

Time Management

One of the most striking differences between school and university is the amount of time given over to **independent learning; working on your own and choosing when to do it**. For literature students at university, the time spent in lectures and seminars – 'contact hours' – averages about 8-9 hours a week. This does not mean that you only have to work for 8-9 hours a week, but that most of your time will be given over to reading and writing on your own. You're expected to work **around 36 hours each week** and may well go over these hours a bit when writing essays or preparing for a seminar presentation. Now let's think about what your weekly schedule might look like:

- You will take three modules each semester (the pattern for first and second years) and each module will have 2-3 hours teaching time.
- Each module will take up a third of your working week: **12 hours per module**.
- The teaching hours are factored into your working week, which leaves you with between **9-10 hours of independent work for each module every week**.

That is a lot of time! You will find you need all of this time for reading, thinking and writing if you're to meet the demands of a literature degree. But **you need to organise this time well** so you don't fall behind.

Creating Your Own Work Timetable

The great thing about producing your own timetable is that it not only factors in your work time, but also ensures you have allocated guilt-free time across the week in which to do anything and everything other than work! After all, unless you happen to sleep an awful lot, your 36-hour week will have left you with many waking hours in which to make the most of all the other things on offer at university.

Map out your week, either on paper or electronically, using colour coding for each module and the teaching and independent work hours. Teaching hours are fixed, but you will need to work out how best to spread your independent work across the week. Here are some factors to take into account when doing so:

- Work in short bursts – two hours at most – and create time between these sessions for relaxation. Working long hours is too tiring and also tends to lead to time-wasting.
- Make sure you set aside time after each lecture and seminar to scribble down any thoughts and questions that may have arisen for you. This need only be a ten-minute slot; just enough time to capture those thoughts before they run away.
- Try to put the sessions for each module as near to each other as possible so you don't keep jumping between subjects.
- Make sure that you position your sessions for each module before the lectures and seminar.
- If you have time left over after you've finished the week's essential reading (the compulsory reading your tutors set), do not regard this as free time. Instead, either use this as an opportunity to read from the 'Further Reading'/Bibliographies given to you or to follow your own research leads.

Remember that the more you put into your work, the more you will get out of it. **But also remember** that overworking (especially overnights) is neither effective nor fun. Like you, we want you to be able to make the most of your time here in all ways.