

The main points

As a student, you are responsible for managing your own workload and meeting deadlines.

Time management is about knowing what work you need to do and planning when you will do it.

Planning ahead helps you to predict when during the semester you will be busiest and to get work completed before deadlines.

At the start of the semester, use a month-by-month planner to write in key dates, such as coursework deadlines and the exam weeks.

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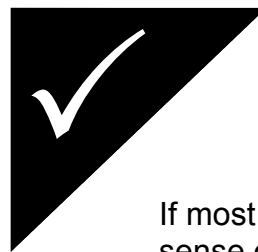
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How did you do?



If most of your answers are 'yes' then you have a good sense of time management and what it is to be an independent learner. You might still find this handout useful for other tips about time management that may be further help to you.

If you answered mostly 'no' to the questions then this handout will give you an insight into some of the issues you will face organising and managing your time and workload at university. Also, the handout includes good hints and tips about becoming an effective independent



How good are you at the moment?

Do you fully understand what is expected of you as a student?

Yes: You have a good idea what independent learning is and that you are responsible for your own learning. You are aware that no one is going to monitor your progress and provide structured study plans for you each week or manage your time for you.

No: You are not familiar with studying at university and are not confident that you know how to perform well in this environment. Use the handout to find out more about the expectations on you as a university student.

Do you know how much work you will be expected to do every day so you can make the most of your time and deliver assessments by the deadlines?

Yes: You know how to gather information from the portal and other sources about deadlines and workload so you can plan your studies each semester.

No: You have no idea where to look to get information about assessments and are not confident that you can plan your workload each time to give yourself the best chance of earning good grades. Use the handout for ideas on how to schedule your work as you prepare courseworks for submission.

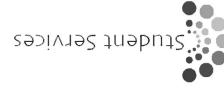
Can you confidently plan the academic year ahead and effectively balance your time between your studies, part-time employment, family commitments and leisure?

Yes: You are aware of strategies that can help you balance your time between your various commitments and are confident that you can plan ahead in a way that will get you through the workload of your course.

No: You are not sure how to go about managing your time so that you can fulfil all your other commitments, as well as your study workload. Use the handout to learn how to find out information on what you will be doing each week and each term, and help planning how best to use your time.



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- **At Abertay:** Visit Student Services on level 2 of the library, including:
 - **English as a foreign language:** Amanda Shaw - a.shaw@abertay.ac.uk
 - **Advice for disabled students:** Claire Allan - c.allan@abertay.ac.uk

- **Online:**
 - **LearnHigher** is a great starting point, full of excellent resources to develop all aspects of your approach to learning - including printable timetables, coursework planners, and more. <http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/students.htm>
 - **Deakin:** Organising and time management skills. <http://bit.ly/aE47hr>

- **Want more?** Other guides available on Blackboard from Student Academic Support that you might find useful:
 - Getting started with coursework.
 - Effective research.

How do you go about finding out how much work you face in a semester?

Your starting point at the beginning of each semester should be to find out what coursework and exams you will be asked to do for each of your modules. This information is available to you through OASIS, where you can access and print off the academic calendar, module descriptors and (later each term) the exam timetable.

The academic calendar will give you the dates of holidays, dates for examinations and the university's system for numbering each week to the academic year, starting with week 0 in September.

Module descriptors give details of what each module covers and how it is assessed. Here you will find information about coursework and exams vital to your forward planning, such as the dates when courseworks are issued and when they are to be submitted.

From this information you can decide when you will need to start and finish each coursework so you do not have to do several at the same time near the end of the semester. You can also plan when you start studying for your exams.

What is the best way to make the most of your time as a university student?

Try taking three different views of the time available: the semester view, the monthly view and the daily view.

The semester view will help you to map out all that you have to do around your daily commitments of work, home and social activities, plus odd events like birthdays, trips or sporting events etc.

The monthly view will help you to work out how many days you have available to focus on your academic work.

The daily view allows you to schedule your academic activities around your other commitments on a day-by-day, hour-by-hour basis.

Taking different views of Time Management

Take the semester view.

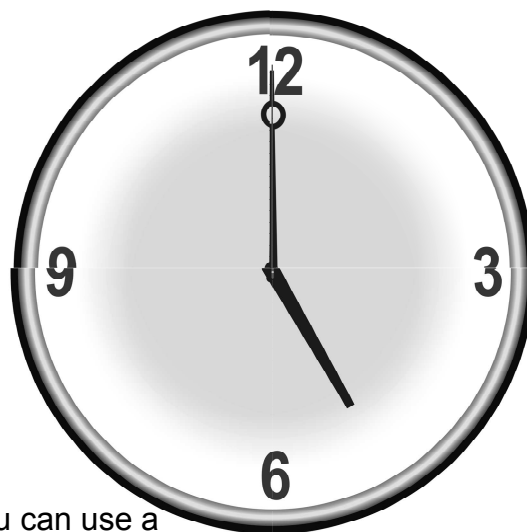
Taking the information from the modular descriptors, you can use a year planner to map out roughly how you will tackle the courseworks. You may find that you will have to attend a few lectures before you acquire enough information about a topic to tackle a coursework on it. Try to work out in advance how much time a week you will spend on each coursework or study assignment in relation to your other commitments.

Take the Monthly view.

For the next level of your planning you should buy a diary and use that to manage your time on daily, weekly and monthly levels. For the monthly view you should sit down once a month to look at your year planner and see what courseworks or studying you have to do. You can then put this information in your diary.

Take the Weekly/Daily view.

At the beginning of each week you can use the diary to plan ahead and decide the tasks you must do that particular week and decide which tasks you will do each day. This type of forward planning allows you to manage your time more effectively. It allows you to balance your time between university work, a part-time job, recreation and family commitments.



Is there a best method of being and staying organised?

Organisation and time management go together. Being well organised creates the right working environment. Poor organisation is risky: everything takes just a little more time than it should and this adds up day by day, inevitably reducing how much you can achieve and how well you can do. If you are poorly organised you cannot locate papers and information easily. You are more inclined to switch between different activities without ever concentrating on any of them to try to meet several deadlines at once. You are more likely to be late with deadlines and will have no clear priorities.

Dealing with information in a systematic way is important if you are to be organised, make the most of your time and become an effective independent learner. Keep all handouts filed in your folders. Always take notes on A4 lined paper and file them carefully. Have separate ring binders to file your notes in for each subject. Use dividers to separate notes for each subject into different topics. Use different coloured folders for each topic.

What is the best way to cope when you have a great deal of work all at once that you could not plan for?

Even if you time manage well and try to stagger your university work to execute tasks in good order, be aware of possible problems. You will always be faced with situations when you have to do several tasks in the same month. You will have to prioritise and do the tasks in order of importance. The simplest and most popular prioritising strategy is the ABC system (Lakein, 1974).

Prioritise tasks with the ABC system

The idea of this strategy is that all tasks can be given an ABC value:

A tasks:

A tasks are those that must be done, and soon. When accomplished, they may yield important results, however if these tasks are not done, unpleasant and disastrous consequences will result. These tasks must be dealt with immediately.

B Tasks:

B tasks should be done soon but are not as serious as A tasks but are still important. These tasks can be postponed, but not for long; within a brief time, they can easily reach the status of A tasks.

C tasks:

C tasks are those that can be postponed for a longer period without creating dire consequences. Some of these tasks can stay in this category almost indefinitely. Others that lead to a remote completion date will eventually rise to an A or a B level task as the deadline approaches. At university the majority of your tasks will be related to doing assessments like essays or reports. Every coursework you do will have a deadline you must meet. The easiest way to meet these deadlines is to prioritise and place the tasks on such an A, B or C list. The tasks themselves are broken down and the sub-tasks are prioritised in a similar way.