



**Think Sharp!**

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## Sharp Thinking?

### Maybe you are used to:

- x summarising everything;
- x considering everything equally important;
- x literally learning everything by heart;
- x learning page by page;
- x sticking to a page until you know it perfectly;
- x just learning for a test;
- x learning superficially;
- x waiting until the eve of the exam to start learning.

### Even if this worked well before, it will not be enough at university! You will be confronted with:

- x larger quantities of subject matter;
- x more difficult subject matter;
- x faster lecture speed;
- x more self-study;
- x more freedom;
- x fewer tests.

## Dare to Think!

You should therefore look for an **efficient approach to studying!** Do it on your own initiative. Start by going through this brochure as soon as possible and try out the method and techniques suggested.

If you still have questions or wish to make any comments after having read this brochure, please contact your student counsellor.

## Think Sharp!

# Study Attitude

If you want to complete your studies successfully, the way in which you regard studying (motivation and interest) and the way in which your approach to your studies (method and planning) are of crucial importance. This is how you develop a correct attitude towards studying.

## Motivation and interest (negative → positive)

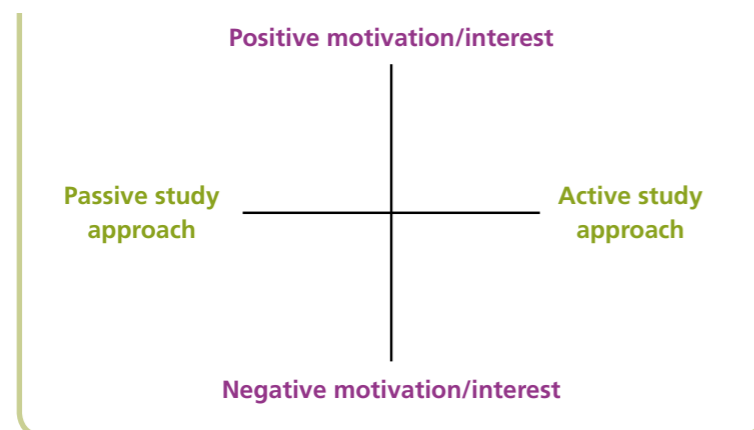
- x Did you choose the study programme following a friend or was it your own choice?
- x Do you have little interest in your studies or are you really fascinated by the subject matter?
- x Do you attend the lectures because you want to find a boyfriend or girlfriend or do you really want to learn something?
- x Did you only choose the study programme in order to make good money or because you are really interested?

Refer to these questions to position yourself on the vertical axis in the figure below.

## Study approach (passive → active)

- x Do you attend lectures because that is what you are expected to do or do you attend the lectures actively (listen attentively, make notes, follow the train of thought, etc.)?
- x Do you wait until you feel like studying or do you plan in advance?
- x Do you just look at the answers to the exercises or do you make the exercise yourself?
- x Do you underline just for the sake of underlining or do you know what you underline?
- x Do you summarize everything as a matter of course or do you first think of how to approach the subject matter?
- x Do you just learn everything by heart or do you try to distinguish the essentials from the minor details and establish links?
- x Do you wait until the preparation time for the exams to assimilate your subject matter or do you try to do it regularly?

Position yourself on the horizontal axis in the figure below by referring to these questions. Join the two points. In which quarter do you find yourself?



The idea is to combine positive motivation and interest with an active approach to studying so as to develop a positive-active study attitude.

## What is a positive-active study attitude?

If you have a positive-active study attitude, you are a student who:

- x studies efficiently;
- x makes great effort;
- x has a flexible approach to studying;
- x plans well;
- x has an inquiring mind;
- x works independently;
- x dares to think critically;
- x perseveres.

## Why study with a positive-active attitude towards studying?

Studying will be much easier if you are very **motivated** to follow the course and show great **interest** in the subjects. You will study more consciously and actively and will be more focused. In this way you will have correct information and realistic expectations about your courses.

You will also develop an **active approach to studying** (an efficient study method and a realistic schedule). The idea is not to do as much as possible but to learn to use appropriate techniques. These skills make studying more pleasant, increase your chances of passing and will definitely also be to your advantage in your further career.

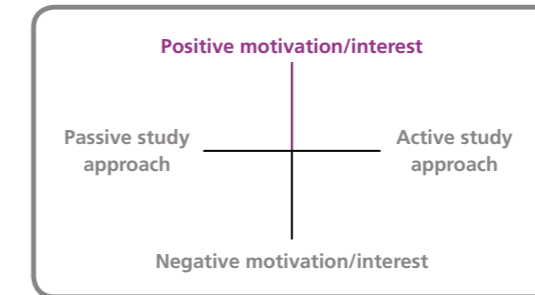
## How do you develop a positive-active study attitude?

You will develop a positive-active attitude towards studying by working at your motivation, interest and approach to studying. The way in which you do that will become clear by applying the techniques and tips in this Think Sharp! brochure.

Studying will be much easier if you are really motivated into following the study programme and show great interest in the subjects.



## Positive motivation and interest



Motivation and interest already played a part in choosing your study programme but you can also develop them further to achieve a positive-active study attitude. The greater your motivation and interest, the easier studying will be.

### How can you improve your motivation and interest?

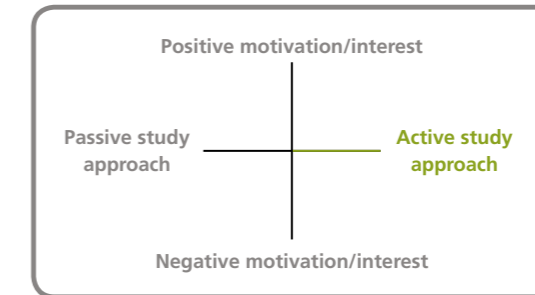
- x Reflect on the subject content, know what you are studying.
- x Search for more information on what is not clear.
- x Work at your courses regularly.
- x Talk about the subject matter and discuss it with others.
- x Make the theory more specific by doing exercises and preparing practicals.
- x Do not just focus on one course but on the entire curriculum.
- x Keep focusing on your final objective (degree, job, etc.).
- x Try to link the theory to everyday life or current events.
- x Do not ignore any difficulties but tackle them.

### Develop an active approach towards studying!

An active approach towards studying means that you develop an efficient study method and learn to plan realistically. Therefore, try to find a good way to study within the time available.



## Active approach



## Study method

An efficient study method consists of six stages:

Stage 1

Gathering information and making notes during lectures

Stage 2

Assimilating subject matter

Exploring

Understanding

Structuring

Stage 3

Studying assimilated subject matter

Stage 4

Actively revising studied subject matter

Stage 5

Sitting exams

Stage 6

Gathering feedback

## STAGE 1

# Gathering information and making notes during lectures

## Gathering information

### Why?

Working independently and actively searching for information is important to **gain an understanding of your curriculum, the courses and the learning material.**

As such, you are reflecting on the best way to deal with these. That is the first step in finding and applying your study method. For example, if the first lecture has given you information on how to present the subject matter at the exam, you can decide on how to assimilate the subject matter within the context of this exam.

### Where?

- x **Minerva**, digital learning platform (<http://minerva.ugent.be>):
  - announcements;
  - documents;
  - forum;
  - ...
- x Course specifications (ECTS-sheets);
- x E-mails to your **UGent account** (<http://webmail.ugent.be>).
- x The UGent **website** and your faculty website.
- x The **monitoring** services and the **faculty student administration (FSA)**.
- x During **the first lecture** of every course:
  - Where and when do you get your learning material?
  - When are the exercises, practicals and rehearsals ?
  - Which assignments and tasks must be done?
  - Whom can you ask about the subject matter?
  - What information do you find on Minerva?
  - What type of exam is used (e.g. written, oral, etc.)?

## Making notes during lectures

### Why attend lectures?

- x This is the introduction to the subject matter.
- x The lecturer emphasises the most important points.
- x You are given additional explanation, examples, illustrations, etc.
- x You discover what the difficult parts of the course are.
- x You feel like starting to assimilate the course.

### Why make your own notes?

- x You pay more attention to the lecture.
- x You do not need to sort out what you already understand.
- x You need notes to assimilate the course.
- x Your own notes are easier to understand.

### How to make good notes?

- x **Briefly go through the subject matter before the lecture.**
- x **Think while you listen actively during the lecture:**
  - What is the lecture about?
  - How is the lecture structured?
  - Do you understand what the lecturer says?
  - Can you distinguish the essentials from the details?
  - What is emphasised?
- x **Adjust the way in which you take notes to the learning material available:**
  - If the slides are available in advance, complete them.
  - If the slides are available after the lecture, refer to them in your notes (title and slide number). Do not simply copy them.
  - If the lecture fully reflects the learning material, restrict yourself to taking down the additional information (applications, graphs, diagrams, links, conclusions, etc.).
  - If the lecture does not closely correspond to the learning material, make notes as structured and complete as possible.
- x **Develop your own style of taking notes:**
  - Limit using full sentences.
  - Use abbreviations, arrows, etc.
  - Refer to the slides (title and slide number).
  - Date and number your notes.
- x **Compare your notes with those of the other students.**

### Tips!

- x Do not write down unnecessary information so that you can still listen to what is being said. You can never take down the entire lecture.
- x Do not make too few notes to avoid losing the lecturer's structure (essentials, new concepts, ideas and links).

## STAGE 2

# Assimilating subject matter

It is important to have an overall view of the learning material before you can assimilate the subject matter (syllabus, manual, notes, slides, etc.). You gain this by paging through your syllabus and asking yourself a few questions, such as:

- x Is there a preface, introduction, index, etc. and can I get useful information out of it?
- x What does the table of contents tell?
- x Which chapters are discussed? In what order?
- x Are there diagrams, tables, graphs and illustrations?
- x Are there exercises?
- x How do the syllabus, notes, slides, etc. link up with one another?

You can start assimilating the subject matter as soon as you have an overview of its structure. Assimilating the subject matter is a **process of "exploring", "understanding" and "structuring"**. This is the ideal moment to take your notes and slides to help you assimilate the essentials.

## Exploring

### Why?

- x To gain a general impression of the subject matter.
- x To find the structure.
- x To discover the general lines.
- x To assess the degree of difficulty.
- x To estimate the time you will need to understand the subject matter.
- x To gain a better understanding of the subject matter when re-reading it.

### How?

Ask yourself a few **questions** while you **screen** the text of a chapter, such as:

- x What does the title of the chapter tell me?
- x Is it a long chapter?
- x Is it a difficult chapter?
- x What is the position of the chapter, what is preceding and following?
- x How is the chapter subdivided (e.g. paragraphs, objective, summary at the end, etc.)?
- x What do you already understand of the titles?
- x What are the general lines of the chapter?
- x How is the subject matter structured?

### Tip!

Attending the lecture helps you answer the above-mentioned questions.  
By actively listening and making notes, you get an overall view of the chapter content.

## Understanding

### Why?

- x You cannot remember what you do not understand.
- x Without understanding you cannot structure the subject matter.
- x To be able to establish links.
- x To find the essence of the chapter.
- x To be able to distinguish the essentials from the details.

### How?

- x Check how the slides, notes and exercises contribute to understanding the essentials.
- x Find the essentials of each paragraph.
- x Follow the train of thought, statements, exercises, techniques, hypotheses, conclusions, etc. as you proceed from one paragraph to the next.
- x Make significant associations, e.g.:
  - Link names and facts to their context.
  - Locate place names on the map.
  - Link the abbreviations to the elements in Mendeleev's Periodic Table.
  - Look at the graphs, tables, etc. to gain a better understanding.
- x Make exercises so as to be able to apply the theory.
- x Try to think of your own applications or examples.



## Structuring

### Why?

- x To have a framework to reconstruct the subject matter.
- x To ensure that your chapter is ready for re-assimilating.
- x To memorise the subject matter more easily.

### How?

There are various ways of structuring. You can apply the following techniques to a chapter or a paragraph:

#### x Underlining and making notes in the text:

- Underline key words and key ideas.
- Make your own titles in a long continuous text.
- Put key words in the margin, e.g. “definition”, “example”, “application”, “conclusion”, etc.
- Put question marks in the margin next to parts that you do not understand and look for the answer in the manual, your notes, on Minerva, ask other students or the study counsellors, etc.

#### x Asking questions and finding answers:

Look for what, why, who, when, how, etc. in order to find structured answers.

#### x Drawing up schemes:

Look for the main concepts in the text. Then indicate the relationship between the concepts so that you gain an insight into the processes, reasoning and proof.

#### x Drawing up tables:

Organise the information in a table so that you have a clear image of the similarities and differences between objects, theories, authors, movements, proofs, drawings, etc.

#### x Doing exercises:

- Do (new) exercises without looking at the answers.
- Read the instructions carefully and assess what is being asked. Determine a solution strategy. Check the result and ask yourself whether it is realistic.
- Write down all the stages in the solution process to see how you get to the answer.
- Do not just do the easy exercises but dare to vary the type of exercises and their degree of difficulty.
- Indicate the exercises that you must definitely repeat in a later stage.

#### x Compiling glossaries:

Take concepts from the syllabus, link them to the course, describe them and provide / look for an example to go with them.

#### x Making summaries:

Summarising is the best-known technique but it is only efficient when used correctly.

It is a handy technique to apply to certain parts of a course (e.g. for difficult and extensive chapters, foreign-language articles, etc.) but:

- Do not apply the technique to an entire course because summarising is time-consuming and does not always yield sufficient results.
- If you merely copy text in an abbreviated form without thinking about it, then you skip the “understanding” part of the subject matter.
- Do not use someone else’s summaries because you will understand the subject matter better using self-made summary.

### Tips!

#### x Take your notes and slides because they help you to structure the subject matter:

- Essentials and details as indicated during the lecture can help you when making schemes.
- You can use examples given during the lecture to compile a glossary.
- A solution strategy for doing exercises is often given during lectures.
- Comparisons and links made by the lecturer help you draw up comparative tables.
- etc.

Once your notes and slides have been integrated while structuring the subject matter, you have prepared a complete ready-to-study package.

#### x One course, different techniques:

It is not necessary to apply only one technique to the entire course. In the one chapter, it is sufficient to underline and make notes in the text and in another chapter it may be better to draw up schemes. You can even apply different techniques (or a combination of them) in one chapter.

#### x Experiment with techniques:

Try out a number of techniques to find a study method that suits you.

**Assimilating the subject matter is a process of “exploring”, “understanding” and “structuring” that you apply per chapter (or part of a chapter). You must respect the logical order of this process but you will notice that you can sometimes perform those three actions simultaneously.**

## STAGE 3

# Studying assimilated subject matter

The moment you are exploring, understanding and structuring, you are already memorising (part of) the subject matter. You must still study (swot) the assimilated subject matter to be able to retain it.

### Why?

- x To remember it longer.
- x To be able to clearly present and apply the subject matter during the exams.
- x To accumulate knowledge that you need for other courses.
- x To gather knowledge that you can later apply in your job.

### How?

There are **two ways** of studying the subject matter, depending on what type of subject matter it is. Disconnected subject matter (e.g. vocabulary, names, chemical symbols, etc.) can just be “learnt by heart”. But most of the subject matter is interrelated and, in that case, “meaningful studying” is the only method that works.

### How do you just “learn by heart”?

- x Divide the subject matter into small amounts to learn each part by heart.
- x Study actively: do not merely read and re-read but also reproduce (e.g. cover and read out).
- x Revise regularly! Short spans of revision yield much more than consecutively revising large amounts of subject matter at a time.
- x Where possible or necessary, use mnemotechnical aids (e.g. form letter words, associate words with objects/rooms in the house, categorise long summaries, etc.).

### How do you “study meaningfully”?

- x Start by studying the structure (the so-called frameworks) and link the details.
- x Use the material that you made while assimilating it (schemes, tables, glossaries, exercises, etc.) because you can recall it more easily through the links and associations that you made at that stage.
- x Re-do exercises or make applications that you made earlier and that you were not able to do or use well.
- x Study the solution method of the exercises so that you can apply them instead of just “learning” the exercise “by heart”.

## STAGE 4

# Actively revising studied subject matter

### Why?

When you have studied the subject matter you must **check if you master it completely**. You do not do this by always re-reading the assimilated subject matter because by doing that, you only test whether you recognise it, not whether you master it! You must actively revise the subject matter.

### How?

- x Try to “reconstruct” the subject matter and use the material that you made when processing it (schemes, table of contents, etc.) as a means to check which parts you do not yet master adequately.
- x Solve samples and/or exercises and check your answers by referring to the manual.
- x Do available on-line tests.
- x Discuss and explain particular topics with fellow students and pretend that you are the one giving the lecture.
- x Revise the subject matter that you find most difficult first. You need not revise your course chronologically.
- x If necessary, revise according to the form in which the exam is organised (e.g. revise orally for an oral exam).

**Try to repeat cycles of stage 1 up to and including stage 4 during the semester.**

**You need not first apply one stage to the entire course to be able to proceed to the next stage.**

**You can complete a number of stages consecutively per chapter or per part of a chapter.**

**You can decide to study a certain chapter after structuring it, for example.**

## STAGE 5

# Sitting exams

If you have gone through the previous stages properly during the semester, you will be in an ideal position to tackle the exam period. But doing exams is a skill in its own right. You will also apply the process of **exploring, understanding and structuring** that you used to assimilate the subject matter (stage 2), to the exams. The manner depends on the **examination method**.

### Written exams with open questions

#### Exploring

- x How many questions are there?
- x What type of questions are there?
- x What is the breakdown of the marks?
- x How much time do you have for the entire exam and therefore per question?  
Keep this in mind so that you do not run out of time.

#### Understanding

- x How difficult is every question? You can use this knowledge to determine the order in which you will answer the questions.
- x What exactly is asked (clarification, explanation, definition, application, comparison, etc.)? If you have assimilated the subject matter properly, you will immediately make the correct link with the course.
- x Thoroughly analyse the exercise instructions. What information is already provided and what must you still calculate?

#### Structuring

- x First formulate the answer schematically in rough before you write down your final version on the answer form.
- x Check that you have answered all the parts of the question and, in particular, that you have replied to the question.
- x When working out exercises, incorporate as many checks as possible so that you can notice any mistakes in your calculation in time and not only when you get to the final result.
- x Calmly read your answers again to check content and any spelling or grammar mistakes. This is also the ideal moment to emphasise key concepts by underlining them.

### Written exams with multiple-choice questions

#### Exploring

- x Is there a correction for guessing or not?
- x How many questions are there?
- x Are there only multiple-choice questions or also open-ended questions?
- x How much time do you have for the entire exam and therefore per question?  
Keep this in mind so that you do not run out of time.

#### Understanding

- x How difficult is every question? You can use this knowledge to determine the order in which you will answer the questions.
- x What exactly is asked? If you have assimilated the subject matter properly, you will immediately make the correct link with the course (sometimes even before you have read the possible answers).
- x Read the question and the possible answers carefully. Note the key words, sentence structure (e.g. double negations, etc.).

#### Structuring

- x Work in "rounds". Answer only the questions of which you know the answer for sure during the first round. Answer the questions for which you have your doubts between two answers during the second round. In the case of a correction for guessing, leave out the questions where you have your doubts between three or four answers.
- x Where possible, answer the questions by process of elimination. By using that process you exclude all answer possibilities of which you are certain that they are incorrect.
- x If you notice that the response items listed confuse you, first think up your own answer and subsequently compare it to the answers provided.

## Oral exams

### Exploring

- x Is there an opportunity to prepare for the exam in writing?
- x How much time do you get to prepare?
- x How many questions are there?
- x What type of questions are there?

### Understanding

- x If you are allowed time to prepare, then read the question very carefully. If you are not allowed to prepare for the exam, listen very attentively to what is being asked. In this case, also pay attention to additional information that the lecturer may give you (additional explanation, example, emphasis, etc.).
- x What exactly is being asked (clarification, explanation, definition, application, comparison, etc.)? If you have assimilated the subject matter properly, you will immediately make the correct link with the course when reading or hearing the question.
- x If you do not immediately understand what the lecturer means, do not hesitate to ask for an explanation! It can yield an additional tip.

### Structuring

- x In the case of written preparation, use the strategy outlined above under the heading "Structuring a written exam with open questions".
- x Be clear and give an overview in your explanation. In this way you will structure your answer, which will enable you to establish links more easily.

## Open-book exams

In the case of open-book exams, you may bring and use (part of) your learning material. This seems easier to study. However, open-book exams are much more difficult, precisely because the answers to the questions cannot be found literally in the learning material. You must formulate an answer of your own and base it on your understanding of the subject matter. This will be easier if you have done stage 2 thoroughly.

### Exploring

- x How many questions are there?
- x What type of questions are there?
- x What is the breakdown of the marks?
- x How much time do you have for the entire exam and therefore per question? Keep this in mind so that you do not run out of time.

### Understanding

- x How difficult is each question?
- x What exactly is being asked (clarification, explanation, definition, application, comparison, etc.)? If you have assimilated the subject matter properly, you will be able to formulate a good answer based on your study material.
- x Thoroughly analyse the exercise instructions. What information has already been provided and what must you still calculate?

### Structuring

- x In the case of open-book exams, use the strategy outlined above under the heading "Structuring a written exam with open questions".
- x Be creative with the learning material.
- x Demonstrate links, substantiate your allegations by referring to the course and actively apply the subject matter.

## STAGE 6

# Gathering feedback

You are given the opportunity of having a look at your exams and asking the lecturer and/or assistants for feedback **after every examination period**. You must definitely use this opportunity if you have disappointing results.

### Why?

- x To discover your weak points.
- x To be given guidelines to a different study approach.
- x To have an overall view of the exam.
- x To learn from your mistakes:
  - You answered totally beside the point (e.g. consequence instead of cause).
  - You did give an account of the facts but did not provide a framework or context to show that you also have a thorough understanding of the subject matter.
  - Your answers were too superficial, you only provided the broad outlines and cited too few details, etc.
  - You were indeed able to provide the theory but were unable to apply it to the exercises.
  - You could do the exercises but you did not accurately answer the question on the theory.
  - You left out a few questions.
  - etc.

### How?

- x Approach it constructively, do not argue about your examination marks.
- x Ask questions if anything is not clear.
- x Be open to remarks, do not immediately be on the defensive.
- x Learn to cope with criticism.
- x Make brief notes on the tips that you are given and do not forget to use them.

### Tip!

- x Go to the multiple-choice exam feedback too!

Planning is being aware of the time available and determining on your own how you will manage it. To draw up a planning schedule you must therefore spread your activities (following lectures, studying, eating and sleeping, doing your hobbies, etc.) over the time available.



# Active study approach

## Study planning

### Why?

- x You have more control over what you do and do not do.
- x You create a balance between work and time leisure.
- x You have a view of what has already been done and what still has to be done.
- x It has a motivating effect.
- x You will realise in time that something may go wrong and can therefore intervene and avoid panic.

### How?

There are three types of schedules to be planned: semester, weekly, study and exam schedules.

#### Semester schedule

When planning a semester schedule, put your practicals, (trial) exams, assignment deadlines and personal activities on a calendar. This will give you an overall view of what to do during that semester.

#### Weekly schedule

When planning a weekly schedule, put all your specific activities (following lectures, studying, eating, sleeping, transport, social obligations, hobbies, etc.) on a weekly schedule (including the weekend). Consult your semester schedule and keep a to-do-list to plan your weekly schedule.

A to-do list is a list of tasks on which you continually update and cross out clearly defined tasks. You determine the tasks per subject, preferably after every lecture, and base these on the subject matter you have dealt with. These tasks must be specific, e.g. do exercises of Chapter 2, read and underline Chapter 4, make a scheme on the subject matter from p. 3 to p. 20, etc. (use the techniques outlined in stage 2 "assimilating subject matter" for this). Estimate per task how much time you will need to do this. Your to-do list is never completely empty, you do cross out tasks but also you continually add to the list.

#### Study and exam schedule

Plan a separate schedule for the study and exam period. This is easier if you have mastered the principles of the weekly schedule.

## Planning a weekly schedule step by step

**STEP 1:** Fill in lectures, practicals, exercises, seminars, etc. (in brief, all activities associated with your studies) on a blank weekly schedule.

**STEP 2:** Fill in your extracurricular activities: sports, parties, etc.

**STEP 3:** Fill in the moments during which you eat, sleep, go to the supermarket, clean, go from one place to the other, etc.

**STEP 4:** Incorporate the tasks from your to-do list in your weekly schedule (set priorities and make conscious choices).

### Tips!

- x **Know yourself**, e.g.:
  - If you know that you tend to linger on in the pub late at night, do not expect yourself to be at your desk at the crack of dawn the next day.
  - When are you most productive? If you are a morning person then schedule the more difficult tasks of your to-do list in the morning. Plan the other tasks on your to-do list during your less productive times.
- x Make sure that you have enough **variation** in pleasant and less pleasant tasks in your to-do list.  
Do not postpone bothersome tasks.
- x Do not schedule the week completely; provide the necessary **buffers** for unforeseen circumstances.
- x Ensure that there is a healthy **equilibrium** between studying and leisure in your schedule. Cross out secondary activities if you notice that there is insufficient time for studying.
- x Work **flexibly** with your schedule but make sure that the scheduled tasks are finished by the end of the week.
- x **Evaluate** your schedule. If it did not work out, then check where it went wrong (planned too much, at the wrong time, did not follow the schedule, etc.) and make the necessary adjustments. Do not just give up on the schedule! Dare to think and keep experimenting until it works out for you.

## Planning the study and exam schedule step by step

**STEP 1:** Estimate per subject how many days you need to study the subject matter.

**How?** By asking yourself a number of questions:

- x Is it an easy or a more difficult chapter?
- x Is it a long or a short chapter?
- x Have I already assimilated the chapter or not?
- x Have I already studied this chapter or not (e.g. to read a trial exam)?

**What should I NOT do?** Divide purely mathematically, such as: there are 8 chapters, so I will do 2 per day and therefore I need 4 days.

**STEP 2:** Estimate per subject how much time you need to revise the subject matter immediately before the exams.

**STEP 3:** Take blank (weekly) time schedules for the study and exam period and fill in the days on which you will be doing exams.

**STEP 4:** Cross out the days or times at which there are fixed activities, e.g. Christmas, etc.

**STEP 5:** Compare the time that you think you will need (total of Steps 1 and 2) with the time that you actually have at your disposal.

If the time actually available is less than the time needed:

- x Look again at Steps 1 and 2 to see if you have estimated everything realistically.
- x Look again at Step 4 to see if you can cross out any fixed activities, which will free time for studying.
- x See whether you can increase the number of hours that you study per day.

**STEP 6:** Now fix the times in your weekly schedule when you will study and revise which course.

**STEP 7:** Further divide the days provided per course subject; allocate specific tasks to them. If the estimated number of days for a subject is 6, for example, then it is important that you divide up the course and then fix in your weekly schedule what you will do per day (that can be easily done by referring to what you did in Step 1).

### Tips!

- x Plan some **leisure activities** in your study and exam schedule.
- x If possible, leave some **time blank** in your schedule, so that you have some leeway if something unexpected crops up. Leave a blank space after a subject for which you suspect that you may have provided too little time, for example.

You can easily check where things went wrong by referring to feedback and your own experience.



## Evaluating and making adjustments

If you have not passed one or more exams, you must check what went wrong, so that you can work at a positive-active attitude towards studying for it (motivation, interest, study method and study planning). It may be useful to make adjustments where necessary, even if you have achieved good results.

### How?

Combine the information that you are given at the feedback with your own experiences to assess yourself and make adjustments. Do this by referring to the statements below.

- I almost never attended the lectures.
- I was not captivated by most of the subjects.
- I have the feeling that I am not in the right place.
- **Make an appointment with a student counsellor at the monitoring service.**
  
- I did not attend the lecture because I thought that it served no purpose.
- I went to the lecture but I was unable to make proper notes.
- I expected something different from the exams.
- **Look at Stage 1 again and work out how you can gather and retain information during the lecture (pp. 10-12).**
  
- I have the feeling that I worked hard but it did not yield any results.
- I made proper notes but did not use them.
- I did not have an overall view of my subject matter.
- I read and understood the subject matter but I did not structure it.
- I limited the assimilating too much to reading and underlining.
- When assimilating the theory, I did too few exercises and made too few applications.
- I assimilated page by page but I did not look for the links between the different parts of the subject matter.
- **Something clearly went wrong in assimilating the subject matter. Look at Stage 2 again (pp. 13-17).**



- I learnt page by page.
- I just learnt the course by heart.
- I limited studying to reading and re-reading.
- I only studied the general lines.
- I repeated too few exercises when studying.

→ **Studying the subject matter properly is closely connected to assimilating it. Therefore, do not just look at Stage 3 (p. 18) but also at Stage 2 (pp. 13-17).**

- I did not revise the subject matter.
- I revised the subject matter passively by just reading it.

→ **It is essential to actively revise the subject matter. Therefore, look again at the tips in Stage 4 (p. 19).**

- My answers were much too superficial.
- I misunderstood the exam questions.
- I did not have enough time to answer all questions.

→ **Sitting exams is a skill in its own right. Therefore, use the tips in Stage 5 (pp. 20-23). Take into account that disappointing results can also be due to not properly following Stage 1 up to and including Stage 4. Go through these stages again (pp. 10-19).**

- I started too late.
- I did not work according to a schedule.
- I tried to work with a schedule but could not stick to it.
- I worked with a schedule but always ran out of time.
- I had a schedule but it was not specific enough.
- I did not have any time left to revise the subject matter.
- I found it difficult to estimate how much time I needed to study a subject.

→ **Learning to plan is essential. Use the step-by-step plans (pp. 28-29) to plan a realistic schedule during the week and the study and exam period.**

#### **Do you have any further questions?**

**Contact a student counsellor at the monitoring service. The contact data of the monitoring service of your faculty can be found at [www.UGent.be/en](http://www.UGent.be/en) > education and study > study support > monitoring service.**

Everyone will recognise these obstacles in some way or other. It is important, however, to pay attention to these matters and, if necessary, to do something about them in due course.



# Appendix

## Possible study obstacles

### PROCRASTINATION

Everyone wants to put off an unpleasant chore or prefers to do something that is actually less important. For example, you do the dishes or clean your digs when you could just as well be studying. Such behaviour is not abnormal or worrying. Procrastination is a form of rational behaviour. Short-term and long-term goals to be achieved are weighed up against one another.

Procrastination becomes a problem if it is continuously repeated and becomes chronic. A pattern is manifested in which unpleasant tasks and study assignments are always put off: e.g. underlining the entire semester and just not getting stuck into studying as such or continuing to go out, also when the exams are upon you; or always regarding difficult tasks as less urgent.

Putting things off can become a habit that causes much unpleasantness and produces a permanently restless feeling. In the long term there is more stress and disorganisation having a negative influence on study results. In addition, it often leads to negative emotions such as a feeling of incompetence, doubting oneself, guilt, shame, etc. These negative feelings again encourage procrastination, which causes a vicious circle.

### LACK OF ASSERTIVITY

Assertiveness is the expression of your thoughts and opinions in an honest, clear and direct manner. Assertive behaviour is making clear what you want and what you do not want and involves taking personal responsibility and making choices. You stand up for your interests in a way that is appropriate to the situation and which also shows respect for yourself and for others. It concerns a positive attitude when you are able to set limitations and stand up for your opinions, give and accept criticism, say "no" without feeling guilty, say "yes" when you agree, etc.

In practice it sometimes seems not so simple to live assertively. We do not wish to hurt other people or we are afraid of being hurt ourselves and follow the path of the least resistance. In that case we speak of "sub-assertiveness". Sub-assertive behaviour is especially characterised by conflict-avoiding and evasive behaviour. You have a specific question about the subject matter but you nevertheless do not dare put the question after the lecture. You do not understand the question at an oral exam but you do not dare ask for an explanation. If people ask you something, you tend to say "yes", even if you mean "no". If you have to finish an assignment and friends invite you to go out, then you do not have the courage to explain the situation and you go out anyway.

By not standing up for yourself and your own interests, tension, stress and a feeling of discontent start building up. This leads to a growing uncertainty and can have a negative effect on your studies.

## STRESS

Stress is a concept that takes up a very central position in our current society and is mostly used in a negative context. Yet stress is essential and a dose of stress is even healthy. Any change (positive or negative) necessitating adjustment causes stress. Stress encourages you to make an effort and ensures that you get your work done. Stress puts your body in a state of readiness: your pulse quickens, you start breathing faster, your muscles tense up, etc. This enables you to react faster, for example, if there is suddenly a car in front of your bicycle. Stress also enables you to concentrate when working on an assignment or doing a difficult exam. The tension disappears of its own accord once the event has passed.

Stress is healthy as long as the demands set for someone do not exceed that person's ability to cope with it. As such, there must be an equilibrium between bearing load and bearing capacity. External situations (e.g. too much work pressure, relationship problems, etc.) and personality (e.g. perfectionism) or aptitude (slightly more stress sensitive) can cause or reinforce stress.

However, stress becomes unhealthy when it is too intense or continues for too long. You start suffering from bodily complaints such as headaches, sleeping badly, palpitations, eating disorders, etc. In addition, mental afflictions such as restlessness, worrying thoughts, irritation and listlessness will start cropping up.

Stress goes with studying and doing exams. Not being able to cope with study stress or other forms of stress puts a strain on the smooth course of your studies.

## FEAR OF FAILURE

Fear of failure is a special form of fear that can occur in (task) situations in which performance is expected. Fear of failure is a completely normal and widespread phenomenon. Everyone can imagine this because it happens to everyone (to a greater or lesser extent). If you cannot handle fear of failure and you suffer from it, then we refer to negative fear of failure.

Fear of failure is manifested in all types of bodily reactions, ways of thinking and behaviour. If there is fear of having mental performance assessed, then we refer to this as cognitive fear of failure. You are so afraid of not passing the exam, for example, that you seize up completely at the exam. However, if fear originates particularly from the expectation of a negative assessment of one's social behaviour, we refer to social fear of failure. You then feel extremely tense, for example, if you must speak out something in front of a large group of people or if the lecturer asks you a question in front of the whole group. Fear when performing tasks whereby one's motor skills are required (drawing and bodily expression) is referred to as motor skills fear of failure.

These various forms of fear of failure can also appear in a combined form. Fear of failure does not only occur in educational situations. You can just as well suffer from it in your sports club, at a party, etc.

The manner in which one copes with fear of failure can differ substantially from one person to the next.

In the case of fear of failure some people start studying harder and frantically try to memorise more and learn all details (active fear of failure). Others will avoid all their work and courses so as not to be confronted with their fear (passive fear of failure).

## PANIC

Panic is a sudden intense form of shock or fear. It can strike an individual or a large number of people simultaneously. Often there is no clearly defined cause, you feel like getting sick and vague feelings of fear start taking the upper hand.

A panic attack is characterised by a number of bodily phenomena (e.g. palpitations, difficulty in breathing, nausea, dizziness, etc.) and psychological symptoms (e.g. feeling that nothing is real, that you are losing control or going mad, etc.). You need not necessarily have all the complaints but there is always an intense fear or discomfort that reaches a maximum peak in a short time span. A panic attack is an extremely frightening experience and a "fear of the fear" is often caused after such an attack. There is a fear of experiencing something similar again and then especially in places where there are many people, for example or from where it is difficult to escape, such as an auditorium.

The risk is that you start avoiding these places, as a result of which the problem is perpetuated. Such avoidance often starts with small things/situations such as no longer going to the supermarket at busy times, avoiding busy parties, no longer attending lectures in large auditoriums, for example. The fear and avoidance will start taking over your life and that of your environment after a while. In the long term you become so fearful and insecure that your freedom becomes increasingly restricted. Attending lectures or reading exams then becomes an exceptionally heavy task.

**Everyone will recognise these obstacles in some way or other. It is important, however, to pay attention to these matters and, if necessary, do something about them in due course. You mostly solve the problems yourself or with the help of friends or acquaintances. Professional assistance or a helping hand can sometimes be advisable. There are two psychologists at the Advisory Centre for Students to whom you can turn if you have study problems or personal issues.**

**Appointments can be made in the Advisory Centre for Students:  
[www.UGent.be/adviescentrum](http://www.UGent.be/adviescentrum).**



For all further information, please contact  
the monitoring service of your faculty



[www.UGent.be/monitoraat](http://www.UGent.be/monitoraat)



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