



STUDY GUIDE

Use this sheet to help you:

- prepare for the transition from school to University
- adopt productive study strategies

5 minute self test

Answer the following questions before reading the Helpsheet:

- How many hours of study per week is best for university work?
- Should you write down everything the lecturer says?
- Should you use groupwork to help you study?
- Do you have a good strategy to prepare for exams?

Getting Started

University is not like school.

At school your day was highly organized – some maths here, some English there, practical classes, laboratories, physical exercise, lunch-breaks.

At university, your day contains one or two classes, with long gaps in between.

When arranging your timetable, try not to schedule too many classes in one day. Ideally, every class should be followed by some free time for reflection on what you have learned.

It will take you a while to get used to the rhythms of university study. A full-time undergraduate student in the faculty of Business and Economics has twelve contact hours per week -typically, eight hours of lectures (two per subject per week) and four hours of tutorials (one per subject per week).

At least DOUBLE these contact hours for your private study. This means that a student who has 12 contact hours per week should be spending an additional 24 hours per week on private study.

That's a 36-hour week - a full-time job.

1.1 Managing Your Time

There are 168 hours in a week. Lectures and tutorials occupy 12 of them. Let's assume that your part-time job occupies 8. Traveling to and from university occupies a further 8. Your health requires that you sleep for about 56 hours per week. Meals will occupy a further 14 hours per week. Sport and/or social activities will occupy at least another 18 hours.

This leaves you with a theoretical 52 hours for study. However, a lot of this time will disappear in shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing, paying bills, administration, snacks, conversations, watching television, playing computer games, travel and so forth. In reality, you have about 26 hours per week to devote to your studies.

Remembering that you need to devote 24 hours per week to private study, you will see that there is very little margin for error. But don't panic. You will manage your studies quite easily with a little planning and organisation.

Let's see what a typical first-semester timetable looks like for a first-year undergraduate in the Faculty of Business and Economics:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00					
10:00		Introductory Microeconomics Lecture		Introductory Microeconomics Lecture	Accounting Reports and Analysis Tutorial
11:00			Quantitative Methods 1 Lecture		Quantitative Methods 1 Lecture
12:00				Managing People and Organisations Tutorial	
1:00					Quantitative Methods 1 Tutorial
2:15		Accounting Reports and Analysis Lecture	Managing People and Organisations Lecture	Introductory Microeconomics Tutorial	
3:15				Accounting Reports and Analysis Tutorial	

It is pretty hard to avoid back-to-back classes entirely, but this student has a reasonably balanced timetable, although the load on Thursday is quite heavy. So when should s/he be studying, and what should s/he be doing when studying?

2: Lecture Review

Reading your textbooks at home is no substitute for attending lectures. Your lecture outline shows you the topics you will be covering and is not usually the same as the table of contents in your textbook. Lectures are one important place where you will receive the information you need to pass the subject.

A top priority is to attend your lectures and ensure that you understand them. You should, as far as possible, review each lecture immediately after attending it. Use your lecture notes, the recommended readings for the lecture, and your memory. Try to re-construct the lecture as an event. Where were you sitting? What was the lecturer wearing? What did the lecturer do or say first?

Use the recommended readings to assist your memory of the lecture but not as a substitute. Skim through them to find key terms to ensure that you have spelt them correctly and understood their meaning. Find any important diagrams and copy them down. It is generally impossible to write down everything your lecturer says. Undergraduate lecture-notes are full of unfinished sentences! This is another reason why the review of your lecture is so important. Your re-construction of the lecture will help you to complete those sentences, as will your skimming of the readings. As you skim, you may also see a passage that sounds familiar: it probably relates to something your lecturer said but you might have forgotten. Slow down and read it carefully, making notes.

Make a note of anything you don't understand about the lecture so that you can ask your tutor about it during his or her consultation hour or send a question to the On-line Tutor.

Including lecture reviews, our student's timetable could now look like this:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00					
10:00		Introductory Microeconomics Lecture		Introductory Microeconomics Lecture	Accounting Reports and Analysis Tutorial
11:00		Microeconomics Lecture Review	Quantitative Methods 1 Lecture	Microeconomics Lecture Review	Quantitative Methods 1 Lecture
12:00			Quantitative Methods Lecture Review	Managing People and Organisations Tutorial	
1:00					Quantitative Methods 1 Tutorial
2:15		Accounting Reports and Analysis Lecture	Managing People and Organisations Lecture	Introductory Microeconomics Tutorial	Quantitative Methods Lecture Review
3:15		Accounting Lecture Review		Accounting Reports and Analysis Lecture	
4:15			Managing People lecture Review	Accounting Lecture Review	
5:15					

As far as you can, review each lecture immediately afterwards. The longer you delay, the less you will remember!

Tutorial Preparation

Your next task is to ensure that you have prepared for your tutorials.

In tutorials you apply the concepts learned in lectures. The value of a tutorial increases in proportion to the effort you put in to prepare for it.

Being silent and passive in a tutorial is unfair to your tutor and to your fellow students, as well as to yourself.

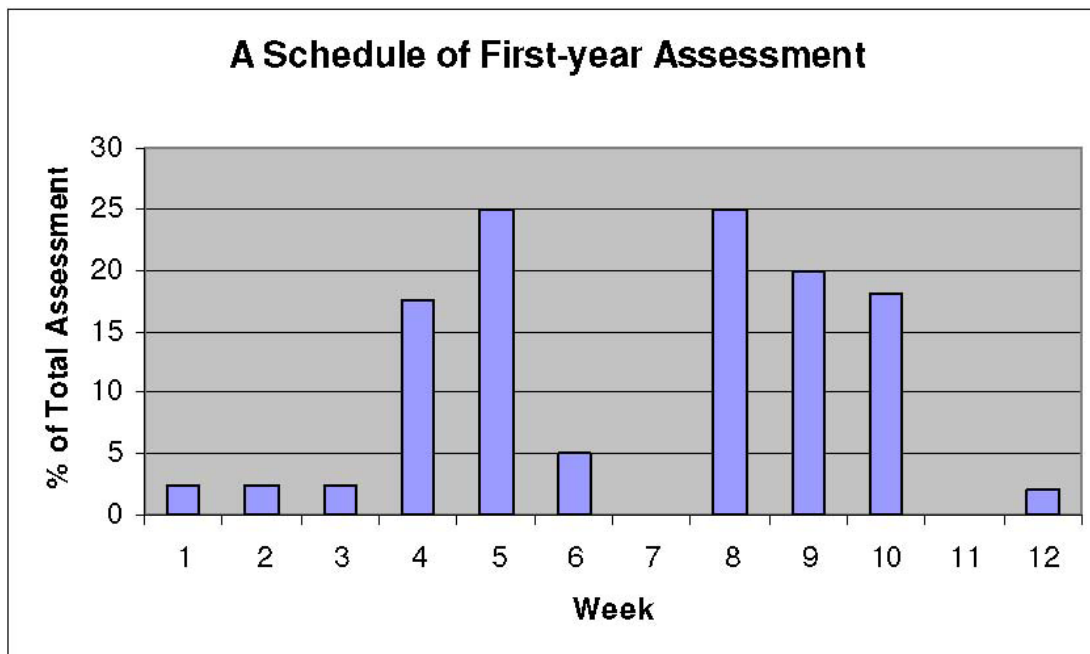
Assignment Preparation

Our first-year undergraduate student's timetable now indicates a 27-hour week. What else should s/he be doing?

The answer is: working on assignments.

Your assessment in all undergraduate subjects in the faculty of Business and Economics will include an end-of-semester examination, but you will be required also to complete written assessment tasks during the semester. These have a nasty habit of sneaking up on you, especially because major pieces of assessment in many subjects are due at the same time.

An example of this is a typical schedule of assessable work for the four subjects our first-year student is taking is shown below.



Therefore, while some weeks will be busier than others, you must allocate a substantial amount of your weekly study time – a suggestion is an average of about 8 hours – to working on your assignments. This means:

- If material for the assignment is being held in the High Use room in the Giblin Eunson Library, go and read/photocopy it NOW – don't wait until the week the assignment is due, when many other students will be after it!
- If you have a choice of questions, decide which one you will attempt and start preparing your answer.
- If the assignment is based on course material you haven't covered yet, use your assignment preparation time to read ahead.
- If you aren't sure how to go about preparing your answer, make an appointment to see a Learning Skills Advisor to discuss it.
- If it is a group assignment, organize your group now: the members, who will do what, how often you will meet, when and where you will meet, and agreed deadlines for the completion of tasks.

Taking all this into consideration, our student's weekly timetable will now appear as follows.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10:00	Managing People Tutorial Preparation	Introductory Microeconomics Lecture		Introductory Microeconomics Lecture	Accounting Reports and Analysis Tutorial
11:00		Microeconomics Lecture Review	Quantitative Methods 1 Lecture	Microeconomics Lecture Review	Quantitative Methods 1 Lecture
12:00	LUNCH		Quantitative Methods Lecture Review	Managing People and Organisations Tutorial	LUNCH
1:00	Microeconomics Tutorial Preparation	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	Quantitative Methods 1 Tutorial
2:15		Accounting Reports and Analysis Lecture	Managing People and Organisations Lecture	Introductory Microeconomics Tutorial	Quantitative Methods Lecture Review
3:15	BREAK	Accounting Lecture Review		Accounting Reports and Analysis Lecture	
4:15	Accounting Tutorial Preparation		Managing People lecture Review	Accounting Lecture Review	Quantitative Methods Tutorial Preparation
7:00	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER
8:00	Assignment preparation	Assignment preparation	Assignment preparation	Assignment preparation	
9:00					

There is the assumption that the student wishes to keep his/her Friday nights and weekends free for social activities. Three of four hours of assignment preparation could be moved to Sunday should the student wish.

4.1 Group Work

Group work will form a significant part of your assessment in the faculty of Business and Economics. Successful group work requires, above all, a capacity for empathy - that is understanding how other people feel and think.

In a group you may encounter people who appear lazy, or arrogant, or unreliable, or controlling, or stupid – people, in other words, who may frustrate you. Try to understand why you respond to them in a negative way. Try to discover why they might behave the way they do. You can't turn a person into someone they aren't: you must seek to understand the person and find a way of working effectively with him or her.

Arrange with your group members when and where you wish to meet, how frequently, and for how long.

As a rule of thumb, a short meeting is a good meeting. Efficient meetings are characterized by the following:

- The people who need to be there are there;
- Everyone knows before they arrive what is to be discussed and who will chair the meeting;
- The Chair ensures that all the agenda items are covered; and
- Everyone leaves with a clear understanding of what is expected of them and the agreed deadlines.

Managing expectations is the key to successful group-work. Each member of the group should know exactly what is expected of him/her, when it is expected, and how it will contribute to the total project.

Meetings can be difficult when strong-minded people disagree. If your meeting becomes difficult, try to remember people need be heard. The Chair must not be afraid to interrupt destructive argument and to insist that the various opinions are listened to in turn, in full, and in silence. A mechanism for decision-making should be proposed: e.g., a vote on the question, decided by a simple majority.

Above all, have someone take notes of the meeting. These notes are an official record of what was agreed and are known as 'minutes'. They are written up and distributed to all group members as soon as possible after the meeting.

4.2 Referencing

Accurate and consistent referencing is a technique, once mastered, that lends authority and professionalism to your writing – as well as ensuring better marks!

What is important to remember is that referencing conventions exist to serve two important purposes:

1. The person or people who first expressed the ideas under discussion are properly acknowledged (this is a matter of basic honesty), and
2. An interested reader can locate the source material quickly and easily.

Two popular referencing systems are the APA and Harvard systems. (See **Study and Research Helpsheets: Basic Referencing for the APA System and The Harvard System** for more information).

Doing Well in Examinations

The best preparation for examinations in the faculty of Business and Economics is to follow the study procedure outlined in Sections 2, 3 and 4 above.

Find out when your examinations are scheduled. The examination timetable is usually available on-line by the beginning of Week 10.

Our student's examination timetable might look something like this:

- Monday 5 June: Introductory Microeconomics,
- Tuesday 6 June: Quantitative Methods 1,
- Thursday 8 June: Accounting Reports and Analysis,
- Wednesday 14 June: Managing People and Organisations.

The first thing s/he would do is defer study of Managing People and Organisations until after the first three examinations. There is only a week between the end of semester and the Microeconomics examination: not enough time in which to revise four subjects effectively!

A written examination is a particular mode of assessment which requires a particular technique to tackle successfully. The good news is that this technique can be learned easily with a little practice.

Look at your Subject Outlines. The lecture schedules in your Subject Outlines indicate the sub-topics that have been covered over the semester and the relative weights attached to those sub-topics. If your lecturer spent three weeks on a sub-topic it is probable that 25 per cent of your total examinable assessment will be on or around that sub-topic. On the other hand, if a sub-topic featured for one lecture in Week 11, it is extremely unlikely that mastery of that particular sub-topic will be worth much in the examination.

The sub-topics indicated by the lecture schedules tell you what you need to know. To find out whether you know it, attempt questions. These will come from past examination papers in the subject and/or from tutorials.

The lecture schedule in your Subject Outline is the key to what you need to know to pass the examination.

Attempt the questions under examination conditions: do not use notes, textbooks or any other materials, and limit yourself to 20-30 minutes to answer the question. Then, assemble your notes, your textbook, relevant audio-streamed lectures (if available), and check your answer. After half an hour to an hour of study of the sub-topic, put all your notes and materials away and attempt the question again. Doing so will tell you how much information you have retained.

Go through this process for six hours a day, ensuring that you do not study longer than two hours at a time (the brain gets tired and you become inefficient). Do it at a time when you are most alert.

You might work from, say, 10:00am until 12:00noon. Then take an hour for lunch. Resume work at 1:00pm, and stop again at 3:00pm. Take a half-hour break. Use this time to do something physical: go for a jog, or walk around the block. Resume work at 3:30pm, and finish at 5:30pm.

Assuming the last teaching day of semester is Friday 26th, the above timetable shows how our student might spend the week before the first examination (Introductory Microeconomics, on Monday 5th). Saturday 3rd would be spent on Quantitative Methods 1, and Sunday 4th on Introductory Microeconomics. This means that the student will have spend 18 productive hours per subject on revision, and have spent the day before the Introductory microeconomics examination reviewing that subject.

Don't imagine that putting a highlighter through sentences in your textbook is studying: you might as well go to the movies.

	Saturday 27th	Sunday 28th	Monday 29th	Tuesday 30th	Wed. 31st	Thursday 1st	Friday 2nd
9:00							
10:00	Intro Micro: Questions Review Repeat	Intro Micro: Questions Review Repeat	ARA: Questions Review Repeat	ARA: Questions Review Repeat	ARA: Questions Review Repeat	QM1: Questions Review Repeat	QM1: Questions Review Repeat
11:00							
12:00	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
1:00	Intro Micro: Questions Review Repeat	Intro Micro: Questions Review Repeat	ARA: Questions Review Repeat	ARA: Questions Review Repeat	ARA: Questions Review Repeat	QM1: Questions Review Repeat	QM1: Questions Review Repeat
2:00							
3:00	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
3:30	Intro Micro: Questions Review Repeat	Intro Micro: Questions Review Repeat	ARA: Questions Review Repeat	ARA: Questions Review Repeat	ARA: Questions Review Repeat	QM1: Questions Review Repeat	QM1: Questions Review Repeat
4:30							

There will be no time to do further effective revision of Quantitative Methods 1 before the examination on Tuesday, but the three days – Thursday, Friday and Saturday – spent on it should mean that the student is well prepared. Wednesday 7th could be used for a final, light review of Accounting Reports and Analysis before the examination on Thursday. Subsequent days can be devoted to revision of Managing People and Organisations.

5.1 In the Examination Room

Use your reading time to determine which questions you will answer, in what order you will answer them, and how much time you will spend on each one.

For example, you see that the two-hour examination has three sections, A, B and C.

Section A is worth 25% of the total marks, Section B is worth 25% of the total marks, and Section C is worth 50% of the total marks. You should therefore spend 30 minutes on Section A, 30 minutes on Section B, and 60 minutes on Section C.

Section A contains ten *multiple-choice questions*. Each is worth equal marks and you are required to answer every question. You should spend three minutes on each question.

Section B contains three *short-answer questions*. Each is worth equal marks and you are required to answer every question. You should spend ten minutes on each question.

Section C contains three *essay-questions*. Each is worth equal marks and you are required to answer every question. You should spend twenty minutes on each question.

Once you have allocated your time appropriately, grade the questions in order of difficulty.

You do not have to answer examination questions in the order in which they appear on the paper. There is a box in the top right-hand corner of every page of your examination script-book in which you can indicate the section and the number of the question you are attempting. As long as your examiner knows which question you are attempting, s/he doesn't care about the order in which your answers appear. This means that you can play to your strengths.

Always start an examination by answering the questions about which you feel most confident.

Answering the questions about which you are confident first means that you will settle your nerves, get marks in the bank straight away, and save time – if you know the answer, you will be able to write it down in less than the time you have allocated for the question. This gives you more time later to work on the questions about which you feel less confident.

A Final Word

Enjoy your studies. If you understand and accept that university study is a full-time job leading you to an exciting and fulfilling future, you will get a lot more out of it than just the piece of paper at the end.