



# STUDY SKILLS AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Selwyn College

Michaelmas Term 2017

# OVERVIEW: KEY THEMES

- THE COLLEGE'S EXPECTATIONS
- PLANNING, *BALANCE* AND PRIORITIES
- TAKING ADVICE AND LISTENING
- DON'T OVER-COMMIT
- ANXIETY COMES FROM NOT DISCUSSING PROBLEMS OR DEALING WITH THEM
- DEALING WITH 'IMPOSTOR SYNDROME'



# TRANSITION

- A big step up from Sixth-Form work; taking responsibility for your own learning
- Study habits and exam techniques from school will not all be transferable to Cambridge
- Constructive criticism is the norm here, such feedback helps you improve
- It isn't a comment on you as a person
- Success entails relating course elements to one another – each year builds on the previous one(s)



# EXPECTATIONS

- The College assumes all those admitted can achieve a good 2.1, if they work hard
- The College expects students to:
  - Seek full and frank feedback throughout the year
  - Use advice constructively
  - Spread work evenly across the whole year
  - Make fulfilling their academic potential a year-long priority



# PLANNING AND ORGANISING

- Effective planning is the best way to manage anxiety
- Plan well in advance to anticipate issues and to get the most out of your time
- Block out sensible and sustainable patterns of work and other activities and stick to plans
- Meet deadlines, don't miss them by seeking perfection
- Build in redundancy/rewards, plan for the unexpected
- Regular routines are important but need to be flexible
- Work may suffer if you do not build in a manageable range of other activities



# BALANCING

- In a job a working week = 35-40 hours, more at busy times. The same is true here, so:
- Average that across the year, more at busy times
- Account for your time in 10-15 minute segments – how long do you *actually* spend working?
- Work efficiently rather than just a lot
- Consider using the [Pomodoro](#) technique
- Sleep, diet, lifestyle bolster efficient working



# PRIORITIES

- Work comes first
- Keep your love of subject alive
- Knowing when to stop
- Learning to say no to friends
- [Apps to avoid digital distractions](#)
- Focus on the long-term goal of Tripos
- Plan for vacation study activities



# DIFFERENT TYPES OF WORK

- Lectures, supervisions, classes – how they fit together
- Consolidate work in the vacations
- Note-taking – to what end?
- Don't read/listen passively, have a reason for doing it
- Take College tests seriously
- Ensure early practice of Tripos questions
- Don't rely on cribs or model answers until *after* you have done work yourself independently
- Focus evenly on all aspects, work as hard on your best as your perceived weakest topics
- Reflect and learn from experience



# SEEK ADVICE

- Learn about marking schemes and key skills
- What works? What works *for you*?
- How do we know what is working?
- Use the many sources of support
- Never hesitate to ask questions, especially when you don't understand something
- Seeking advice early averts crises
- Reflect critically on advice



# STUDY SKILLS SUPPORT

- Supervisors, DoSes and Tutors are on your side and will help
- Everyone experiences problems
- Lots of support inside and outside Selwyn
- Online resources
- Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellows
- Quizlet, Anki, Isaac Physics sample questions
- New reading in the exam term is good revision



# BEHAVIOUR

- Don't try to mislead supervisors by sounding emptily confident if you are not
- Beware of others' claims of how much/little work they do
- Don't be aggressively competitive or show off, it detracts from your experience and that of others
- Such behaviour can reflect academic insecurity
- Don't just repeat things that don't work



# LESSONS FROM PAST EXPERIENCE

- Students with disappointing results have usually:
  - Evaded doing practice Tripos questions
  - Not sought advice and help in timely fashion
  - Avoided discussing work with their peers
  - Been too passive in supervisions
  - Not made good use of the vacations to consolidate work
- ‘I did not feel ready’ was a common rationalisation for these behaviours
- Demoralisation and under-motivation are a consequence of not seeking help



# JUDGING PROGRESS

- Students often misjudge how they are doing or how much work is needed – ask
- Listen carefully to feedback, read and reflect on supervisors' reports
- Tell supervisors how *you* think work is going
- Use tests and reports to reassure yourself
- Judge yourself against criteria and not against your abstract idea of ideal progress or what you imagine 'everyone' to be achieving



# PEER SUPPORT

- Discuss work with your peers outside supervisions – study buddies
- Share problems and solutions together, it is helpful technically and good for morale
- The explainer gains as well as the person to whom something is explained
- Present about project work if you get the chance



# Resilience

- Overcoming problems builds confidence
- Concentrate on positives as well as negatives
- Focus forward on solutions, not backwards on problems
- Remember things that are going well
- Recall past episodes where you overcame problems or succeeded – rehearse this
- Take the long view of success not just the immediate



# Key Messages

- Everyone admitted here has potential to succeed and you belong here because of that
- The transition to University worries everyone
- Plan, reflect, be realistic
- Ask for advice and act upon it
- Deal with problems early, don't let them grow
- Keep a healthy work-life balance
- Enjoy your studies, remember why you are here

