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TIME MANAGEMENT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

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UBC and CTLT are situated on the traditional, ancestral, and
unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people.

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Traditional: recognizes lands traditionally used and/or occupied by the Musqueam people or other First Nations in other parts of the country.

Ancestral: recognizes land that is handed down from generation to generation.

Unceded: refers to land that was not turned over to the Crown (government) by a treaty or other agreement.

Source:

<https://students.ubc.ca/ubclife/what-land-acknowledgement>

Agenda

1. Icebreaker
2. What are your questions?
3. Before you begin work:
 - *Prioritizing (group activity)*
4. While you work:
 - *Working through procrastination and distractions (group activity)*
5. Outside of work:
 - *Creating boundaries (group activity)*
 - *Work rituals*
6. Team Q & A
7. Summary
8. Feedback for me

Tools

1. Chat
2. Annotations
3. Zoom reactions
4. Sharing via mic
5. Breakout rooms
6. Google slides

****You will have a chance to write your own notes on paper, or a word doc, or whatever works for you!**

A Few Notes Before Starting

- If, as a TA, you go over your total number of hours, please contact the TA Union for support and advocacy at president@cupe2278.ca
- If you have any questions about your TAship or your rights as a TA, please check out the CUPE 2278 [website](#) or contact them directly.
- Each person is facing many challenges and unique work situations. I'm not sure if we'll be able to address everyone's individual situation, but, you will walk away with concrete strategies you can apply to your own work!

Mental Health Resources at UBC

- Counselling Services
- Student Health Service
- UBC Centre for Accessibility
- MindHealthBC
- Enroll in Wellness Centre: Online Canvas Course
- UBC Student Assistance Program

Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, you will be able to:

- Identify, prioritize, and break down tasks into manageable work times
- Reflect on why we procrastinate
- Use different strategies to mitigate distractions
- Set expectations/boundaries for yourself and with others about your work

Icebreaker: anonymously annotate things that are on your mind as you come into this workshop (distractions, stressors, whatever you don't want to bring into this space)

What questions do you have about time management as a grad student?

How to set realistic deadlines

for writing dissertation chapters ♥ ♥ ♥

interested in concrete strategies for boundary setting and prioritizing btwn different aspects of life - school, work, family, friends, personal health ✓

how do you handle the feeling that you're not putting in enough time while also not overworking yourself? ✓ ♥ ★

How do you switch focus between coursework, meetings, and reading/research? (I find the

balancing work and health, managing expectations of myself and others ♥

How can you manage time when you have research going, taking class, and doing TA at the same time? ✓ ♥ ★ ✓
LAST TA session

How to be available available * ♥ ♥ ♥ ★

how to set real timelines when you have no idea how long a new experiment might take ♥ ★

lots of strategies out there, but hard to get start ✓

Just general anxiety and need to be better at it ✓

How do I look for tools that UBC might have but I struggle to find ✓

Feeling you are supposed to be doing more ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

How do you continue working on longer-term items (thesis etc.) when presented with more pressing deadlines? ♥ ♥ ✓ ♥

Why am I qualified to run this workshop? At my busiest, I was...

- Working 20 hours/week as a program coordinator
 - Working 10 hours/week as a TA (with 2 weekly discussion groups)
 - In a graduate seminar with weekly writing assignments and readings
 - In a language course
 - Writing my thesis
 - On a volunteer team organizing a conference
 - A volunteer at Pacific Spirit Park
 - Cooking meals 6/7 days of the week (gotta get takeout every so often!)
 - Finding time to spend with my partner, catch up with friends, call my parents, etc.
-

Part 1: Before you start work: Prioritizing

Prioritizing is a skill that will take you far not only as a grad student, but in future work of any field.

Group Activity

You will be divided into groups to try and prioritize 10 tasks. You will have 10 minutes to do this. Be sure to introduce yourself to your group! We will have a group discussion afterwards where will have a chance to reflect on why your group did what you did and any challenges you faced in the process.

Please find your group's slide - group numbers correspond to breakout room numbers.

- Group 1 = Slide 12
- Group 2 = Slide 13
- Group 3 = Slide 14
- Group 4 = Slide 15
- Group 5 = Slide 16
- Group 6 = Slide 17

Group 1

1. Drag and drop the boxes to show how you'd prioritize these tasks from first (1) to last (10) in your schedule
2. Under this slide in the "speaker notes", take note of how your group decided what to prioritize.

1. Research meeting with supervisor	6. Grade 50 exams
2. Upload new course content to Canvas	7. Read 3 articles for your own research
3. Plan for a lab, tutorial, discussion, or lecture	8. Write a conference presentation or poster
4. Answer student emails	9. Work on thesis or dissertation proposal
5. Read 3 research papers	10. Respond to discussion posts on Canvas

Add notes on your process here. Why did you choose this order?

- Prioritized tasks with hard deadlines
- Prioritize tasks that are needed for other people, eg. for a supervisor or other students

Group 2

1. Drag and drop the boxes to show how you'd prioritize these tasks from first (1) to last (10) in your schedule
2. Under this slide in the "speaker notes", take note of how your group decided what to prioritize.

1. Research meeting with supervisor	6. Read 3 research papers
2. Write a conference presentation or poster	7. Work on thesis or dissertation proposal
3. Grade 50 exams	8. Respond to discussion posts on Canvas
4. Upload new course content to Canvas	9. Plan for a lab, tutorial, discussion, or lecture
5. Answer student emails	10. Read 3 articles for your own research

Add notes on your process here. Why did you choose this order?

- Need to know deadlines in order to prioritize effectively
- Working on things in chunks means it's hard to prioritize in a list
- Space out similar kinds of activities (e.g. reading)

Group 3

1. Drag and drop the boxes to show how you'd prioritize these tasks from first (1) to last (10) in your schedule
2. Under this slide in the "speaker notes", take note of how your group decided what to prioritize.

1. Research meeting with supervisor	6. Upload new course content to Canvas
2. Grade 50 exams	7. Read 3 articles for your own research
3. Write a conference presentation or poster	8. Read 3 research papers
4. Work on thesis or dissertation proposal	9. Answer student emails
5. Plan for a lab, tutorial, discussion, or lecture	10. Respond to discussion posts on Canvas

1. Meeting dates are fairly set - hard to get with supervisor
2. Grading takes a long time, start early
3. Deadlines dictate priority of conference presentations
4. Planning labs takes time, need to be able to correct, edit
5. D
6. Reading - has to get done, doesn't take as much time
7. Same ^
8. Never ends so... get to it eventually
9. Same ^

Group 4

1. Drag and drop the boxes to show how you'd prioritize these tasks from first (1) to last (10) in your schedule
2. Under this slide in the "speaker notes", take note of how your group decided what to prioritize.

1.	6.	Grade 50 exams	Upload new course content to Canvas
2.	7.	Respond to discussion posts on Canvas	Plan for a lab, tutorial, discussion, or lecture
3.	8.	Write a conference presentation or poster	Research meeting with supervisor
4. Work on thesis or dissertation proposal	9.	Read 3 articles for your own research	Read 3 research papers
5.	10. Answer student emails	Add notes on your process here. Why did you choose this order? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- We considered deadlines, and consequences of not meeting particular deadlines.- Hard to prioritize without deadlines	

Group 5

1. Drag and drop the boxes to show how you'd prioritize these tasks from first (1) to last (10) in your schedule
2. Under this slide in the "speaker notes", take note of how your group decided what to prioritize.

1. Write a conference presentation or poster	6. Work on thesis or dissertation proposal
2. Upload new course content to Canvas	7. Plan for a lab, tutorial, discussion, or lecture
3. Grade 50 exams	8. Respond to discussion posts on Canvas
4. Answer student emails	9. Read 3 articles for your own research
5. Research meeting with supervisor	10. Read 3 research papers

Add notes on your process here. Why did you choose this order?

- Tough to decide which things were most important! For your own work, you know which things have deadlines and how relatively important they are. A lot of this is context dependent! Also depends how many people will feel the repercussions

Group 6

1. Drag and drop the boxes to show how you'd prioritize these tasks from first (1) to last (10) in your schedule
2. Under this slide in the "speaker notes", take note of how your group decided what to prioritize.

1. Write a conference presentation or poster	6.
2. Grade 50 exams	7.
3. Answer student emails	8.
4. Work on thesis or dissertation proposal	9.
5.	10.

Read 3 research papers

Respond to discussion posts on Canvas

Upload new course content to Canvas

Plan for a lab, tutorial, discussion, or lecture

Research meeting with supervisor

Read 3 articles for your own research

Reflecting on the activity:

What did your group consider when prioritizing? Did you face any challenges or barriers in the process?

- Timelines/deadlines were key in prioritizing
- Who is impacted by priority (students who want their grades back, supervisor)/who or how many people are depending on you
- My own work often comes last
- What matters the most in the "grand scheme"
- How specific? It's hard to prioritize "chunks" of work

Strategies to help you prioritize:

1-3-5 Method

- Identify 1 high effort, large task, 3 medium effort tasks, and 5 small effort tasks to complete on your to-do-list
- <http://www.135list.com/>

SMART Goals

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

Eisenhower's Importance-Urgency Matrix

Important & Urgent (DO)	Important but not Urgent (PLAN)
Urgent but not important (DELEGATE/ DELAY)	Neither urgent nor important (DISCARD)

Summary: Steps to take in prioritizing

1. Identify all your tasks for a week, a day, whatever you are aiming for
2. Break down large tasks/projects into smaller steps
3. Be realistic with yourself about how much you can get done in one day or one work session
4. Go through the list and prioritize in your favourite way (highlight with different colours, rewrite on a nice piece of paper, use stars, numbers, sticky notes)

For daily, weekly, and hourly checklists in PDF form, and many great time management tips, check out [this resource](#) from the University of Waterloo.

Break!

We'll resume in 10 minutes!

C Because we don't have our list ready for today :) ❤️

Annotate: Why do we procrastinate? Why do we get distracted?

It's fun

Because we have a lot in our plate :) ❤️

need some short break, which turns into long break

Feel more accomplished completing lots of small tasks

fear of failure ❤️

Don't know how to start the

short term reward

it's a coping mechanism to relieve us from stress/doing things we don't want to do

perfectionism ✓

response to anxiety

❤️ Because naps are amazing ❤️

Task is too large/daunting

it's hard to get motivated to do huge tasks sometimes

I know how long something will take so why would I start until the absolute last minute???

we do not really know what we want to do in that moment ✓

difficult to get

started on

work--so

tempting to start

or continue doing

something "fun"

or "lazy"

Immobilized by stress of what needs to be done. ✓ ★★

While you work: Managing distractions

Group activity

In groups, you are going to have around 7 minutes to go through these problems and brainstorm solutions if these things happen to you. You don't have to start anywhere in particular, as long as you go through all 4 problems and add a few answers.

You can add ideas by adding a new "text box" (feel free to use a colour for your group!).

We will reconvene as a group afterwards and reflect on what you'd like to try on your own.

Problem 1: You *just can't* get started (feeling overwhelmed, guilty)

- Take a deep breath a short break and start with the easiest task
- Break task to smaller sections

Prepare your work environment

- Start with something extremely small
- Start with 5/10/15 minutes
- Bake cookies
- Physical change in what you're doing (go for a walk, go outside) to change the pattern of not working/fix the blockage/hope it's better when you come back

Try to read/listen to/watch a story that inspires you or a song you like to get you feeling more motivated

Problem 2: Short breaks turning into long breaks (because the news, etc.)

- Setting a timer
- Lock your phone /put it away
- Do your best to hold yourself accountable

- Using a timer for breaks
- Avoid starting something new during break

-setting a timer
- re-adjusting goal for the thing you're procrastinating
(break into smaller chunks)

Set a reminder on your google calendar to remind you of your event/task for that day

Use an app that blocks distracting websites
when your time is up (forest chrome extension,
screen time on phone)

Problem 3: Feeling burnout from internet/screen/zoom, or general apathy about what to do

- Take 30 minutes to go outside and take in nature
 - Go for walk get some fresh air
 - Take a nap
 - Meditate for few minutes
 - Take a nap/shower/self-care
 - Shift priority/start with work that you most enjoy in order to "jump start" your motivation
 - Enjoy hobbies
 - Exercise
 - Going outside
 - Calling a friend
- Write by hand instead of on computer, to get a screen break

Talk with friends

Problem 4: Not knowing how to start large projects.

Ask for help!

- Break it down into bite-sized pieces
- Accountability (with other people — tell them your goals for the week and check in with them. Not your supervisor)
- Zoom study groups—hang out together for an hour or two, check in every hour or something. Seeing someone working beside you helps you to stay on task (subtle peer pressure)

- Break large tasks to smaller tasks eg. write 100 words
- Get help

Ask a friend/mentor/supervisor or someone who has done something similar how they got started, and see if any of the ideas will work for you

Summary: Managing Distractions

A few other tips that I can add to these lists:

- Pomodoro method (short work periods and consistent breaks)
- Reward yourself for getting started
- Take non-screen breaks (checking your email is not a break!!!!)
- Use positive reinforcement (you'd be surprised what you can do when you tell yourself you can)
- Find a friend to work with (or a youtube channel)
- Whitelist websites (forest chrome extension, facebook newsfeed eradicator)
- Create work rituals (make tea before you start, do deep breathing, recite a mantra or read a quote, listen to a song to get you in the mindset)

Outside of work: Managing expectations

Group Activity

Each group will have a chance to work on the same scenario. As a team, write a sample email to your advisor/PI letting them know that you're unable to take on another project at the moment.

Work as a team to write a professional email! Find your slide number here:

- Group 1: Slide 31
- Group 2: Slide 32
- Group 3: Slide 33
- Group 4: Slide 34

1. Scenario: It's the middle of the semester and you are already working on your own project, performing your TA duties, and your PI/supervisor has asked you to take on a 10 hour per-week Graduate Academic Assistant position that is related to your research. (You want to take it, but you shouldn't for your own wellbeing and performance on everything else.)

Dear (supervisor's name),

Summary: Setting Expectations

- Let your advisor know when you aren't available, rather than when you are! This can help you make your work a priority.
- Manage your expectations for yourself as well (as we've discussed throughout this workshop)!

Additional Resources for setting boundaries:

- Checklist to clarify with supervisor
- Comprehensive document for supervisor and student to consider together (from University of Waterloo)
- UBC Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies resources

Summary: Building your process

1. Prioritize your tasks for the week:
 - a. What do you need to get done?
 - b. How much time do you have?
 - c. Identify when do you work best (morning, lunch, before class, evening?)
 - d. Prioritize - important/urgent, 135
 - e. Be realistic with yourself - you can't work 10 hours per day for eternity!!
2. Set yourself up for success:
 - a. Frequent breaks
 - b. Block your apps, set up screen time on your phone
 - c. Find a saying or quote you can use to motivate yourself
3. Set boundaries:
 - a. Communicate with your PI and your students
 - b. Let them know when you AREN'T free! Your work is important too!
4. Build in flexibility
 - a. Things will come up that you weren't expecting!
 - b. Plan time for eating and walking and gaming etc. :)

Summary: Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, you will be able to:

- Identify, prioritize, and break down tasks into manageable work times
- Reflect on why we procrastinate
- Use different strategies to mitigate distractions
- Set expectations/boundaries for yourself and with others about your work

Team Q&A - Revisiting your questions

- If deadlines are unknown, can you limit the scope of the project? Can you set multiple deadlines?
- Sometimes not switching between ideas can be helpful (i.e. if you're in a good writing mode, you can keep writing!)
- It can be important to understand that the expectations placed on grad students are completely unrealistic and it's okay to reach out for help (beyond your supervisor if you don't have support there)
- Talk to your peers! Create communities that support one another rather than using one another for comparison or competition

THANKS!

Please fill out the feedback form in the chat for me:

Do you have any questions?

lindsay.fraughton@gmail.com

Credit to Jennifer Brown for the awesome lesson plan!

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by
Slidesgo, including icons by **Flaticon**, infographics &
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