Your Dissertation: managing your time

Learning Enhancement Team

Your project
Freewrite to these prompts for 5 minutes ...

• The issue, concept or question I want to explore is ... because ...

• The sources/data/methods I will use include ...

• My contribution will be ...

OR

• What I am most interested in is ...

• The idea I keep coming back to is ...

Adapted from Anthony Haynes, The Professional and Higher Partnership
Managing your project

On post-it notes write down your time management concerns or questions.

• What stops you from working on your dissertation?
• Where is most of your time spent?
• Where do you need to spend more time?
Top tips

1. Plan

“In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless ... but planning is indispensable.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower
(34th President of USA, 1953-61)
2. Know yourself

- Do you know which hours of the day you are more productive?
- Do you do your most important/difficult tasks in those hours?
- What motivates you?
  - Do you like to work steadily towards a goal?
  - Are you motivated by the pressure of a deadline?

Try working in short bursts ...
www.pomodorotechnique.com
3. Setting goals #1 Writing to prompts

What work for my dissertation have I done and what do I need to do (in the long, medium and short term)?

• 5 minutes
• In sentences
• Private writing – no one will read it
• To be discussed in pairs or groups


3. Setting goals #2 ‘Drill-down’

“In order for that to happen what has to happen?”

Plus semester planner
3. Setting goals #3 Writing in layers

- Outline the structure: write a list of chapter headings.
- Write a sentence or two on the contents of each chapter.
- Write lists of headings for each section in each chapter.
- Make notes, below the headings on how you will develop each section.
- Write an introductory paragraph for each chapter.


3. Setting goals #4 From notes to draft

- Freewrite on the ‘story’ of your chapter (5mins)
- Write three or four prompts for this chapter e.g. sections headings or questions (5mins)
- Outline the chapter you are drafting: what will be addressed? (5mins)
- Write about a prompt you wrote above (5mins)

Rowena Murray, How to write a thesis (OUP, 2006), p.134
4. Prioritise

Ask yourself …

• ‘What needs to be done Now? Soon? Later?’
• ‘What is important and what is urgent?’
• ‘What would happen if I didn’t do this Today? This week? This month? At all?’

5. Scheduling

Remember …

• ‘Good judgement comes from experience, experience comes from bad judgement’
• 5 – 30 – 60
And finally ...

Keep moving forward

‘Progress’ means ...

- Getting results, good or bad
- Being able to explain them
- Feeling confident in your research
- Completing a certain amount of work
- Learning new skills
- A better understanding of what’s going on in the literature

Your work is good enough when ...

- Your arguments and conclusions are plausible, even if you are not completely happy with them
- You have made a recognizable contribution to knowledge, even though it is not earth-shattering
- You have achieved some or all of your aims

Rowena Murray, How to write a thesis (OUP, 2002) p.139.
Learning Enhancement Team

• Drop-ins: Mon-Thurs, 4-5pm in the Dean of Students’ Office

• Tutorials: 50min individual appointments

www.uea.ac.uk/dos/let/tutorials

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