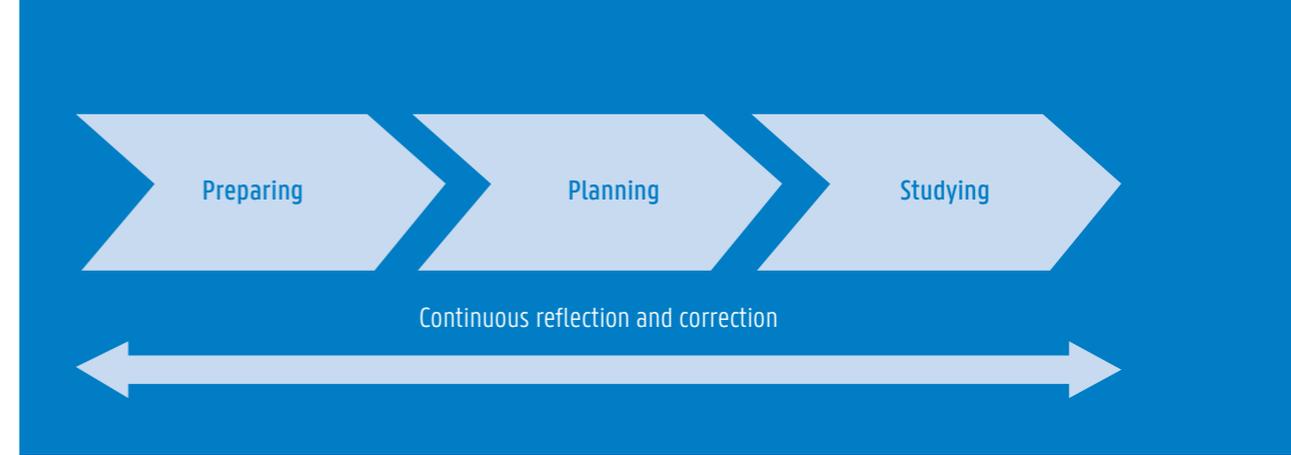




MAXIMIZING
STUDY
EFFICIENCY



MAXIMIZING YOUR STUDY EFFICIENCY?

- Are you tired of wasting time at your desk?
- Tired of suddenly wondering after a whole day of studying 'What was it actually all about?'
- Do you like having enough spare time, without decreasing your chances of success and without feeling guilty?
- Do you want to decide how you can do this straight away?

CONSIDER THIS:

- At what times of the day are you able to deliver high-quality intellectual work?
- When are you going through a slump and should you turn to support tasks?
- What study material do you want to master? What do you need to do before you can begin studying?
- What do you want to do when?

NOW GET TO WORK IN AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE WAY!

- Deliver high-quality work in your **productive hours**.
- Perform support tasks in your **less productive hours**.
- Relax, sleep, eat in your **unproductive hours**.
- Reconsider **lost hours**.

WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU CAN PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE? THEN KEEP ON READING!

- **Productive hours:** this is when you deliver high-quality work = you want to memorise study material for a longer period of time and want to gain insight. You study.
- **Less productive hours:** this is when you perform support tasks, such as preparing, planning, or researching. You are going through a slump and complete concentration is not possible.
- **Unproductive hours:** this is when you relax, eat, sleep or get from A to B.
- **Lost hours:** this is lost time, spent at your desk or anywhere else, when you actually wanted to study or relax.



PREPARING

Preparing means becoming familiar with the subject matter but also finding out what kind of student you are:

- determining your productive hours;
- collecting and exploring your study materials (e.g. notes, syllabuses, slides);
- establishing your quality work.

Your less productive hours are perfect for preparing.

WHEN ARE YOU AT YOUR MOST EFFICIENT?

You probably already know when you study best, when you are at your most productive and when you can't seem to get anything done at your desk.

Indicate your productive, less productive and unproductive hours with +, +/- and - in the left column of the attached week schedule.

If you don't know when your productive hours are, then have a look at p. 10-11 for an easy way to determine this.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

MAKE A TO DO LIST

1. Do you want to look up particular things, organise your course, finish the layout of an assignment, prepare a class or tomorrow's practical? This is all **support work**.
2. Explore the subject matter and divide it into concrete sections based on their content. For example: 'Chapter 1 covers employment law, cases concerning employment law, contract law and definitions.' Or: 'This chapter contains exercises on regression analysis and logarithms.' Do not use subdivisions such as 'Chapter 3' or 'Statistics', as these do not represent concrete learning targets. Classify studying these sections as **quality work**.
3. Estimate **how many hours** you need for each item on your list. This is not an easy task, so give yourself the time to become better at this.

ASSESS AND CORRECT

Your experiences in the past week(s) will allow you to further fine-tune your preparation. Maybe you have discovered other productive moments or you have learned that it is better to simply relax at particular times of the day. Or you had a productive time slot, but the effort you put into the class session right before it made it difficult to perform any quality work.

Determining your (less) productive personal is highly personal. Be realistic and take into account your personality and lifestyle. Do not attempt to pack as many productive hours as possible into one day, but be honest with yourself. It is better to work efficiently for three hours than daydream for ten hours at your desk.

PLANNING

Planning is all about making choices and decisions. It helps you in your study process, by allowing you to verify if you're still on schedule, to maintain a clear overview and therefore also reduce stress.

PLAN YOUR WEEK

The removable blank schedule attached to this brochure can serve as a basis to plan your week.

STEP 0

In your preparation, you have determined your productive, less productive and unproductive times of the day. If you haven't done this yet, indicate these hours on the blank week schedule.

STEP 1

Fill in any classes, practicals, exercises, seminars and other activities that are an inherent part of your studies in the week schedule. Take into account how much time you need to get from A to B.

Make sure you have one time block for each activity (taking into account transport).

STEP 2

Now add your other activities, such as sports, the youth movement, parties or doctor's visits and again provide enough time for transport. Think carefully when you plan these activities. They are best suited for your unproductive hours.

STEP 3

Determine when you eat, sleep, or go to the supermarket. Here, too, you should take into account your productive, less productive and unproductive hours! Here's an example:

- Did you go out late or would you like to sleep in? Then you will not be able to start studying at 8 AM.
- Are you most productive between 9:30 AM and 1 PM? Then have lunch at 1 PM.
- Are you unable to be productive after 9 PM? Then you can relax!

STAP 4

Now see when your productive hours can be put to use in your schedule and plan quality work from your to do list in these hours. Do not let these hours go to waste and do not make them less productive or unproductive! Do the same for your less productive hours and plan support work at these times of the day.

TIPS

- Have a break when you have finished a complete section, making your break a kind of reward. Do not plan your breaks purely based on time. For example, do not tell yourself 'I will have a break after 2 hours', but rather 'I will have a break as soon as I know the definition and two proofs of this mathematical concept and I need to be able to do that in that time.'
- Add some buffers for unforeseen circumstances. In other words, never schedule the maximum number of hours. Estimate what you can definitely get done, not what you would like to get done.

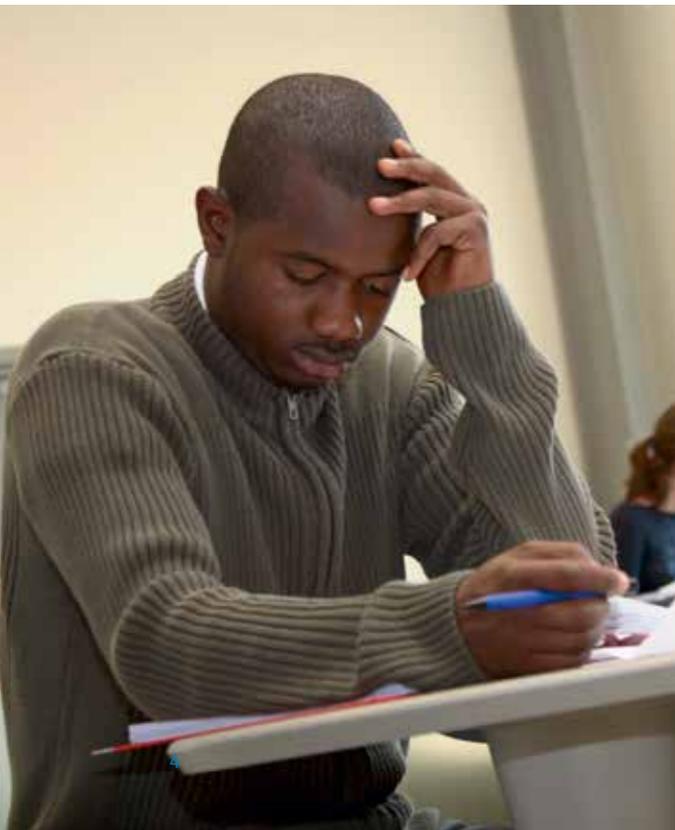
Keep in mind:

Planning is best done based on your own personality and lifestyle. Only a realistic, personal time schedule is worth making. Do not make an 'ideal' schedule for the 'ideal' student, because s/he simply does not exist!

I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO STUDY, WHAT NOW?

'Grab' your productive hours! It is quite possible that you are simply not using your productive hours to the fullest.

- Do you daydream for hours at your desk? That is quite pointless. Instead, decide when you are going to study and when you are not going to work at all. Do this based on your (less) productive hours and use your preparation to help you.
- What distracts you (e.g. your cell phone, worrying, your computer)? Avoid checking your phone when you hear that you have a text message. If you are unable to resist, put your cell phone in a different room. Or even better: decide during your preparation what your distractors are and remove them.



- It takes a lot of time to study a course by heart and it is simply not necessary! Instead, consider what the learning targets are – this is what you should focus on. Do not be afraid to set priorities.
- Experiment with other times of the day that you do not yet perceive as productive or at time that have been somewhat lost so far. Try to turn these into short yet powerful productive moments. This will give you the satisfaction that quality work is in fact possible.

ASSESS AND CORRECT

Were you unable to finish all the items on your to do list? Find out what went wrong and remedy this. Maybe you simply bit off more than you could chew, or you did not consider when you are most productive? Or maybe the items on your list were too vague? Whatever the reasons why it didn't work, you should not give up on planning! Dare to think and do not stop experimenting until you find an efficient time schedule that meets your own personal needs.

Exam period

Studying for the exams starts in the first few weeks of the semester. The principles of studying efficiently remain the same. However, as soon as you know your exam schedule and the exam period is slowly approaching, you should also take into account how much time you actually have to study for an exam.

So what is the best approach? Go see your student counsellor.



STUDYING

Studying is a process of orientation, comprehension, consolidation and active revision (= recalling the subject matter). Use the entire semester to do that, not just the exam period. Use your productive hours to study, because that is when you are the most focused.

Process each part of the material very consciously and attentively, following the steps below. As soon as you have mastered the process, it will become an automatic reflex rather than a process consisting of various steps.

- Examine the material in detail.
- For each paragraph/section, try to find answers to your concrete questions/aims.
- Follow the sequence of ideas, statements, exercises, techniques, claims, conclusions, etc.
- See how slides, notes and exercises can help you.
- Do exercises that allow you to apply the theory.
- Attempt to come up with applications or examples yourself.
- Ask yourself why-questions about the subject matter.

By gaining insight into the material, you will be able to formulate a well-structured answer to the questions you asked yourself during orientation. 'I sort of understand' is impossible: either you understand or you don't.

1. ORIENTATION

Start with the concrete items you want to study from your to do list. Find the **structure/central theme**. This is the main point.

- What is the course about? What is the section that you are studying right now about?
- What study material forms the basis of the course: the textbook, the notes, the slides, ... ?
- Use the table of contents to discover the structure of the course.
- How can examples, exercises, tables, or graphs be linked to the theory?
- Find example questions and/or exercises (from past years).

In short, set **concrete objectives**. Ask yourself questions to which you will find the answer while you're studying. For example: 'What is behaviour? What is the difference between behaviour and social action?'

2. COMPREHENSION

You know what questions you want to ask (= orientation). Now the time has come to find out the answers. If you are able to explain how the material is structured without coming across anything that is unclear, then you know that you really master the material.

Get to work!

When you're reading the material and are trying to understand it, do you tend to highlight passages straight away, without even realizing it? Make a short, one-page summary of each section. This will keep you from using full sentences and will allow you to make a good schematic overview.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE SUFFICIENT INSIGHT INTO THE SUBJECT MATTER?

- You are able to contextualise the subject matter.
- You know the structure and coherence of the subject matter. This is the central theme and it will help you actively recall the material.
- You see connections between different sections and are able to explain them.
- (Dis)similarities are clear to you.
- You have developed a solution strategy for exercises.

You understand the material and have an answer to all your previous questions. What now?

3. CONSOLIDATION

Structure the study material so that you can memorise it. There are different ways to do this. Whatever strategy you are using, never lose sight of your objective: being able to reconstruct the entire study material in one blink of an eye.

Get to work!

- Underline and make notes in the margins of your text (titles, key words, lists, synonyms, examples, references).
- Make an overview that allows you to clarify the structure.
- Make tables to identify (dis)similarities.
- Work out solution strategies from your exercises.
- Draw up a glossary of the most difficult concepts.
- ...

TIPS:

- Use different 'techniques'. Do not apply one single technique to an entire course.
- The content of a section will determine what the most appropriate way of structuring is.
- Be critical of summaries, overviews or notes from fellow students, but use them if you find them enlightening.

Making a course ready to study is simply delaying the inevitable. You either know something or you don't, and knowing something right now is always much more gratifying than delaying things.

Understanding and consolidating the material go hand in hand. Do not wait until the month of the exam to actually memorise the material.

If you start relatively early, you can make optimal use of your long-term memory.

It makes a lot of sense to immediately consolidate the material as much as possible and then move on to short yet powerful revision sessions.

4. ACTIVE REVISION

Close your books and actively recall what you have studied! In any case, that is one way of getting started. Afterwards, fill in any blanks in your memory by looking up what you have studied in your study materials. This will allow you to actively process everything.

For example, you could test yourself (draw up sample questions while studying). This is a perfect way to revise the material.

Be careful not to 'reread', because this practises recognizing the material, rather than actually fully understanding and knowing it.

By going through the entire process, a large part of the material has already been stored in your long-term memory. But to really consolidate everything, you should also regularly revise the parts you do not yet fully master. Have you completely forgotten what a particular section is about? Then start the process again, to fully understand and/or consolidate that part of the course.

Get to work!

- Try to 'reconstruct' your study material. Start with the central theme/structure.
- Solve example questions and/or exercises and then check your answers in the course.
- Use your processed study material (e.g. overviews, questions, table of contents) to see what parts you do not (yet) fully master.
- First revise the sections that you find the most difficult. Do not start each revision with chapter 1, as you probably already know it from start to finish.
- Take into account the examination format (for example, revise orally if you have an oral exam).
- Make sure you can formulate short, concise answers to concrete questions (not the whole story). Find a buddy (virtual or in real life) to whom you can explain what you've studied. This will keep you on your toes!

ASSESS AND CORRECT

Studying efficiently means continuously assessing your approach and correcting when necessary. The best way to check if you're on the right track is to see if you have reached your concrete goals within the predetermined time. And do not forget: studying involves orientation, comprehension, consolidation and active revision. Allow yourself time to learn. Correct during the semester but also after exam periods.



CALCULATE PRODUCTIVE HOURS

Record your activities for one week in the schedule below.

+ -		MAANDAG	DINSDAG	WOENSdag	DONDERDAG	VRIJDAG	ZATERDAG	ZONDAG
	6am							
	7am							
	8am							
	9am							
	10am							
	11am							
	12noon							
	1pm							
	2pm							
	3pm							
	4pm							
	5pm							
	6pm							
	7pm							
	8pm							
	9pm							
	10pm							
	11pm							
	12pm							
	1am							
	2am							
	3am							
	4am							
	5am							

Activity	Code
Contact hours (classes, exercises, practicals, ...)	C
Non-study-related activities (sleeping, eating, commuting, relaxing...)	N
Quality work (studying)	Q
Support work (checking Minerva, printing slides, preparing something, planning ahead ...)	S
Lost hours (copying notes, daydreaming ...)	X

STEP 1:

After one week of observation, you will be able to get a first idea of what your productive hours are. How do you proceed?

- 1) Use a particular colour, for example green, for moments when you have done quality work (i.e. activities **coded Q**).
- 2) Use the same colour for the classes, exercises or practicals (**coded C**) that you have followed very attentively. The other contact hours are assigned a different colour, for example yellow.
- 3) Reconsider the moments you have **coded S**. Mark them in green if you believe that you could have done quality work at those moments. Mark all other O-codes in yellow.
- 4) There are three options for **N-codes**: (a) green, if you believe that you could have done quality work at those times; (b) yellow, if you think you could have used them for support work; (c) blank, if you could have relaxed or done other things.
- 5) **X-codes** are marked in black

STEP 2:

Now have a look at the complete schedule and find some patterns. Do you notice that the green zones are mainly in the morning? Or quite the opposite, do you appear to be most productive in the evening? In the next step, summarize your personal productivity profile in the first column of the schedule. For this final step, do not use the schedule per day, but per hour.

Analyse each row.

If green predominates, then this is clearly a productive hour for you and you should put a '+' in the first column.

The less productive hours can be found in the rows where yellow predominates; mark these with '+-'. If a row is mainly left blank, that means this is an un-productive time for you which should be marked with '-'. Consider how you can put your 'black' hours to good use in the future.



NEED MORE TO STUDY MORE EFFICIENTLY?

- See the student counsellor of your faculty
- Follow a training session with the Student Counselling Service

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