**PROJECT PLANS TO DEMONSTRATE PROGRESS**

**by Simon Moss**

Occasionally, you will need to develop a project plan—a plan of the goals you want to achieve, the activities you want to implement, and the skills you want to develop over the next three to six months. In some instances, you might choose to develop a project plan to motivate yourself and to communicate your goals and activities to your supervisors. In other instances, supervisors or deans might instruct you to develop a project plan because they feel you could progress more rapidly. This document is designed to help you construct these plans.

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| **Sample plan** |

Here is a sample plan. As this sample demonstrates, your plan should indicate

* The main goals you would like to achieve in the designated time—such as three months or six months
* The activities you plan to complete to achieve these goals—including the knowledge or skills you plan to acquire.
* The dates during which you plan to initiate and complete these activities.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goal or activity | Start date | End date | Tick the plans you fulfill |
| **Goal 1: Write preliminary methodology and methods section for Study 1** | 2 Feb 2019 | 2 April 2019 |  |
| Consult supervisors and other academics or specialists on which sources to read | 2 Feb 2019 | 5 Feb 2019 |  |
| Read textbook information about methodology and methods | 6 Feb 2019 | 20 Feb 2019 |  |
| Consult supervisors after reading methodology and methods | 21 Feb 2019 | 22 Feb 2019 |  |
| Read papers that have utilized similar methodologies and methods | 23 Feb 2019 | 5 Mar 2019 |  |
| Transcribe notes on the key details to include | 6 Mar 2019 | 10 Mar 2019 |  |
| Order these details to construct a preliminary plan | 11 Mar 2019 | 12 Mar 2019 |  |
| Seek feedback on the preliminary plan | 13 Mar 2019 | 14 Mar 2019 |  |
| Update preliminary plan | 15 Mar 2019 | 16 Mar 2019 |  |
| Write first draft | 17 Mar 2019 | 20 Mar 2019 |  |
| Read articles on how to optimize writing | 21 Mar 2019 | 25 Mar 2019 |  |
| Apply these insights to refine the first draft | 26 Mar 2019 | 1 April 2019 |  |
| **Goal 2: Complete ethics application** | 2 April 2019 | 2 May 2019 |  |
| Consult supervisors to identify key ethical issues to consider, such as implicit coercion | 3 April 2019 | 4 April 2019 |  |
| Consult with relevant stakeholders about the project | 5 April 2019 | 15 April 2019 |  |
| Discuss with supervisors or other academics how to resolve these ethical issues | 16 April 2019 | 20 April 2019 |  |
| Begin a rough draft of the ethics application | 21 April 2019 | 25 April 2019 |  |
| Seek feedback from supervisors on the ethics application | 26 April 2019 | 27 April 2019 |  |
| Refine and submit the ethics application | 28 April 2019 | 30 April 2019 |  |
|  | Estimated number of work days: 90 | | |

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| **Common activities to include** |

When you construct these project plans, one common challenge is to estimate the duration you might need to complete these activities. Most activities will demand longer than you predict—a bias called the planning fallacy.

The next table presents some activities that students often need to complete as well as rough estimates of the time they might need to complete these activities. This table could help construct a feasible project plan. That is, to contruct your plan, you could extract some of these activities.

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| Activity | Estimated duration |
| **Knowledge and skill development** |  |
| Reading the textbook or other basic material about a specific topic | 1 to 5 days |
| Conducting an extensive literature search | 1 to 3 days |
| Reading all the relevant abstracts on a specific topic | 1 to 5 days |
| Reading the key papers on a specific topic | 1 to 5 days |
| Conducting a systematic literature review | 10 to 20 days |
| Observing workshops on a topic—including online tutorials | 1 to 5 days |
| Practicing a technical skill | 1 to 5 days |
| Develop writing skills | 1 to 10 days |
| **Seeking feedback** |  |
| Sessions with supervisors—including preparation | 2 to 6 hours per month |
| Discussions with stakeholders—including preparation | 1 to 5 days |
| Sessions with other academics or specialists | 1 to 3 hours per month |
| **Designing your research** |  |
| Collating your ideas | 1 to 2 days |
| Developing the research questions | 1 to 2 days |
| Reading textbooks on potential methodologies and methods | 1 to 3 days |
| Reading papers about the potential methodologies and methods | 1 to 3 days |
| Deciding upon your research methodologies and methods | 1 to 2 days |
| **Submitting an ethics application** |  |
| Identifying ethical issues | 1 to 2 days |
| Addressing these ethical issues | 1 to 2 days |
| Completing a first draft of the ethics application | 1 to 2 days |
| Optimizing the ethics application | 1 to 2 days |
| **Developing the research proposal and oral defense** |  |
| Collate the key details to include—after reading previous research proposals | 1 to 5 days |
| Arrange these details to generate a detailed plan of the research proposal | 1 to 5 days |
| Write a rough draft of the research proposal | 5 to 10 days |
| Optimize the research proposal | 5 to 10 days |
| **Empirical studies** |  |
| Prepare materials to conduct study | 1 to 20 days |
| Utilize materials to collect or extract data | 1 to 100 days |
| Plan the data analysis | 1 to 5 days |
| Conduct the data analysis | 1 to 100 days |
| **Writing** |  |
| Plan overall structure of thesis | 1 to 5 days |
| Plan structure of a chapter or paper | 1 to 5 days |
| Plan the key paragraphs and sentences on a specific topic | 1 to 3 days |
| Write about this topic | 0.5 to 1 day per 1000 words |
| Optimizing writing on this topic | 0.5 to 1 day per 1000 words |