



Academic Skills

PRE-ARRIVAL SEPTEMBER 2024

Academic Support at Keele

- Academic Mentor
- Workshops
- One-to-one coaching
- Student Experience and Support Officers (wellbeing related)
- SpLD specialist support (DSA)
- Subject-specific learning support (some schools)

Understanding your time

- Directed study: lectures, seminars, workshops, lab sessions.
- Independent study: planning, reading, research, writing, revision.
- Paid work and volunteering.
- Maintenance: eating, sleeping (advised between 7 and 9 hours per night), cleaning.
- Physical activity: structured exercise, walking, being outdoors.
- Free time: socialising, browsing the internet, computer games, reading, or other hobbies.
- Responsibilities: carer, children, pets.

Barriers to time management

Procrastination: the act of delaying or putting off tasks until the last minute, or past their deadline.

Perfectionism: striving for flawlessness and perfection and placing unrealistic expectations on what can be achieved.

Poor prioritisation: an inability to arrange tasks in order of importance and urgency.

Motivation: lacking the drive to act in the way needed to achieve certain goals.

Strategies

- Break down large tasks into smaller chunks to make the tasks manageable, realistic, and achievable. Set daily goals that help you to achieve these tasks, but keep them small, specific, and simple using the [SMART Goals technique](#).
- Add your daily goals as tasks in your calendar so that you know what to focus on when you begin each workday. Decide which tasks require most focus. Use the [Eisenhower Matrix](#) to help you categorise your tasks according to their urgency and importance.
- When you feel most energised, complete tasks that require high levels of concentration and creativity (e.g. reading journal articles and writing sections toward your assignments). For times where you are less energised, complete tasks that require less energy such as formatting references and responding to emails.
- Try the [Pomodoro technique](#): study for 25 minutes, have a 5-minute break, then repeat this process four times.
- Try Hugh Kern's Golden Hours technique where you set aside study time early in the day before you start other daily activities (including checking your phone). Depending on your schedule and commitments, we recommend scheduling 10 minutes of early morning study time initially and then increase this dedicated study time as necessary.

When?

Consider what time of day you work best. There are benefits and drawbacks to all times of day, for example:

Mornings – gets the day off to a productive start but can mean having less sleep.

Afternoons – makes the most of time after lectures but might not have as long to get fully focussed on a task.

Evenings – generally have more free time available but this may take time away from social activities.

Where?

At university:

- Location: needs to be suitable based on your needs and the type of work you are completing, such as the library silent study for in-depth writing or an informal learning space for group work.
- Equipment: there might be specialist equipment or software only available at university, or you might need to remember to bring certain equipment with you for a day of study (e.g. laptop charger).
- Travel: consider the time it will take for you to travel from your home, particularly at peak times, and whether this time could be better spent on study.



At home / halls:

- Routine: it's important to differentiate between leisure and study time if working from home, to help keep you focussed for an appropriate amount of time.
- Clothing: what you wear can affect how you approach your studies and how productive you feel. For example, you will want to feel comfortable, but if you are feeling too relaxed you may not feel motivated.
- Study space: it is best to work from a desk or table, rather than a bed or sofa, to help you to get into the right frame of mind for studying. Using a laptop from a bed or sofa can also lead to physical health issues such as poor posture or muscle aches.

How?



Plan for the day and week ahead.



Work backwards from your deadlines and plan in contingency time, so that you are not working right up to the deadline in case something goes wrong such as feeling unwell or IT issues.



Set realistic goals such as finish the reading for this essay this morning, write 250 words in the afternoon. Break down the overall aim of the assessment as a whole into smaller, more manageable chunks.



Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet and stay hydrated; this will help you to stay focussed.



Get enough sleep – experts recommend 7-9 hours per night.



Make sure you have access to the right resources before you start, such as books, equipment, lecture notes.

Suggested apps



VAIA – create digital flashcards and quizzes for any subject and access thousands of free resources.



Forest – stay focused and avoid distractions with this productivity app.



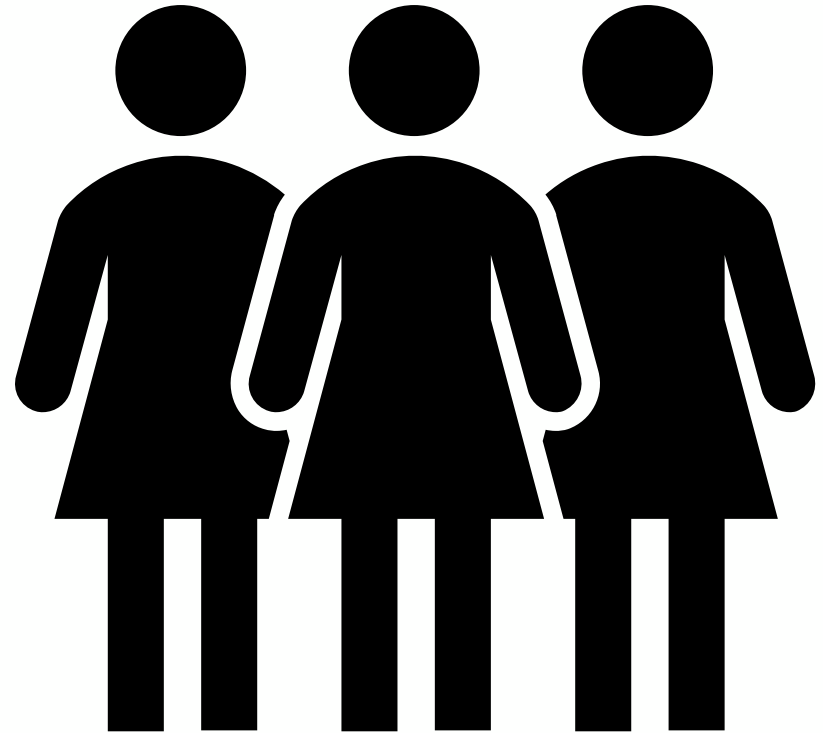
Grammarly – improve your writing and grammar skills with this editing tool.



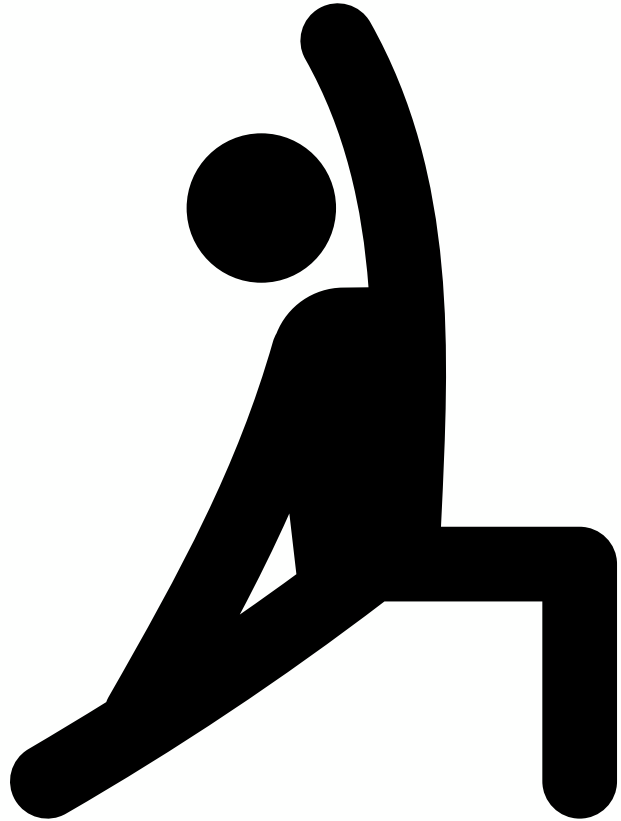
Evernote – take and organise notes easily.

Wellbeing - Connect

Make sure you continue to communicate with family, friends, and course-mates, even when you are busy. Finding the time to nurture your existing relationships with others, and connecting with new people, can help you feel better and live better. Speaking to family and friends away from university can act as a distraction from your studies when you need to take a break, and by connecting with course-mates you can support each other with your studies.



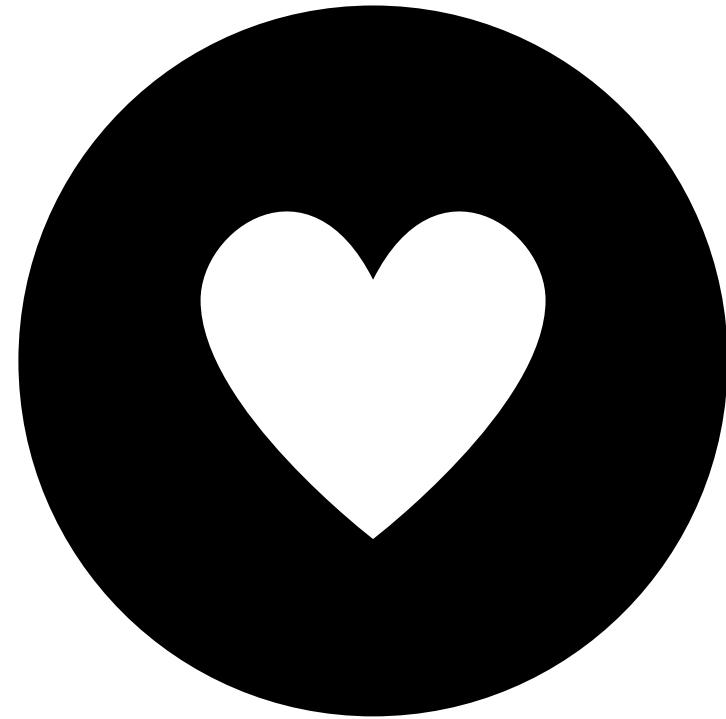
Wellbeing – Be Active



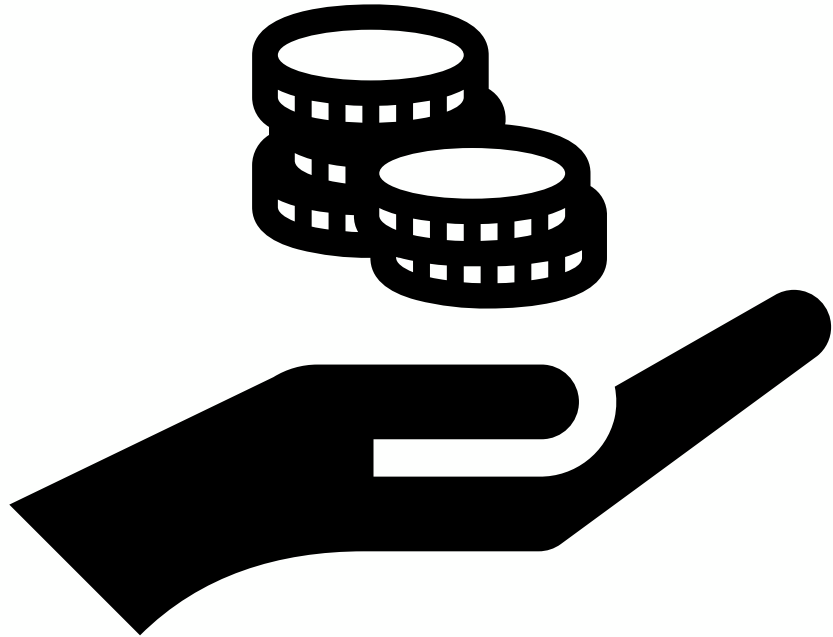
Take some time away from your desk or study area. You don't have to go to the gym or be super-fit, but taking a walk around campus, going for a bike ride, or playing rounders with friends can be a good way to de-stress during the assessment period. Find an activity you enjoy and then it won't feel like a chore.

Wellbeing – Keep Learning

This may sound like an obvious one when you're at university, but learning new knowledge or skills can give you a sense of achievement and increase your confidence. So, keep your end goal in sight to help you stay motivated. You can also use your downtime to learn skills away from your programme, such as a cooking course, learning to play a musical instrument, or figuring out how to fix your bike. We also have a variety of student societies which might help you to learn something new or develop your hobbies.



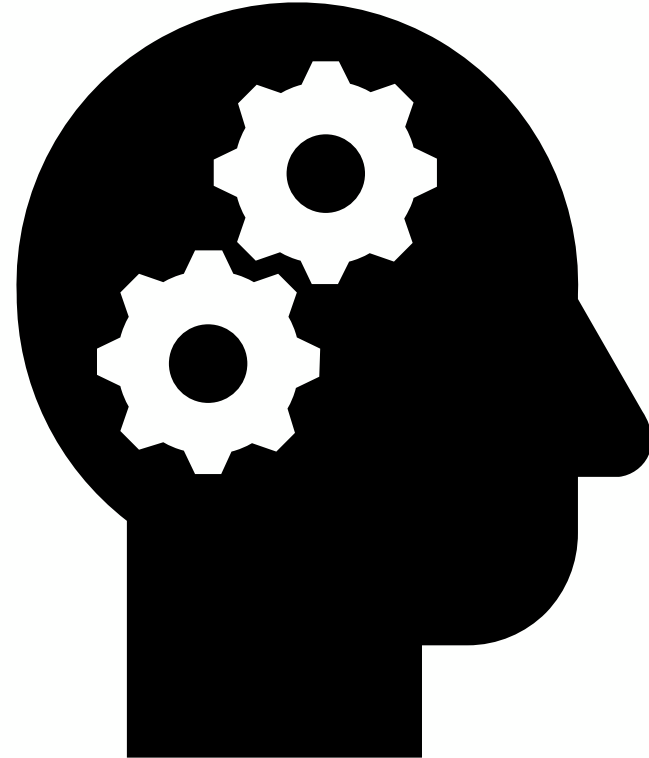
Wellbeing – Give to Others



Even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering locally, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks. During the assessment period, you could help others out by arranging a group study session, or sending a motivational message to a friend before they sit an exam.

Wellbeing – Be Mindful

Being more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body, and the world around you, can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. If you find yourself becoming stressed during a study session, take a break, complete a mindfulness activity, and you should feel more relaxed when you return to your studying.



Thank you slide

Keele
UNIVERSITY



Thank you

Keele University
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 5BG
+44 (0)1782 732000