TIME MANAGEMENT

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TIME AT CAMBRIDGE

Seb Savory
Director of Undergraduate Education
THE PRINCIPLE

- Identify goals
- Decide on order of priorities
- Formulate plans accordingly
- Take control of how you spend your time
- Work hard and play hard
- Achieve goals!
PLANS & GOALS

• Long term plans:
  ⇒ Personal fulfilment: engineering, career, family, relationships, community, sport, fame, fortune, health, religion, politics etc.

• 4 year plan:
  ⇒ Personal fulfilment:
    some or all of the above, to greater or lesser extent
    + BA, MEng
    + developing and broadening the mind
WHAT’S IMPORTANT FOR YOU?

Get a balance between three main areas:
academic work
non-academic activities
‘down-time’ social activities

Do enough of each (personal preferences: your priorities)
AND: always leave time for the mechanics of life (eating and sleeping)

If you manage your time well, you can fit in amazing amounts of things!
PLANS & GOALS: THE COURSE

• 1 year plan:
  ⇒ Learn fundamentals of Engineering; enjoy the course; pass Engineering Tripos Part IA

• 1 term plan:
  ⇒ Stay up-to-date: Examples Papers and coursework; prepare for College test in January

• 1st week plan:
  ⇒ Understand Cambridge system; find way round; meet people
WEEKLY & DAILY PLANS

• Identify fixed commitments:
  ⇒ Lectures + Labs: 20 hours/week
  ⇒ Supervisions: 2-3 hours/week

PLUS

⇒ Private Study:
Examples Papers (2.5 × 6 hours) 15 hours/week
  Coursework reports etc. ~3 hours/week
  Reading, reviewing notes etc. ~6 hours/week

Total weekly average ~48 hours/week

+ Recreational and social commitments
SET PRIORITIES

• Draw up a list of “things to do”

• Split big tasks into smaller ones
  e.g. when writing a major report
  ⇒ plan report
  ⇒ organise the figures
  ⇒ prepare 1st draft
  ⇒ proof read, edit and complete report

• Number your “things to do” to indicate priorities
TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR TIME I

• Cambridge has lots of interesting and worthwhile things on offer
• All being well, you will be here 4 years
• Don’t have to do everything this term / year:
  - ask yourself: will there be a later opportunity?
• If you are well organised, you can fit in a huge amount
TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR TIME II

• Plan your week, every week
• Plan your day, every day
• Use a diary
• Identify the most important jobs each day, and do them!
• Start doing it now!
PLANNING WORK I

• Most of your study needs blocks of uninterrupted time (e.g. 1-4 hours)
• Some jobs fit into odd half hours: use them
• Identify your best time of the day for work (early mornings, afternoon, evenings)
• Identify your best place for work (College room, College library, CUED library)
• Ensure your workplace is well-equipped: heat, light, clear desk, notes, data books etc.
PLANNING WORK II

• To get maximum benefit from the course, and for least stress: stay up-to-date
  ⇒ Write up practicals the day of the experiment, not the day before the mark-up
  ⇒ Try Examples Paper questions the day of the lecture, not an hour before the relevant supervision

• Most students find Cambridge life very hectic – if you fall behind, it is hard to catch up again
A COMMON STORY

Student takes a while to settle down to work

After 3 weeks student is 2 weeks behind schedule

Director of Studies "has words" with student

At end of term student is still 2 weeks behind

Student works hard for remainder of term
PLANNING WORK III

• **Ration your time** according to benefit (marks) – remember that Part I coursework is for standard credit

• **Prioritise**: identify important tasks; check deadlines; partition your time to meet deadlines

• **Expect the unexpected** – leave time for contingencies

• “**Just in time**” = “**Late**” - only too often!
EXAMPLES OF GOOD AND BAD WEEKLY TIMETABLES

FIND YOUR OWN WORKING PATTERN
## FIXED WORK COMMITMENTS

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- **CUED activities**
- **Supervisions**

- Only 6 slots needed for private study
- 15 free 4 hour slots
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6 × 4 hours = 24 hours of private study
EVENING WORKER

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Rugby training or matches
CU ballroom dancing society
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Rowing, training, coaching or racing
Language class
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Practice, rehearsals or concert
Chapel
SUMMARY

If you’re well organised, there’s enough time for everything

Find out what you need to do
Understand how you work best
Don’t over-commit to non-academic activities (societies etc)
Plan accordingly!
Use your time fully:
do small tasks in odd moments
safeguard blocks of time for serious work
Don’t forget to eat and sleep!

Strike a balance: don’t work all the time, but do enough