

August 2003

To: Foundations Instructors and Tutorial Leaders  
From: Linda Briskin, Foundations Co-ordinator, Social Science

**Re: INCORPORATING TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES INTO YOUR FOUNDATIONS COURSE**

Part of the goal of the Foundations Program is to support the development of the range of skills which will support student success at university. Time management is one such skill. This handout makes some suggestions about how time management can be easily incorporated into your course. It also outlines some of the campus resources available to support you in this undertaking.

**INCORPORATING TIME MANAGEMENT INTO YOUR ASSIGNMENTS**

**1. FIRST ASSIGNMENT: RAISING STUDENT CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT**

**i) Incorporate time management instruction in your assignment handout.**

In the handout for your first assignment, consider including an instruction like this:

"Students often do a poor job on assignments because they don't allocate enough time to them or they try to do a large assignment in the few days before it is due. Poor time management produces stress and inhibits learning.

In order to plan your time effectively, do a time management plan before you begin this assignment.

- \*Start by reading the assignment carefully.
- \*Break down this project into its different parts.
- \*List each step and estimate how much time it will take to complete.
- \*Identify the time you have available to work on this assignment over the next few weeks.
- \*Develop a plan which indicates by what date you will complete each step.
- \*Leave a few days after your assignment is finished before doing the final editing and proofing.
  
- \*Keep track of how much time you actually spend on each step so that you can assess your time management skills.

For more information, see "Time Management for University Students: Tips to help you make the grade!" and "Time Management for University Students" at <http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp>.

## **ii) Include time management in your discussion of the assignment**

When this first assignment is discussed, include time management instruction. As a group, students can break the assignment down into manageable steps, and assess how much time it will take to do each one. On this basis, each student can prepare a time management plan. Such planning helps students practice new time management strategies in relation to concrete tasks.

This approach also ensures that students are clear on what the assignment requires them to do and makes transparent the work involved in doing it. Knowing the individual steps helps students feel more in control of the work and hopefully will reduce student stress.

## **2. FOR A MAJOR ASSIGNMENT: BREAK THE ASSIGNMENT DOWN INTO SMALLER GRADED UNITS.**

For longer assignments, many Foundations instructors reported (on the 2002 Questionnaire I circulated) using pre-writing, re-writing and/or a series of graded steps for major assignments.

You may also consider linking this breakdown of the work to the development of effective time management skills. Not only will working through a series of graded steps each with a deadline help students learn the complex process of producing a university-level essay, but it will also teach students some time-management skills.

## **3. MAJOR ASSIGNMENT: INCORPORATE A TIME MANAGEMENT PLAN INTO THE ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS**

### **i) Incorporate time management instruction into your assignment handout.**

Here is an insert you might use for a large essay assignment that is broken down into several steps over the course of a number of months.

"Too often, students leave their assignments until the last minute and then do a poor job on them. The most effective way to do a big assignment like this one is to space it over several months. Spacing the work gives you time to formulate your ideas, process them, and refine them.

A key time management strategy involves breaking down a large project into its component parts, estimating how much time each will take and then allocating that time over the weeks you have available. Use the attached sheet to develop a Time Management Plan.

Be sure to keep track of how long you actually spent on each step over the year. This record will allow you to assess your time management skills. Effective time management requires an ability to accurately assess how long a task will take.

For more information, see "Time Management at University: Tips to help you make the grade!" and "Time Management for University Students" at <[www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp](http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp)>."

You might also include a text like this:

"Too often students begin writing their essay before they are ready. This is usually very frustrating and can lead to writers' block, because they don't really know what they want to say and they have not yet developed a clear structure in which to say it. Often the problems that students have writing essays have little to do with their ability to write and more to do with fuzzy thinking. Do your thinking work before you begin to write.

Since poor time management is often the reason students begin to write before they are ready, you should prepare a 'time schedule' as soon as you are given an essay assignment. This involves making a list of all the steps necessary to complete the assignment with an estimate of how long each step will take. You should then block out the time necessary over all the weeks available to you. Do not try to do all the work in a short period of time. This reduces the time available to synthesize the material.

You should always try to have your assignments completed one week ahead of time. This gives you time for revisions and for unforeseen personal crises. The gap in time allows you to read your assignment as a stranger, identify weaknesses and correct them.

A key to student success is effective time management skills; in fact, research shows that good time managers get one grade point higher."

**ii) Have students hand in a time management plan with the first step of their assignment**

See below for the kind of form that might be included in your assignment instructions.

**iii) Have students evaluate their time management as part of a self- evaluation of their major essay.**

You might ask the following question:

"How effective was your time management plan? Did it help you organize your time? Why or why not? What would you do differently in the future?"

## READING AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Since reading will take up so much of students' time and because it is so connected to writing, it is important to help students assess the actual time it takes them to read. Brian Poser of the Learning Skills Program at the Counselling and Development Centre reports that students think they ought to be able to read a page per minute, but their tracking suggests that 4-6 minutes per page is a more realistic estimate.

Brian encourages students to adopt a three-step reading process:

**\*Perusing** a new reading using titles, headings, sub-headings, topic sentences, introductions, conclusions in order to get a sense of what it is about (5-15 minutes).

### **\*Reading**

**\*Reflecting** on the meaning of the reading and contextualizing it in relation to other course readings (5-15 minutes).

Students often express shock at the total time required to read effectively, but instructors should stress that being more keenly aware of the time required can help them plan more effectively.

## TIME TRACKING EXERCISE

Brian Poser also recommends 'time tracking' to raise student consciousness about their use of time. Ask students to keep track of how they spend their time for a week and have a discussion in tutorial the week following this activity. This exercise can highlight many of your habits that students might selectively ignore.

In the discussion, have students identify their biggest time waster (for example, lost time between classes, watching TV etc). Suggest they commit to using one (or two) hours a week differently. On a bi-weekly basis, check in with them to see whether they have managed to capture some of this time. You might even suggest that they write a contract with themselves in class, and perhaps share it with other students.

See attached handout "Time Management for Students" for more detail.

## REAL TIME CONFLICTS

Many students will have real time conflicts, that is, too much to do in terms of part-time work, family responsibilities and school work. You might want to discuss and strategize about these tensions.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT TIME MANAGEMENT TEACHING

148 Behavioural Sciences Building  
416-736-5297 [www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp](http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp)  
[lsp@yorku.ca](mailto:lsp@yorku.ca)

The Learning Skills Program, housed in the Counselling and Development Centre (LSP/CDC) offers a range of programs to support student success in university, including programs on time management. Find attached two time management handouts written by Brian Poser from the LSP. These handouts are available on line at [www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/index.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/index.htm)

### FOR STUDENTS

Programs are offered in time management (and also improving reading, listening, note-taking, memory and exam preparation, and academic stress management).

a) Workshops on these topics are offered on a regular basis. A complete list of dates and times are posted at 145 BSB or on line [www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp.form1.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/form1.htm). Students can register in person at the LSP. The LSP will also send me an email with this information which I will post to the Foundations listserv. You can send this material on to your tutorial listservs.

b) Individual consultations: Students are offered 4-45 minute sessions per term (as needed). To access such consultations, students first must first fill out a questionnaire to help identify their needs and meet with a counsellor for an initial 30 minute assessment session.

### FOR FOUNDATIONS COURSES

The LSP offers one-hour lectures on time management (also on improving reading, listening, note-taking, memory and exam preparation, and academic stress management). They fill requests on a first-come basis, and as time permits so it is important to book your session early.

The LSP stresses the importance of prior needs assessment of students, integrating these skill issues into course material, and follow up after the lecture. They will meet with course teams or course directors to develop strategies for these purposes.

**Time Management Plan for Essay Assignment**

	How long will it take?	When to do?	How Long did it take?
<b>Step 1: DUE:</b>			
Restate Topic			
Outline based on Question			
State Opinion/Tentative thesis			
<b>Step 2: DUE:</b>			
Find Sources			
Produce Bibliography			
Read Sources			
Take Notes and Annotate			
Comment on relevance of sources			
Review and update tentative thesis			
Do Essay outline			
Proofread and make changes			
<b>STEP 3: DUE:</b>			
First Draft: Focus on structure and organization			
Second Draft: Focus on logic/ clarity			
Third Draft: Final Proofread			

Self Evaluation			
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