Overcoming barriers to effective time management

Procrastination

- Procrastination is putting off difficult tasks by doing easier ones instead. Sometimes procrastination can be a useful way of working up to a big task. Learn to recognise whether your procrastination is a necessary part of getting ready or whether it has turned into task avoidance.
- Find a way of encouraging yourself to do the difficult task. This might be setting up a reward system or breaking the task down into more manageable chunks.
- Work your way into the task by starting small and building up, e.g. starting with rough drafts before you write.

Lack of motivation

- Focus on some long-term goals – what is it you are going to be able to achieve eventually by doing this task?
- Make sure your short-term goals are realistic. They may need some adjustment since you last thought about them.
- Find something to motivate you, even if it is a negative thing, e.g. I will have to retake in September if I don’t work now.
- Make your study space more attractive or try studying in a different place – the library or a café.
- Consider your course and module choices – have you really made the right decisions? If you are concerned, ask your academic tutor for some advice.

Lack of confidence

- Psyche yourself up with positive talk. Remind yourself of your strengths.
- Don’t let past criticism hold you back, especially if it was in a different context, e.g. at home, at school or at work.
- Take feedback well and use it constructively.
- If anxiety is an ongoing problem, contact Counselling and Wellbeing Services or your Student Learning Advisor for some advice.
Perfectionism

- Perfectionism can be paralysing and often leads to problems with meeting deadlines, or getting started.
- Start with rough drafts – write your way towards a finished piece.
- Accept deadlines as a way of drawing a line under a task and let go.
- Accept that you may have some errors and omissions in your work – it won’t be the end of the world if this is the case.
- Remember that the purpose of assignments is to LEARN, not to be judged (although it often feels like the latter).

Excessive embellishment

- Give yourself a deadline for a task and stick to it. Do not go back to the task again unless all other tasks are complete.
- Stop worrying so much about what people will think of you.
- Check that the embellishment is not just another form of procrastination.

Negative mindset

- Remind yourself of previous successes
- Work out a reward system for yourself
- Recognise the negative thought patterns and challenge them
- Think instrumentally, e.g. how will achieving this task benefit me eventually?
- If you find yourself on a downward spiral with negative thinking, contact Counselling and Wellbeing Services for some advice

Too many important commitments

- Have an honest think about what you’re trying to achieve in your life and whether or not it is realistic. Work out what can or can’t be sacrificed at this stage.
- Ask for support from friends and family – sometimes just one small thing can make a huge difference.
- Learn to say ‘no’ to new commitments or ask for time off from something you have arranged, at least until the end of term.

Tendency to waste time

- Identify what it is you are doing when you waste time.
- Be ruthless – remove distractions.