

Managing your self and managing your time.

The most common reason for students failing modules at University of Worcester is non-submission of work. For some students this is because they did not start or complete their work in time to meet the submission deadline. For other students the reason for their non-submission was not because they did not complete their work, but rather they did, but felt that it was not good enough to submit. What these two things demonstrate is, in the first instance, poor time management, and in the second, issues with self management.

Time Management

The ability to manage time is crucial for all students but for students facing re-assessment the pressure to manage well the small amount of time that you have to re-submit or revise for your re-takes is even greater. And obviously, the more pieces of work you have to submit, the greater this pressure will be. For those students who have young children who will also be on school holidays during this time, the pressure will feel greater still. For these reasons it is important at this point to think about how you will manage your time, this means thinking about the work that you need to submit; what it involves, and how you will complete it before the deadline.

At this point students tend to go one of two ways. They either panic, thinking about the task that lies ahead of them, or they move into a chill out zone of thinking that there's plenty of time and no reason to start working today. Try and avoid doing both of these as neither are helpful.

The process that you need to go through is exactly the same whether you have one or several pieces of work to submit or exams to take. You need to:

Write down the piece or pieces of work that you need to complete and the deadline/s that they need to be completed by. e.g.

Revise for kinetic physiology exam

Exam date: 23rd August

Sport Nutrition assignment

Submission date: 25th August

Then think about what other things are going on in your life before those deadline dates that will take you away from your studies e.g. holiday in Tenerife (13th-20th July), Daughter's birthday (3rd August), time with family, part-time job, housework, socialising, etc. As time is limited you need to be realistic and put in the things you really need to do but also limit some of the things that you could perhaps put on hold for a few weeks whilst you work on your assignments and revision. It's as equally important that you don't put into too many distractions from your work as it is to pretend that there won't be any distractions.

From your two lists try and work out how many hours are left for studying. Be realistic here and remember that you will need to plan in time for sleep, meals etc. You will probably be left with a couple of hours each day, with some days where there is no time for study and other days where there are more than a couple of hours.



Add up the number of available study hours.

Look at the pieces of work that you need to do and what you will need to do in order to complete them and ask yourself several questions such as : will you need to make visits to the library to research content for your assignment or have you already got the information you need? Have you access at home to a computer or will you need to use one at the University or other computers elsewhere? Then factor in time for making an essay plan, taking notes, writing and re-writing your essay (usually 2-3 drafts) writing a bibliography and proof reading etc.

Once you have broken the assignment down into tasks try and allocate the amount of hours you think you will need to complete each one. Obviously this will probably change, but try and be realistic. Think about how long it normally takes you to complete tasks and use that as a guide.

Compare the times you have allocated for each task to the amount of available study hours you calculated in step 3. Hopefully they will be roughly the same. If there are massive differences you will need to revisit either the amount of distractions and try and reduce them or speed up on the time to complete the tasks. The best tactic here is usually to opt for the first as it is unlikely that you have underestimated how long it will take you to complete each task. In order to reduce those distractions you may have to resort to using friends and family for childcare, neglecting housework for a few weeks and allocating any task that you can to someone else. You may also have to forgo any social life you have for a few weeks. It's not great, but it is only for a few weeks!

Once you have allocated time to each piece of work it is then time to start working. Stick to your plan and work in short bursts. Forty minutes of hard effort is better than three hours with two of those spent making coffee, texting your mates and swinging off your chair. The more successful you are in focussing in these short bursts the more motivated you will feel. Knowing that you've wasted most of the morning you had put aside for study does nothing for morale or confidence.

Reduce time spent on travel to and from the library etc. by doing your research in one day rather than going to the library every day. Looking up resources on-line from home prior to your library visit can also save you time, as armed with a list of shelf references, you should be able to locate your books quickly and easily.

Tick each task off as you complete it and at the end of every couple of days review your progress. If you are falling behind on tasks it is better to try and correct this every few days rather than to leave it to a couple of weeks into your study plan.

If you have a number of pieces of work to complete you may want to focus on one piece at a time. Complete one and then remove it from your list of assignments. This way you will see your work reducing rather than constantly feeling the pressure of having 3 or 4 assignments to write.

Self Management

Self management is about a number of things, one of those could be how you manage your time, another could be how you manage your emotions. Re-assessment time can feel difficult and stressful and unfortunately, there is no way of getting away from that. There are, however, ways in



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which you can help yourself through these difficult times. The Counselling Service has produced a variety of materials that you can access on line, via your SOLE page. These can help you with managing stress, exam anxiety and procrastination. If you feel that you would benefit from talking to a counsellor, Elizabeth Hewitt is available during the vacation months. You can contact her via the counselling webpage or on 01905 855107 or email e.hewitt@worc.ac.uk. Alternatively you could see either Ellen Williams or Kelsey Coward from the Student Achievement Team. Both are available between 10am and 2pm on Tuesday 20th and Thursday 22nd July to discuss any issues you have in relation to your re-assessment. There is no need to book; just turn up to room 75 on either of the days.

Avoid non-submission

Thinking that your work is not as good as it could have been is very common. It is also often very true. But not to submit it because you feel it could have been better will result in only one thing: a fail mark. It may not be the best assignment that you have ever written and you may not get the grade that you know that you are capable of. But to submit something is always better than submitting nothing!



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