

BALANCING ACT

issue 4



DATES TO REMEMBER

Headstart Seminar (Early Careers in Law)

- Thursday Week 9, 11am
- Napier 102 Lecture Theatre

Stress Less Day

- Monday Week 11
- Ligertwood Courtyard

Exam Prep 101

- Monday Week 11, 2pm
- Ligertwood 333

First Year Activities

- Keep your eyes peeled for any upcoming first year activities! We have a few ideas floating around that we hope to make happen soon!

Congratulations on making it through Term 1 of 2021! You've probably noticed by now that assignments are being piled upon you and that you're struggling to prioritise a night in studying or a night out with your mates. Unfortunately, decisions like these will only become more difficult. That's why it's important to find a balance! So what better time than now to offer you some tips and tricks in order to prepare and help you find that balance between your work commitments, study and that ever important social life.

In order to help us on this quest for a balanced lifestyle, we spoke with Annabel, the Vice-President of the AULSS, about potential tips for effective studying routines that she has learned throughout her time in law school. Annabel is also the Community Engagement Officer at Headspace Adelaide, where she works to increase mental health literacy and reduce the unfortunate stigma surrounding mental health.

How do you prioritise work meaningfully?

Annabel: First of all, congratulations to everyone for getting their first assignments done, it's a really big hurdle to cross and you should all be very proud of yourselves for doing so! With regard to prioritising work, a really simple trick that I've found to work well for me is writing down itemised lists to keep track of things to do each week! You'll feel much more organised and able to handle things after doing so. In particular, I would recommend prioritising lecture and seminar content, while slowly compiling these into separate exam prep notes.

There can often be so much going on at university to the point that it becomes quite difficult to fit everything in, especially with the sheer volume of reading that you're often expected to tackle in your first year. If you can start to feel like you don't have enough time anymore, try to list out your tasks – as Annabel says, it will feel less daunting once you're able to confront them one step at a time. This will also allow you to prioritise your items, and start to plan your days more effectively. Above all, it's really important to be realistic about what needs to be finished first – we'd recommend giving yourself at most just 3-4 things to do one day. Assignment deadlines would likely be the most important to tick off the list, followed by lecture and seminar prep, while extra background reading can wait until later.

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How do you adjust your routine during high-stress studying moments?

Annabel: It's really essential to note that everyone will have a different style of doing this, and organising yourself in general. There's quite a big learning curve in law, and there's no need to worry too much about being 'clunky' at the start. It's perfectly okay if it takes until even the end of your degree to finalise this. As a Virgo who needs an effective routine to flourish, I'm personally the type where I try to develop a strict routine for high-stress moments such as exams. By strict routine, I don't mean by the minute but rather something like a colour-coded calendar designating which subjects to focus on for certain days of the week. Because of the way that the different subjects in their entirety can seem so overwhelming, breaking them down into manageable chunks is much more effective and easier to rationalise taking on.

It's also really important to be kind to yourself during these moments! This may be a cliché answer but we all need to keep in mind that we're not perfect and have a limited capacity. Something that I've realised recently is that exercising is not just to get fit but is also a tool for mental health. As a result I've really been strong in forcing myself to go out and go for a walk, even if it's just 10 minutes around the block. This might sound counterintuitive when you feel like you're running out of time to study (I'll always have internal thoughts and worries about whether doing so would make me lose valuable time for studying) but I always feel calmer and in a better mood to study afterwards.

Are there any useful resources you would recommend?

Annabel: Being able to reach out for support is really important. While for some people this can be easily found in the form of family and friends, not everyone has that connection. In this regard, I would really recommend the University's support staff, who are absolute angels and always willing to help students who reach out to them. Doing this is quite easy too. Simply log on to the Wellbeing Hub on the University website or access their portal through Disability Support Services. As an alternative, you can also seek professional help. This may not be for everyone, but it can be very effective. The ability to be honest to yourself and not ashamed to seek external support is so crucial; the amount of people who use such options is way less uncommon than you'd think. Otherwise, I'd also shamelessly plug Headspace. We have our e-headspace support and counselling services, which are always available if you need help.

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Of course, you can also speak to any of the senior students within the Law School, or anyone on the AULSS whether it be Peter or myself, the Executive or the representatives for help and advice. We all probably seem very busy and extremely tired all the time when you see us in the Liggy hallways, but if you need anything please do reach out to us! We've been where you've been and done what you've done – and while we might be doing more 'advanced' subjects, that doesn't mean that your first year subjects are any less difficult. We can't help you with your exams of course but we are absolutely here to support you.

As a supplementary answer, we want to remind everyone feeling less than 100% that they should definitely not be afraid to seek help from a mental health professional to determine the best next steps for them, should they think it necessary. If stress is something that you particularly struggle with, you are in good hands here at the University of Adelaide. There is an abundance of resources available that can assist you with your wellbeing, offer useful internal and external help from professionals and even facilitate arrangements for assessment deadlines. 'Student Life Counselling Support' is a great example of such services!

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Summary: Tips and tricks for finding the right balance

Routine/Time Management

It's important to have a routine! Undoubtedly, you've heard this many times before - the hard part is implementing it and finding ways to make it work for you. A successful routine will provide you with stability and focus from the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep.

We suggest:

- Waking up the around the same time every morning; creates stability in your day and reduces anxiety
- Writing a to do list, highlight what is most important; this could be for each day or each week; keep the to do list somewhere easy to access
- Know what times of day you find you are most productive and least productive; schedule in your important tasks accordingly
- Set deadlines for yourself; setting standards for yourself to complete work is important, however, it is equally important to be compassionate and flexible
- Find a system that works for you

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Your routine and expectations may not be nearly as perfect as you expected, and that's absolutely fine! The point is to be more productive and intentional with your time.

Self care: physical/mental wellbeing

We can't stress the importance of finding time for yourself to practice amongst the clutter of work and university. It is beneficial that you find ways to distress whether it be physical activity, disconnecting from social media, or spending time with friends and family. Each person is different and de-stresses in different ways so we recommend finding something that really helps you. Keep in mind, this may also change as your interests change or as you progress in your degree, because you may begin to value different methods – we are all about embracing change so definitely don't feel as though you have to stick to the same methods!

Talk to your employer

If you're studying and trying to balance work, it's important that you coordinate with your employer regarding your study commitments. Many employers can be very flexible in working around your schedule and facilitating time off work during high exam periods. This is particularly important if you're returning to study and trying to balance a career.

Know your limits

It's important to know when you have too much on your plate and you're struggling to keep up with staying on top of your studies and work commitments. If this is the case, you need to know your limits. This might mean you have to cut back on work, say no to the occasional social outing or take a break when you are feeling overwhelmed. It's perfectly fine to take breaks! Taking some time off can do so much for your well being and productivity! Saying no is a great tool and one we cannot recommend doing more when you are struggling to juggle all that you have on your plate.

We would like to end this article by saying this article is geared towards finding a balance and is in no way trying to rabbit hole you into self help, so make sure that you find methods that work for you! Remember, self care is in no way selfish.

We wish you all the best in your personal quest for balance,
Kane and Ikhwan