with no other assessments due.
- Also mark in any important dates apart from your study due dates. These may include things such as your sister's 21st birthday party; a planned holiday; a weekend visit to see your family in the country; sports commitments; etc. In short, anything that will require a time commitment from you.

- Put this planner somewhere close to where you regularly study so that you are constantly reminded of what is coming up for you in the following weeks. It is not sufficient to simply fill in the planner at the beginning of the year and then forget about it until you realise that three assignments are due next week and you have done little work on any of them.
- You will note once you have completed this planner that there will be some weeks where there are a number of assessment tasks due at the same time. Knowing this, you will be able to plan to ensure you are able to successfully complete all of them.

Managing on a weekly basis

You must now concentrate on managing your time on a weekly basis in order to achieve your semester goals effectively. Again there are many strategies that can assist with this.

At University there is **contact time** and **non contact time**. Contact time is all of the lectures/tutorials/workshops/seminars/practicals/laboratory sessions where you are expected to be in class. Non contact time is your private study time which includes reading, note making, research in the library, writing drafts, preparing for seminar presentations, editing etc. In your weekly timetable you must make allowance for both.

- Firstly, put all of your **contact time** onto your weekly planner. You may wish to use the planner in the front of your student diary or make up one of your own. Include all lectures, tutorials, seminars, practical sessions etc. contact time varies greatly between courses. For instance, in first year of the Bachelor of Dental Surgery there are 24 hours/week of contact time. In a Bachelor of Arts there may only be 13 hours/week.
- Now add all of your other, **non negotiable commitments** for the week. This could include sports practice, paid work schedule, family time, shopping, travel time etc. Remember you also need to have time for sleeping and eating!
- When you have done this you will be able to see what blocks of time you have available in a week to fit in your **non contact time**. This will vary from week to week as you will be working on different tasks in order to meet your study and assessment goals. The less contact time you have, the more non contact time you are expected to put into your study.
- It is useful to set aside some time at the beginning of each week to overview your commitments for the week to come. That way you can write specific tasks into your planner rather than just leaving a space – where it will be easy to waste time. You might like to write a ‘to do’ list and then fit these items into your planner.
- Try to schedule one hour blocks for the various tasks – often if you spend longer than this on one task your attention begins to wane and your study is not as effective.
- Make sure your schedule is realistic. Do not plan to work every minute of the day; allow some time for free time, rest and social activity. Becoming involved in the social aspects of University is important for many students.
- Work out when you have small amounts of time – these could be used for less demanding tasks such as organising your notes into folders; scanning an article to see if it is useful for an essay; reviewing notes from a lecture.
- If you catch public transport to University you could do some of your set reading or note an article while traveling.
- Break down the major assessment tasks into manageable ‘bits’. For example for a major essay: analyse the question, research in the library, noting of articles, rough draft and editing, all done over a couple of weeks rather than crammed in to the day before it is due. Remember your preparation time is likely to be more than you initially think so allow enough time for each task.

Here is an example of what your weekly planner might look like. It is based of the first semester timetable for The Bachelor of Dental Surgery:

Sample weekly planner for Bachelor of Dental Surgery

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6-7am							
7-8							
8-9	Travel to uni	Travel to uni	Travel to uni	Travel to uni	Travel to uni		
9-10	Dental & Health Science1 session	Human Biology pre reading	Human Biology ID class meeting	General Studies 1D	Dental Clinical Practice practical	shopping	
10-11	Dental & Health Science1 session	Human Biology ID lab session	General Studies 1D	Dental & Health Science1 class meeting	Dental Clinical Practice practical	shopping	
11-12	General Studies 1D	Human Biology ID lab session	Dental & Health Science1 learning lab		Write up Dental Clinic practical	Prepare lab report for Human Biology	Bush walking with family
12-1pm	lunch	Library – research for Human Biology report	Dental & Health Science1 learning lab	lunch	lunch	Begin prep for Dental & Health Science presentation	
1-2	Dental Clinical Practice practical	lunch	lunch	Dental Clinical Practice practical	Human Biology ID class meeting		
2-3	Dental Clinical Practice practical	Human Biology ID practical	Write up Dental & Health Science lab work	Dental Clinical Practice practical		Start draft of General Studies essay	
3-4	Dental Clinical Practice practical	Human Biology ID practical	Human Biology questions from practical	Write up notes from Clinical practice	Dental & Health Science1 tutorial	Continue draft of General Studies essay	
4-5	Library – research General Studies essay	Dental & Health Science1 class meeting			Travel home		
5-6	Travel home	Travel to work	Human Biology ID tutorial	Travel to work			Pre reading for General Studies lecture
6-7	netball	Work	Travel home	Work			Pre reading for Dental & Health Science
7-8	Noting of General Studies articles	Work	Prep for Dental & Health Science class meeting	Work		Out with friends	Review planner for next week
8-9	Noting of General Studies articles	Work		Work	Out with friends		
9-10		Work		Work			
10-11							

What about the unexpected?

Even if you are wonderfully organised and have kept up to date with your assignments there may be an unexpected event that could throw your plans into disarray. You may get sick or need to take time off to deal with sick children or others in your care; there could be a family or personal emergency that requires your immediate attention; or you may need to suddenly shift out of your accommodation. All of these events will take time away from your studies.

All lecturers have a policy for extensions and most are very supportive of students with a genuine reason for late submission of assignments. You must ensure that you go through the correct procedure to obtain an extension under these circumstances. Always contact your lecturer as soon as possible to discuss an extension. Remember however, that extensions should be used only in an emergency situation – they should not be seen as a time management strategy! Asking for extensions on a regular basis will only create more problems as your postponed work accumulates.

Be your own trouble shooter

Think about how you can help yourself to become a better time manager. If you get into difficulties do not be tempted to spend your precious time on procrastinating. Be proactive in helping yourself. Try some of the following strategies to get yourself back on track.

- Have a back up plan in case your well laid plans don't work as well as you think they will. You may need to reassess your ideas and devise something more realistic.
- Phone a fellow student or friend and talk about your problems with them – they may have some good motivational strategies.
- Ask a librarian to assist with some research strategies to get you started with your assignment.
- Come to a Helpdesk session at Language and Learning Service before you get to a crisis point – good planning can help to avoid a crisis on the day the assignment is due.
- Speak to your lecturer or tutor about your worries. Again do this when they first occur – do not wait until the day before the assignment is due to be handed in.

Other useful resources

The University of Adelaide Counselling Centre has a useful brochure on time management at:

http://www.adelaide.edu.au/counselling_centre/brochures/time.html

In addition you may be able to make a personal consultation time with one of the counsellors to work on your issues concerning time management by ringing the Counselling Centre on 8303 5663.

If you require more assistance with time management please contact the Language and Learning Service on 8303 5771.
Visit the LLS website for additional resources: www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/lls/

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