

TIME MANAGEMENT

Managing your time effectively will help you to achieve your best academically as well as to enjoy your time at university. It is a skill that is also a valuable and valued asset for life beyond graduation, for your personal and professional future.

Clarify Your Goals

Clarifying your goals includes three key words: Personal, Career, and Study. Having a definite sense of where you are headed and what you have to do to get there will help you to prioritise your activities and to stay focused and motivated.

- Establish your short-term goals (e.g. passing an assignment); medium-term goals (e.g. finishing your degree); and long-term goals (e.g. career and lifestyle).
- Keep goals achievable: Be ambitious but not to the point of being unrealistic.

Prioritise

Sometimes it's a trade-off between the amount of time spent in relation to benefits gained. Having clarified your goals, now prioritise your time accordingly:

- Do you really need straight A's (eg for entry to a professional course)?
- Are some papers more important than others for your personal/professional goals?
- Should you spend as much time on a 5% assignment as on a 20% one?
- How much is the internal assessment worth in comparison to the final exam?
- How much time can you allocate to social activities?
- Should you keep that part-time job?

Know the objectives/learning outcomes for each of your papers overall and for the individual components within them, and structure your study accordingly. Knowing the expectations of the course can guide you in your study, both in the time you spend, and what you spend it on.

Be Organised

Keep your study space and your notes and materials orderly and tidy. When gathering information for assignments, always make a note of full reference details including author, publishers, date of publication, page numbers, etc. This saves time tracking down these later.

Beware of Procrastination!

Procrastinators come in a variety of forms, from the “there's plenty of time to do it later” type, to the “there's not enough time to do it properly, so I won't bother starting” perfectionist. If you know you are procrastinating, the important thing is to do something, even if it's just a small task. Start by drawing up some time plans according to the following guidelines:

Semester Planning

Having an overview of the ‘big picture’ in terms of your entire semester (or year) will help you to feel in control of your life and this in turn will help to keep you focused and motivated.

- On a wall planner, set out all your assignment deadlines in one colour, exam dates in another colour, and other important activities in a third colour.
- Assignments: Split each assignment into smaller tasks and in a different colour mark when you have to begin preparing, to give yourself plenty of time to meet each deadline.
- Do the same for exams, marking in when you need to start revising.

Weekly Planning

A weekly timetable allows close monitoring of your time.

- Fill in your commitments for each day (study, work, shopping, gym etc).
- Identify time patterns that suit you and plan blocks of study when you are most alert. Do other activities when you are least alert.
- Use the points system to estimate how much study time to plan for (eg an 18-point one- semester paper equates roughly to 12 hours study per week including lectures, tutorials, and homework).
- Try out *our weekly planner*? <https://www.otago.ac.nz/educational-design-innovation/students/digital>

Daily Planning

Spend a few minutes at the beginning or end of each day compiling your daily plans.

- Make a list of the tasks you want to accomplish each day in relation to your semester plan and weekly goals.
- Prioritise tasks according to importance (A,B,C) and do the A list first.
- Use small amounts of time (10 to 20 minutes) as they become available: avoid the belief that if you haven’t got two or three hours to spend on your study, then it’s not worth starting.

Make sure your time plans are realistic and achievable. They should also be flexible! Don’t organise your time so tightly that you can’t include unexpected or spontaneous activities.

Don’t forget to plan for fun -- leisure, sport, friends are all important for a normal, healthy life. A balance between work and play helps you to stay interested and motivated.