

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. If you are a part-time student, your study hours will be less. Either way, you also need to fit in your various other commitments.

Goal setting

Time management becomes easier if you have clear goals to work towards. If you have made the decision to attend university, it is likely that you also have a goal to complete your program and receive your award. This requires consistent application to your studies; keeping up with the work and the assessment tasks. You may not have as much time for family and friends, and this may mean making some changes in your life.

At university, there is 'contact time' and 'non-contact time'. Contact time includes lectures, tutorials, workshops, seminars, practicals and 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 presentations and editing. The less contact time you have, the more non-contact time you are expected to put into your study. You must make allowance for both.

Managing on a semester basis

It is important that at the beginning of each semester you map out all of your commitments so you will have a clear picture of what needs to be achieved. Each semester has 12–13 teaching weeks followed by exams and mid-semester or mid-year breaks. The University of Adelaide Planning Calendar is available from www.adelaide.edu.au/governance/principal_dates.html.

Go through the 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.

- 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 assessment commitments, you can choose a date to suit you.

Also, mark in any important dates apart from your assessment due dates. These may include things such as special occasions, a planned holiday, and extra-curricular activities.

- Put your planner close to where you regularly study so that you are reminded of what is coming up in the following weeks. It is not enough 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.

Managing on a weekly basis

- Put your contact time onto your weekly planner. Include all lectures, tutorials, seminars, practical sessions etc. Contact time varies greatly between courses. For instance, in the first year of the Bachelor of Dental Surgery there are 24 hrs/week of contact time, whereas in a Bachelor of Arts degree it may only be 13 hrs/week.
- Add 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.

Helpful hints

- Set aside some time at the beginning of each week to overview your commitments.
- Write a 'To Do' list and fit these items into your planner. Make sure you are being realistic. Do not plan to work every minute of the day. Allow some time for free time, rest and social activity.
- 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.
- Break down the major assessment tasks into manageable 'bits' e.g. for an essay: analyse the question, research in the library, noting of articles, rough draft and editing, can all be done over several weeks rather than crammed into the day before it is due.
- Use small amounts of time for less demanding tasks, such as organising your folders, scanning articles, or reviewing notes from a lecture.
- If you catch public transport, do some of your set reading while travelling.
- 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. The following is based on the first semester timetable for the Bachelor of Dental Surgery:

<i>Time</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
8-9	Travel to uni	Travel to uni	Travel to uni	Travel to uni	Travel to uni		
9-10	Dental & Health Science 1 session	Human Biology pre reading	Human Biology 1D class meeting	General Studies 1D	Dental Clinical Practice practical	shopping	
10-11	Dental & Health Science 1 session	Human Biology 1D lab session	General Studies 1D	Dental & Health Science 1 class meeting	Dental Clinical Practice practical	shopping	
11-12	General Studies 1D	Human Biology 1D lab session	Dental & Health Science 1 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 Science 1 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 1D class meeting		
2-3	Dental Clinical Practice practical	Human Biology 1D 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 1D practical	Human Biology questions from practical	Write up notes from Clinical practice	Dental & Health Science 1 tutorial	Continue draft of General Studies essay	
4-5	Library - research General Studies essay	Dental & Health Science 1 class meeting			Travel home		
5-6	Travel home	Travel to work	Human Biology 1D 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		

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 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/tutor as soon as possible before the assignment is due 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

- Ask a librarian to assist with research strategies to get you started.
- Attend a semester seminar session at the CLPD before you reach crisis point.
- Have a backup plan in case things do not 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.
- Speak to your lecturer/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

Counselling Service

If you are anxious about your university schedule you can seek assistance. If stress becomes overwhelming there are a number of strategies you can explore. The University of Adelaide Counselling Service runs workshops on stress management and relaxation or you can make a personal consultation time with one of the counsellors by ringing 8303 5663.

Printable Resources

http://www.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/51829/pmanagetime2007.pdf

https://guerin.ballarat.edu.au/aasp/student/learning_support/resources/docs/time_management.pdf

http://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/1_StudySkills/study_pdf/timemanagement.pdf

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/pdf/time.pdf>

If you require more assistance with Managing Your Time, please contact the Writing Centre on 8313 5771.

Visit the Writing Centre website for additional resources: www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/

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