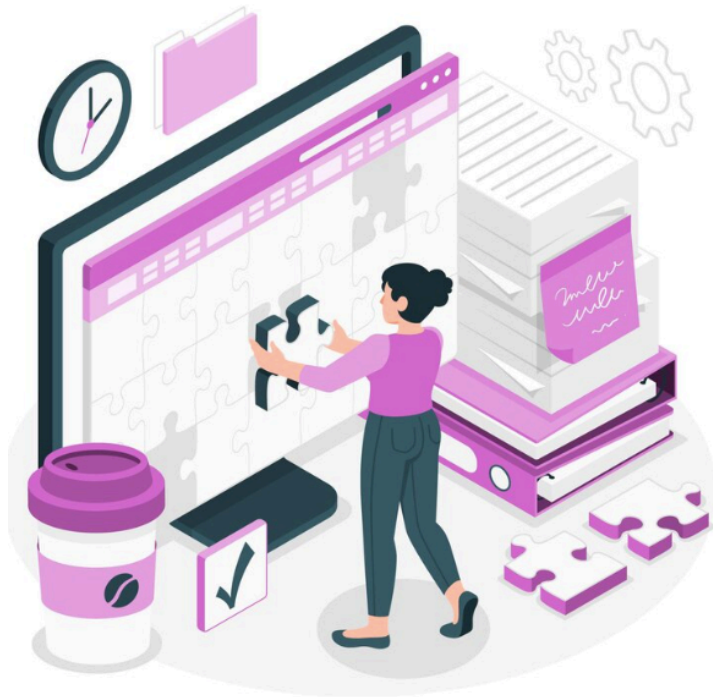


## I. What is Assignment Management?

Assignment management refers to the systematic and efficient organization, planning, and execution of tasks or projects assigned within an academic or professional setting. It involves skills such as interpreting assignment instructions, setting realistic timelines, prioritizing tasks, and employing strategies to ensure the successful completion of assignments. Effective assignment management aims to optimize productivity, enhance comprehension, and meet deadlines while maintaining a balanced and structured approach to the workload.



## II. Navigating Independent Research Assignments

Almost all courses set tasks which require you to undertake some kind of primary research for yourself. This might consist of many smaller projects for which you write short reports, or larger-scale assignments such as a final year project, in-depth case study, long essay or dissertation. Students often find such assignments daunting, especially if it is the first time they select a topic for themselves or their first large-scale assignment. However, they generally enjoy them because:

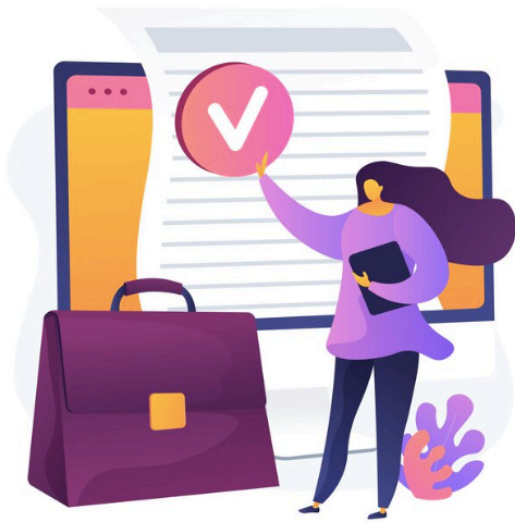
- ▶ they find the assignments interesting
- ▶ typically, such assignments are set at a point in the course where you have already had practice in the underlying academic skills
- ▶ the course provides in-depth information about more specialist skills needed
- ▶ Arguably, the most challenging and important aspects of such assignments are in:
  - ▶ understanding what is required in terms of the brief and the process
  - ▶ choosing a manageable topic
  - ▶ planning and managing the task as a project or homework

### III. A Holistic Approach to Managing Assignments

#### 1 Understanding the Assignment Brief

a) **Deciphering the Assignment Instructions:** The first step in tackling any assignment is understanding the task at hand. Carefully read the assignment brief, paying close attention to specific instructions, formatting requirements, and evaluation criteria. This foundational understanding will guide your entire assignment process.

b) **Identifying Key Requirements:** Highlight key requirements outlined in the assignment brief. Whether it's a word count, specific topics to cover, or a particular structure to follow, identifying these elements early on ensures you stay on track throughout the writing process.



#### 2 Strategic Planning

a) **Task Breakdown:** Break down assignments into smaller, more manageable tasks or milestones.

b) **Prioritization:** Prioritize tasks based on deadlines, complexity, and overall importance.

c) **Time Allocation:** Allocate realistic time estimates for each task to avoid underestimating workloads.

#### 3 Resource Optimization

a) **University Resources:** Utilize university resources such as libraries, online databases, and academic support services.

b) **Collaboration:** Work collaboratively with peers through study groups or discussion forums to share insights and perspectives.

c) **Guidance from Teachers:** Seek guidance from teachers or teaching assistants when encountering challenges or uncertainties.



#### 4 Quality Writing

a) **Thorough Proofreading:** Dedicate specific time for thorough proofreading to catch grammatical errors, improve clarity, and enhance overall writing quality.

b) **Feedback Integration:** Actively seek feedback from peers, teachers, or writing centers, and implement constructive suggestions to refine your writing skills.

c) **Reflective Practice:** Reflect on past assignments to identify recurring issues and areas for improvement in your writing style.

## 5 Academic Integrity

a) **Understanding Citation Styles:** Familiarize yourself with citation styles (APA, MLA, etc.) as required by your academic institution.

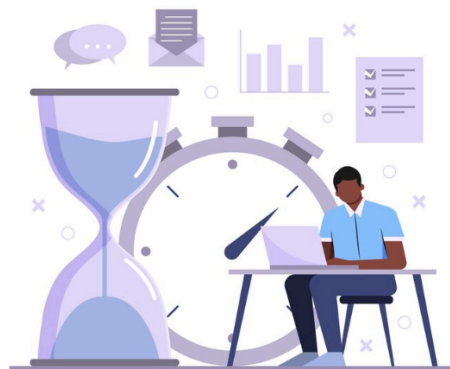
b) **Avoiding Plagiarism:** Understand the consequences of plagiarism and ensure proper citation of sources to maintain academic integrity.

c) **Source Management:** Keep detailed notes on sources during research to facilitate accurate referencing.

## 6 Effective Time Management

a) **Focused Work Sessions:** Allocate focused, uninterrupted time for work to maximize productivity.

b) **Learning from Feedback:** Review and learn from feedback on past assignments to identify areas for improvement and enhance future time management.



## 7 Data Security and Backup

a) **Regular Saving:** Regularly save your work to prevent data loss in case of technical issues.

b) **Backup Strategies:** Implement backup strategies, such as using cloud storage or external devices, to secure your work and prevent potential setbacks.

c) **Version Control:** Use version control tools or features to track changes and revisions, enabling you to revert to previous versions if necessary.



## IV. Key Tips on How to Get Back on Track with Managing University Workload

### 1 Start your work early

If you're a habitual procrastinator, it's time to rethink your approach. Leaving assignments until last minute inevitably creates more stress and does not give you enough time to do your best work.

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Worse, you could forget about an assignment altogether and miss a deadline. It's best to start important projects as early as possible and make a game plan for how you are going to complete the assignment before the due date. This way, you don't have to panic or pull an all-nighter before it's due and you have time to get extra help if you need it.

### 2 Make to-do lists

Making a daily to-do list can help you keep track of your assignments and your other commitments. Studies have shown that writing something down helps you remember it better, so the next time you have a whole list of things to do scattered in your brain, relieve some stress by putting them down on paper. Your to-do list can include tasks as simple as remembering to check your email, exam deadlines and homework reminders. Whatever you think you will forget, be sure to include.

### 3 Use a planner

Using a planner is indispensable for effective task management and organization. In the realm of academia or professional life, where assignments and responsibilities abound, a planner serves as a strategic tool. It aids in outlining deadlines, setting realistic timelines for project completion, and breaking down tasks into manageable steps. A planner not only helps in tracking assignments but also fosters a

proactive approach, allowing individuals to foresee potential challenges and allocate time wisely. By providing a visual roadmap, a planner becomes a guide for success, helping individuals stay on top of their commitments and maintain a well-balanced and structured workflow.



### 4 Prioritize what needs to be done first

Prioritizing is a critical part of making your to-do list. Consider which assignments are most urgent and make sure to complete those first. Tasks that are less urgent, such as going to the dry cleaner, can likely be tackled later when you have more time. Prioritizing your to-do list can help you improve your time management skills and ensure that

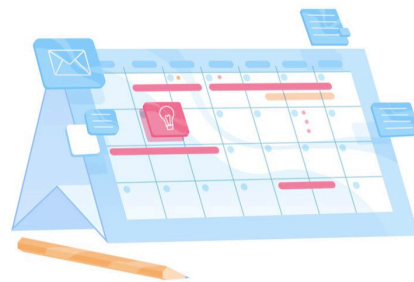
you don't put too much time and effort into something that may not be due for another month.

### 5 School comes first

When things get chaotic (because at some point in the year, they probably will), remind yourself that your schoolwork comes before other activities. Pushing off your assignments to hang out with friends or pick up an extra shift at work will just make it harder to get everything done on time. Starting your assignments early can benefit you in this area and make it easier to stay on track in all aspects of your life.

### 6 Pick one day per week to organize

Choose one day per week as your "organization day" where you can catch up on schoolwork and prioritize the week ahead. If it works for your schedule, Friday is a great day to do this because it's before the start of the regular work week. It doesn't necessarily have to be the whole day either; taking just one hour to sit down and acknowledge what you have going on for the upcoming week can be helpful. This way, you will have no confusion about what your priorities are for each day.



### 7 Find a study buddy

Making a friend in your classes can be extremely helpful in getting your work done. You essentially have a guaranteed study buddy and you can hold each other accountable for getting your work done on time. It also makes preparing for projects and exams much easier because you have someone with which to collaborate, share ideas and ask questions. Forming a study group is another way to reduce procrastination and better prepare for your exams.



### 8 Take breaks

The final and most important tip is to make sure you fit in some time to relax among all the hustle and bustle of college. Taking short breaks between assignments can be a great way to avoid burnout. You never want to compromise your own wellbeing just to get an assignment done. If you are feeling stressed out, take a short break and come back with a fresh outlook. Chances are, the final product you develop will be much stronger.

Balancing university with the other aspects of your life can be a challenge, but a few positive lifestyle changes can make your busy

schedule seem much more manageable. Try to start your work ahead of time or incorporate a new tool like myHomework or Evernote into your life to stay organized. By implementing these tips now, you'll already be on track to a more productive year.

### V. Requirements of Research Assignments

Typically, research-based assignments require you to:

- ▶ break the project down into manageable tasks or steps
- ▶ make a good choice of subject
- ▶ identify appropriate methods, including ways of collating, recording and analysing source materials and data
- ▶ produce a report
- ▶ complete the project on time.

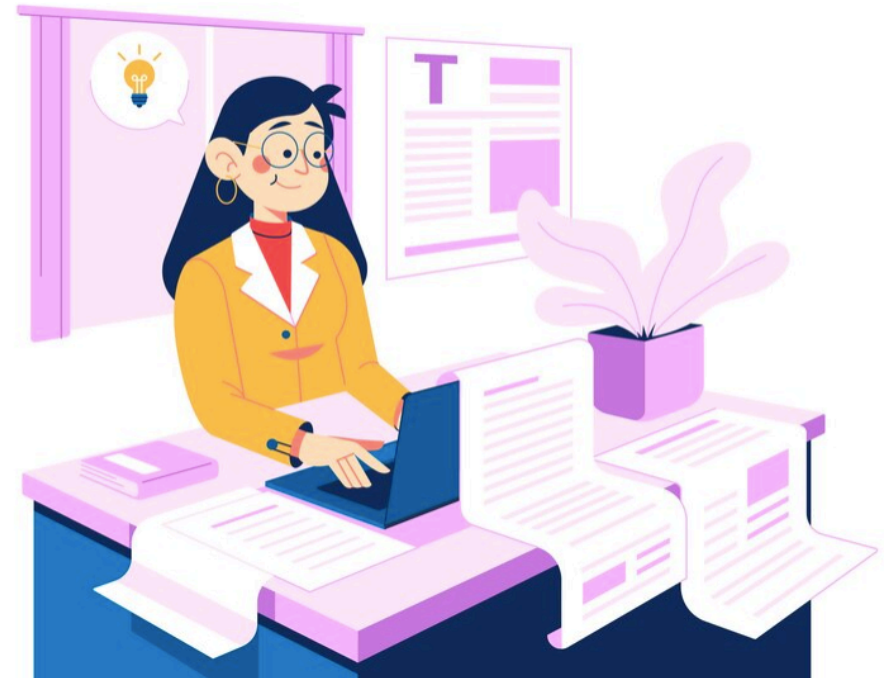
When deciding how much time to spend on an assignment, consider your familiarity with the material, the weight of the assignment and the difficulty of the class as well as how long it will take you to complete it. For example, it makes sense to budget three times as much time to writing a term paper worth 30% than you would in preparing for a term assignment worth 5% of your overall grade. However, you will also want to spend more time on the more difficult classes.

The first time you do a new activity, you're facing a "*double learning curve*"-not only are you learning new material, you are also

learning how to do a particular type of assignment. The first time you write a university-level paper, for example, you'll need to learn how to find appropriate resources, how the library works and what presentation format the teacher expects. Allow extra time for this double learning curve.

### VI. Working on a Larger Project

Projects typically share the following characteristics:



## 1 Unique

In each project, there will be some aspect – the subject matter, the client group, the data or the finished product – that makes it different from everybody else's. Your tutors will be looking to see that your work is original. This does not mean making major discoveries, but you should bring some new angle. This might be that you:

- test out other people's findings for yourself
- conduct a questionnaire or survey so that you can draw conclusions from your own data
- apply existing research to a new area such as by using a different demographic, sample or focus.

## 2 Informed

Although your project will be 'unique' in the ways described above, your tutors want to see that you have used previous research to inform your own project. Your project report should be explicit about how you drew upon previously published materials and well-tried methods in shaping your own project.

## 3 Focused

In elaborating the task, take care to ensure your choice of topic and the scale of work are manageable. Choose a topic that can be researched and completed to a high standard within the set time and word limits. If necessary, narrow the focus so that the workload is

realistic. Avoid large subjects that can only be covered in a superficial way within the time and word limits.

Identify central questions to answer through your research, so that you have a clear focus. Avoid collecting and including material that, though interesting, is not directly related to the project focus. Your tutors will want to see that you can design a manageable, focused project, using an appropriate methodology.

## 4 Set apart, yet relevant

Projects are usually one-off pieces of work, relevant to the course but covering ground chosen by the student. Make clear to your tutor how the subject you have chosen is relevant to the course and its learning outcomes.

## 5 Time-bound

Typically, projects are larger pieces of work than standard essays, with higher word limits and more complexity. The time allocations for projects therefore tend to be greater than for essays. It is important not to let that create complacency: as there is more work to do, it must be carefully planned and managed to avoid problems along the line.

## 6 Managed

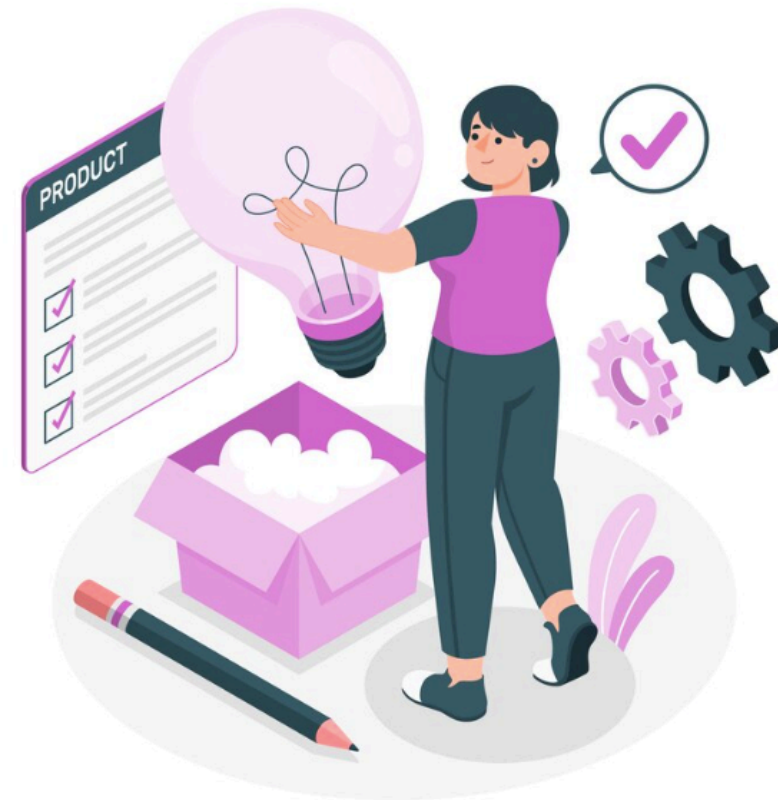
Projects usually require you to think and plan ahead. Pay careful attention to small details. For example, you might need to book

resources well in advance, ensure that participants are available, coordinate schedules with others, design materials and deal with setbacks. These tasks are not necessarily difficult, but take time, thought and good organisation.

### VII. Steps to Complete a Larger Project

For large projects, such as essays, term papers (TD mark papers or presentations) and especially group assignments, you will need to develop a project plan. For example, writing a paper may require the following steps:

- 1) **Choose a topic** - 1 day (Do preliminary research to ensure that the topic is viable, then narrow the topic)
- 2) **Research the topic** - 10 days
- 3) **Prepare an outline** - 1 day
- 4) **Write a rough draft** - 7 days
- 5) **Revise the rough draft** - 5 days (Do a final edit to check grammar and mechanics)
- 6) **Work on other projects while someone** (i.e., teacher, friends, etc.) **reviews the paper and offers suggestions for improvement** - 7 days
- 7) **Complete the final revisions** - 3 days
- 8) **Proofread and print** - 1 day before



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