

ÅSA BURMAN
Finish on Time Publications

Exercises



From

THE DOCTORAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

Master Effectiveness

Reduce Stress

FINISH ON TIME

Exercises

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Exercise 1:

Pin down your work process

This exercise will help you create an overview of your work process – not your goals for the work, but what the path looks like. Are you currently grappling with anything in particular? For example, does it involve issues related to supervising? Or whether you are on the right track with your dissertation? Or do you have questions about your role in the department and as a doctoral student in general? Or do you think your research is taking over the rest of your life? Take a moment to reflect on any challenges you are currently facing in your work situation, then write down your reflections.

Exercise 3:

The elevator pitch

This exercise will help you practice writing syntheses. Take out the most recent article or book you have read for your dissertation. Imagine that on your way up to the department, you meet a colleague in the elevator who asks you to explain the relevance of what you've just read for your dissertation. Write down your synthesis in one sentence in this workbook or on a piece of paper.

Exercise 5:

Focus on the end product

This exercise aims to clarify four dimensions of your dissertation by using the end-product focus technique.

Materials: This workbook or a blank sheet of paper and a timer. *Instructions:* Set the timer for seven minutes. You only have seven minutes to complete the four tasks below, so remember to allocate your time well. The limited time is an important part of the assignment (I'll come back to why shortly).

1. Clarify your quantitative goal. Make an initial estimate of the number of manuscript pages in the dissertation binder for your finished dissertation. If you are writing a monograph, how many pages will your finished dissertation be? If you are writing a compilation dissertation, decide on the number of articles and then estimate the scope of the completed articles and the scope of the summarizing chapter. You can get an estimate of the number of pages by looking in one of the journals to which you plan to submit your article. You can also explore how comprehensive the scope is of the summarizing chapters in other compilation dissertations that you've found as good examples. Preferably, add a precise number for the quantitative goal later.

Now write down the number of manuscript pages that the dissertation binder will comprise.

2. Clarify your qualitative goal. Reflect on a qualitative goal for your dissertation by using a scale from 1-5, where 5 is the highest. Write down a number between 1 and 5, where 5 means your dissertation will be as good as it can possibly be and that you are prepared to do everything necessary to achieve this goal. 4 indicates a very high level of ambition. 3 means you want to write a good dissertation, but that you are starting to feel finished with the writing process and want to move on to other tasks. 2 means you aim to write a dissertation that is approved, but not a lot more. If you already have another job outside of academia but still want to complete your dissertation, this might be one option.

3. Now write down the title of your finished dissertation.

4. Then write down the date of your public defense in the form of the day of the week and date, for example Friday, May 18, 2020.

Exercise 6:

Dissertation binder

This exercise will help you make your own dissertation binder. You will need one day to finish the exercise. If you want to get started right away, but you don't have an entire day, then you can split the exercise into three different parts and complete one part at a time.

The first part of the exercise is to buy a dissertation binder (including index tabs) that you really like, because it's going to represent your end product – your finished dissertation. At the same time, buy a work binder that you can use for the texts that aren't ready to be inserted into the dissertation binder just yet. If you can't go out and do this right now, then write down in your calendar when you are going to buy the binders instead.

The second part of the exercise is to set aside plenty of time and begin printing out all the material you've written so far that is related to your dissertation. Remember to print single-sided rather than double-sided, because it will be harder to fit double-sided pages into the dissertation binder. Next, sort the pile according to the description in the section above. It may take a moment to figure out if something is finished to the point of 80 percent or more. But don't get stuck for too long on an individual section of text or on the details; rather, work through the pile as quickly as you can.

The third part of the exercise involves printing a page with your title, which you already have from the previous exercise, and your name. Then make a table of contents for your dissertation, rather than an outline, in which you write down how many pages each chapter or article contains and insert this as page two of your dissertation binder. Next, insert an index page as page 3 of the binder with the preliminary titles of each article and the summarizing chapter, if you have one. Now insert the pieces of text that are 80 percent complete or more in the proper locations throughout your binder. The pages that you've assessed as dissertation-related but that aren't sufficiently complete for your dissertation binder quite yet should be put in your work binder instead. Your work binder can reflect your dissertation binder: have an index for the same number of chapters, and an "other" category where you can place materials that you aren't quite sure where they will fit in yet. Just make sure that most texts don't end up in the "other" category.

Exercise 7:

Your synthesis of the chapter

This exercise will help you find your vital 20 percent.

Browse back through the chapter and reflect on what you've read. Then set a timer for five minutes and write down your key takeaway from the chapter in the form of a synthesis. Limit yourself to one sentence.

Exercise 8:

Your techniques

This exercise will help you select the techniques that are most valuable for you, given your current situation. Set a timer for three minutes. Reflect on the techniques you've learned about during your reading, from more overarching techniques like the dissertation binder to simpler techniques like using your best hours for the most complicated tasks. Choose 1–3 of these techniques to start implementing within a specific time, like next week.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Exercise 9:

Time bandits

This exercise will help you identify your primary time bandits and strategies for handling them.

1. Write down your top three time bandits.
2. Which one is the most important for you to handle in order to reduce interruptions and boost your effective time instead?
3. What should you do to eliminate this time bandit?

Comments on the exercise: One doctoral student who found surfing the internet to be a huge time bandit turned off the Wi-Fi on his computer and literally unplugged the internet when it was work time. This became a routine for him that signaled the fact that now it was time to work on the dissertation.

Exercise 10:

Batch your e-mail

This exercise will help you start using the batching technique for your email. Answer the questions below and then complete the next steps in order to use the technique:

- What is your main objection to not reading email in the morning?
- What, if anything, would you gain from not reading email in the morning?
- What time of day would best suit you for batching your email?
- Who, if anyone, would you need to inform about the change?
- What are the next steps for starting to use the technique?

Comments on the exercise: Examples of “next steps” could be planning your next week based on the technique and entering the times in your calendar, setting up an auto response for your email, or informing your closest colleagues.

Exercise 12:

Important / urgent matrix

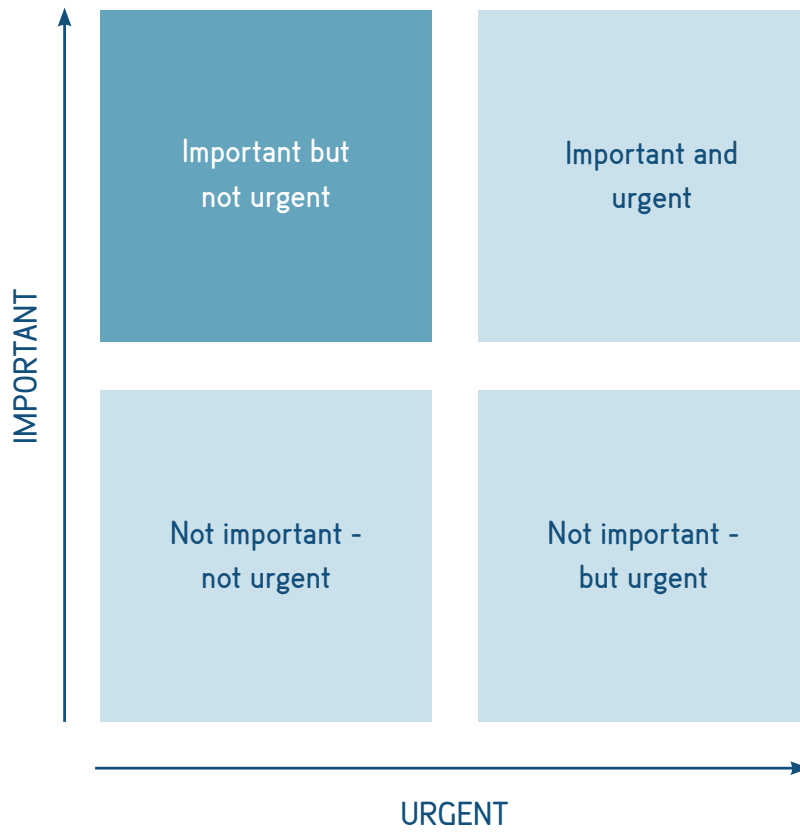
This exercise will help you improve your effectiveness by using the matrix. Start by printing two copies of the matrix, or trace it if you prefer.

Post one copy on the wall in front of your workspace as a reminder to set aside enough time for the “important but not urgent” box.

Now take out your calendar and the other copy of the matrix. Look up the past week. Place all the work tasks from the week in the proper box in the matrix. If the week was atypical, choose a different week that is more typical, or use tasks from several different weeks. Then, answer the following questions.

What conclusions can you draw upon seeing the placement of all your work tasks in the matrix?

Did you also find that you had a blind spot, with few items in the “important but not urgent” category? If so, how could you change this for next week? For example, could any of the strategies presented in chapter 4 be helpful?



Exercise 13:

SMART goals

This exercise will help you apply the SMART goals technique to your work. It should take a maximum of five minutes to complete. Set a timer on your phone or watch.

Write down three, and only three, SMART goals for your next work week in your workbook or somewhere else.

Examine the three goals you have written down. Do they meet all of the criteria of SMART goals? Reformulate your goals until they truly are SMART. You will return to and use these formulations in conjunction with the weekly schedule at the end of the chapter.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Exercise 14:

Your doctoral program goals

This exercise aims to clarify your goals for your period as a doctoral student. Spend about 15 minutes reflecting on them, for example by thinking back to the day you were accepted to your doctoral program: what happened when you got the news? Did it arrive by mail or did someone from the department call you? How did you feel when you heard you got in? Back then, what did you imagine this time would be like? What did you dream about and what did you want to achieve? Is there anything in particular you want to do or learn that is beyond the formal requirements? Maybe you want to spend some of your doctoral program abroad, take a course with a specific researcher, or participate in radio or TV?

Write down three personal goals for your doctoral program.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Exercise 15:

Formal requirements

This exercise will help you clarify the formal requirements for your doctoral degree. Write down the formal requirements that are necessary for you to obtain your degree. Remember to formulate the formal requirements in terms of SMART goals to the greatest extent possible.

Confirm these requirements with your supervisor at your next meeting in order to be certain that they are correct. Doctoral students who are writing compilation dissertations are occasionally uncertain about how many articles are required in total, and how many of these articles must be published or accepted for publication in order to carry out the public defense.

Exercise 17:

Your doctoral program plan

The purpose of this exercise is for you to design your own doctoral program plan.

Time required: 2–3 units.

Materials:

- Your various goals: personal goals for the doctoral program, formal requirements and informal expectations from previous exercises.
- Your individual study plan.
- A large sheet of paper and a ruler.

Now create your own doctoral program plan according to the section above. The plan will work best if you formulate no more than three goals per term. The purpose of this limit is to help you choose the most important goals – using the 80/20 principle – and to ensure that each individual goal leads to the major goals. A limited number of goals will also provide a good overview. If your doctoral program has mandatory courses, you should consider planning for them by placing them in the different terms. Teaching and learning courses usually fill up, so keep this in mind as you plan. The goal to “submit the dissertation to the printing house” should be in the last or second-to-last term. When choosing the term in which to place this important goal, you should count backwards: you can only post your dissertation during a term and you must do so by a certain point before your public defense. You will need to set aside time for editing before then.

Check your doctoral program plan next to your individual study plan. Are there any important goals from the individual study plan that you didn’t include? Or do you need to adjust your individual study plan in light of your doctoral program plan?

FORMAL GOALS: INFORMAL GOALS: PERSONAL GOALS:	
Term 10:	Term 9:
Term 8:	Term 7:
Term 6:	Term 5:
Term 4:	Term 3:
Term 2:	Term 1:

Exercise 18:

The term plan

This exercise will help you create your own term plan. Start by browsing back to the three SMART goals you formulated for this term in the previous exercise (number 17). Write them down in your workbook or another suitable place. Remember to write down only three goals and no more. Limiting the goals is actually an application of the 80/20 principle, because the limit helps us hone in on the vital 20 percent.

Examine your goals once more. Are they specific and measurable? Do you accept them, in the sense that you believe you can achieve them within the time frame of one term, or can these goals only be achieved if everything goes exactly your way and then some? Adjust the goals to meet all five dimensions of SMART goals.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Exercise 20:

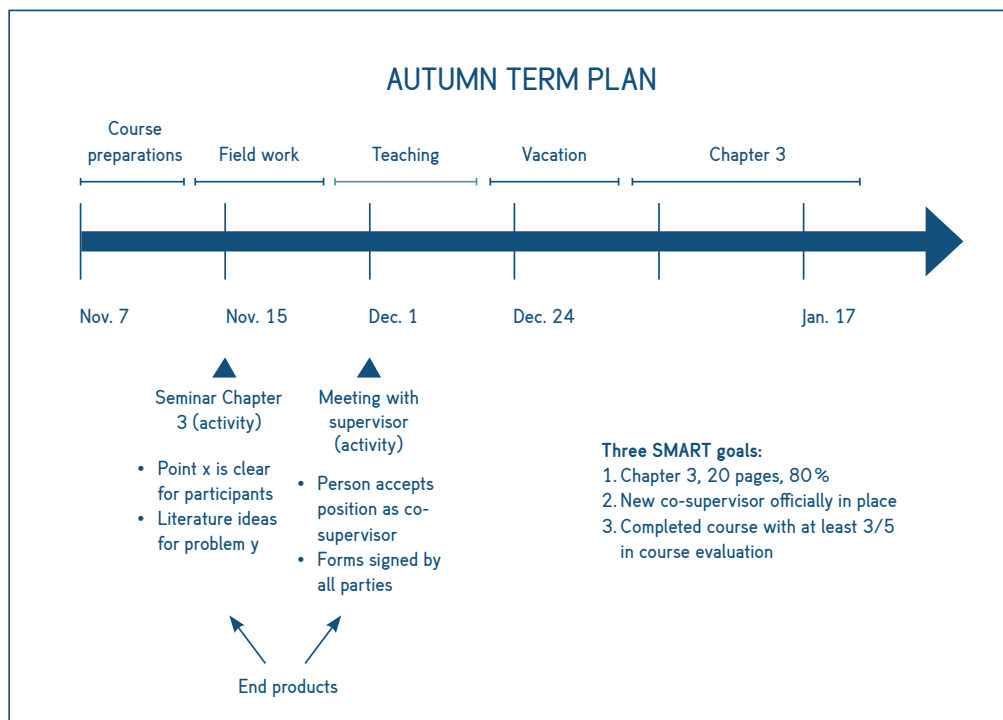
Create your term plan

The purpose of this exercise is for you to be able to use the term plan in order to plan and evaluate your work. The exercise involves creating your own term plan. Post the term plan on the wall by your desk when you are finished.

Time required: 1–3 units.

Material: A large sheet of paper, pens in three different colors, a ruler and Post-it notes. Notes from the exercise Walk Through Your Term.

Carry out the exercise as explained above. Tip: take a look at the illustration of the term plan on page 102 and use it as a template in order to include the various components and to differentiate between activities and end products.



Exercise 21:

Weekly schedule

This exercise will help you begin to use the weekly schedule technique. Print out four weekly schedules and use them for the next four weeks. To begin, fill in this week or next week. Remember to start with SMART goals. You'll find additional guidance in the section above. In chapter 6, you will draw conclusions from these four weekly schedules. In order to draw these conclusions, you will need empirical data, so remember to fill in all rows in the weekly schedule for at least the next four weeks.

Comments on the exercise: The weekly schedule also supports the use of units and the batching technique.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Number of units _____, of which _____ are dissertation units
 Achieved goals
 Output (number of pages) _____ that are _____ % complete

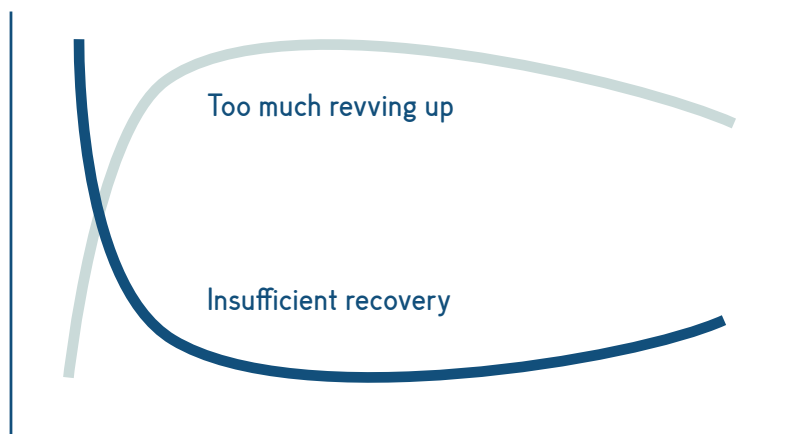
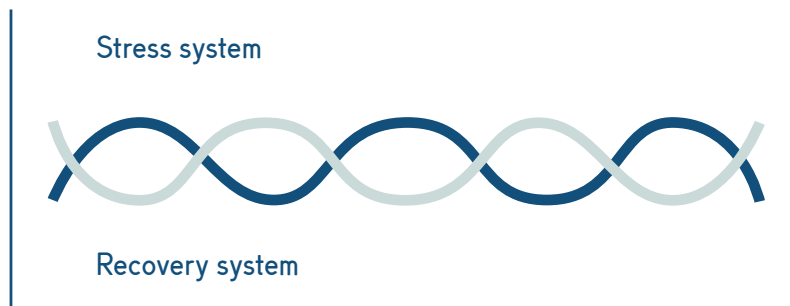
Three SMART goals:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

Exercise 22:

Stress and recovery

This exercise will help you reflect on how much recovery you've had in the last month. Open your calendar and look through it to jog your memory, then answer the following questions:

- Which of the curves best resembles your past month?
- If you were to make some changes, what would you do?
- How can you implement them in the next month?



Exercise 23:

Your signs of negative stress

This exercise aims to help you recognize and be mindful of your signs of negative stress, in order to enable you to cut off the situation as soon as possible. Take five minutes to list your signs of negative stress by answering the following questions:

- Which of the signs on page 124 in the book apply to you?
- Are there any signs you want to add that are not included in the list above?

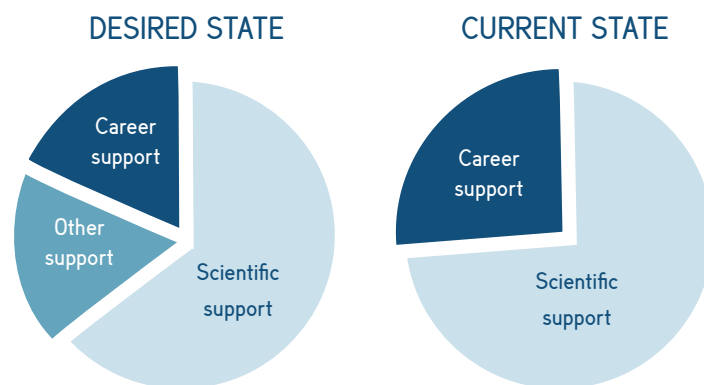
Exercise 24:

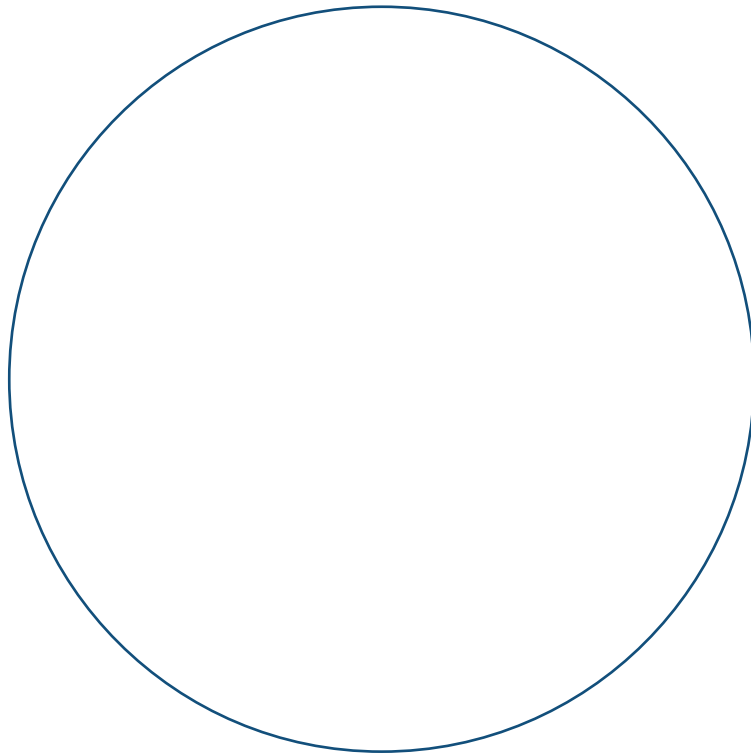
Support

This exercise will help you identify what type of support you need and what type of support you currently have. Take out a blank sheet of paper and draw two large circles or use the two large circles below. The left-hand circle represents your desired situation and the right-hand circle is your current situation. What type of support do you want and need? Make categories or pie pieces in the left-hand circle representing the type of support that is important to you. If you only want academic support, then that should be the whole circle. If you want two kinds of support, you can draw how important each type is by varying the size of each piece of pie.

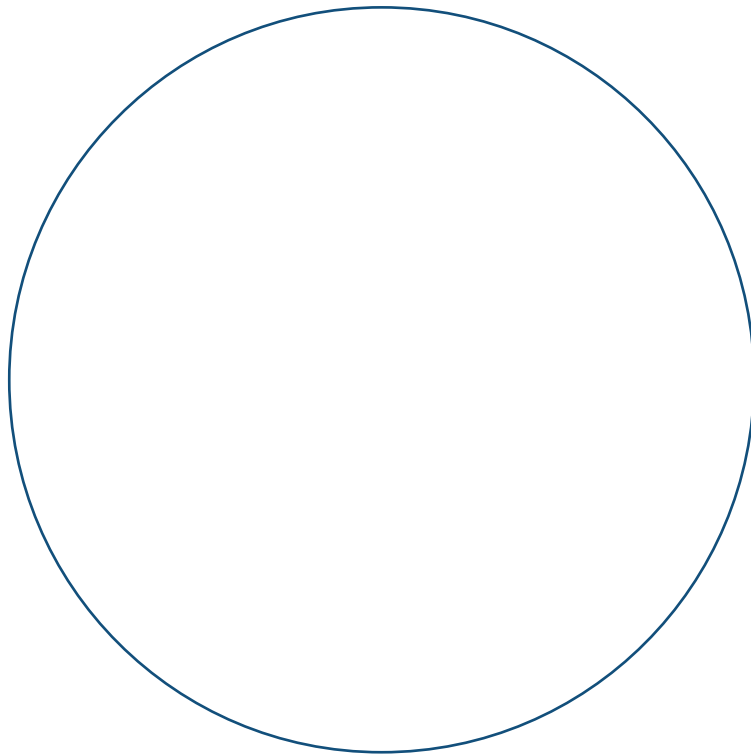
Now shift to the right-hand circle and consider what type of support you currently have. Divide the circle into pie pieces of various sizes representing the types of support you have today.

Write down your conclusions from the exercise. If there is a gap between the support you currently have and the support you want, consider whether anyone outside of your supervision context perhaps a mentor or another discussion partner, could provide this kind of support.





CURRENT STATE



DESIRED STATE

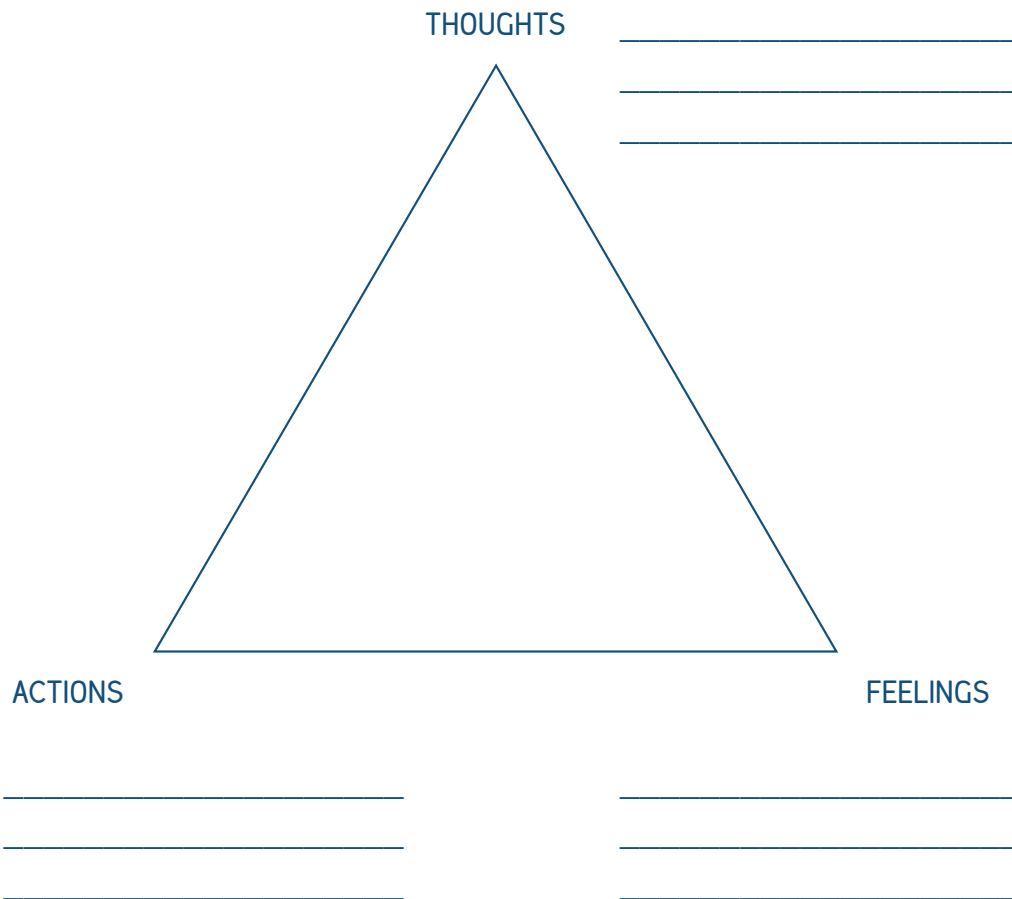
Exercise 25:

Active and passive recovery

This exercise will help you identify what different forms of recovery you currently use. Write down some examples of passive and active rest that you use today.

Passive recovery

Active recovery



Exercise 29:

Demands and supervision

This exercise will help you clarify the demands and expectations associated with supervision. Reflect on the following questions:

- What type of supervision do you currently receive?
- Who initiates meetings with your supervisor?
- How often do you see each other?
- What type of feedback and comments do you receive on your work?
- What type of support do you need?
- Can you find someone other than your primary supervisor, for example a co-supervisor or mentor, who could provide this support?
- What type of support do you think your supervisor believes she or he is tasked with providing?
- What demands and expectations do you believe your supervisor has of you as a doctoral student?

Write down your reflections on these questions. It may be valuable to confirm your thoughts on what demands and expectations your supervisor has of you and whether you would like to change anything about your supervision situation, such as having regularly scheduled meetings.

Exercise 31:

Your main strategy

In chapter 6, a main strategy for action was illustrated as a shovel. This strategy is helpful for the most part, but it can be problematic if it's the only one you use. This exercise will help you become more flexible in your behavior by adding alternative strategies to your main strategy. Reflect on your main strategy and what alternative strategies you could use by answering:

- What is your main strategy?
- What alternative strategies do you want to practice?
- In what situation next week can you practice this alternative strategy?

Exercise 32:

Your automatic thoughts

This exercise will help you identify your automatic thoughts and illustrate some of the strategies above.

Take out a blank sheet of letter size paper and set a timer for 4 minutes. Write your automatic thoughts on the sheet of paper in front of you.

Pick up the paper and hold it right in front of your face. Could you work on writing a text right now? Listen to a friend with empathy? Or hug a loved one?

Now fold up the piece of paper with your automatic thoughts and leave it on the table or put it in your pocket. Can you work on your text now, or listen to a friend?

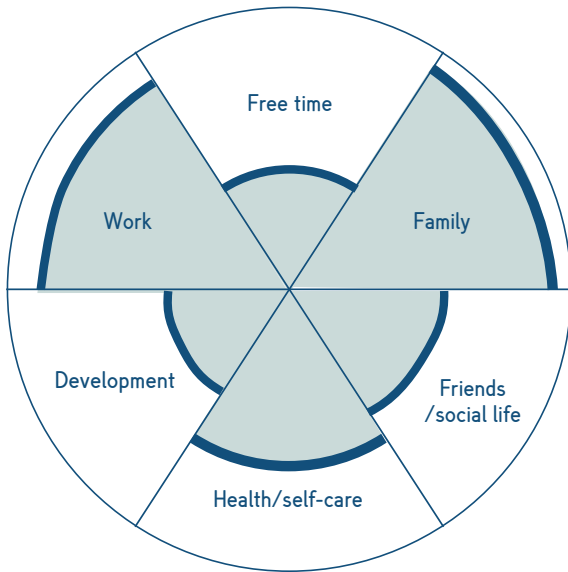
Comments on the exercise: If you have a hard time identifying your automatic thoughts, then consider whether common themes of automatic thoughts feel familiar to you, or think about situations you perceive as challenging and what thoughts tend to appear at those times. This exercise can be seen as a metaphor for the most functional strategy for handling automatic thoughts: you can carry your thoughts with you, and still move in the direction you want to go.

Exercise 33:

But vs. and

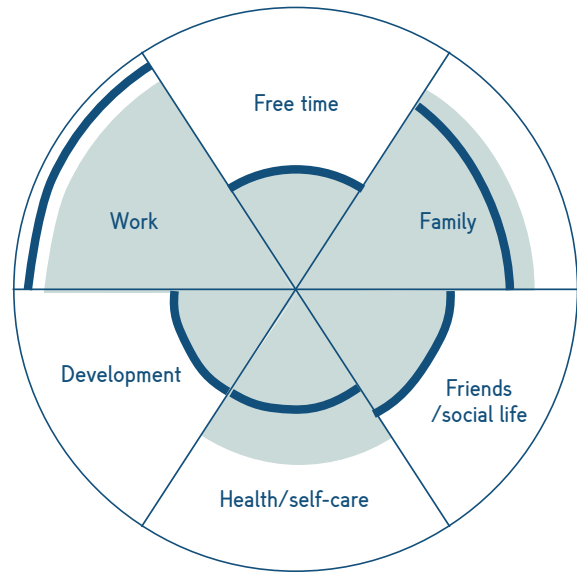
This exercise aims to help you reflect on how your use of language can help you move in the direction you want to go. Try replacing “but” with “and” in three everyday situations in the next two weeks. You can try this in work situations and everyday situations, for example: “I’m thinking about exercising, but I feel so tired,” contrasted with: “I’m thinking about exercising and I feel so tired.”

VALUE COMPASS



Desired state

VALUE COMPASS



Current state

Conclusion: I need to reduce my work hours so that I spend maximum 40 hours/week on work. This will enable me to spend more time with my family and exercise more.

Next steps: Sign up for group training classes once/week and make an appointment with a friend to exercise together once/week.

Exercise 36:

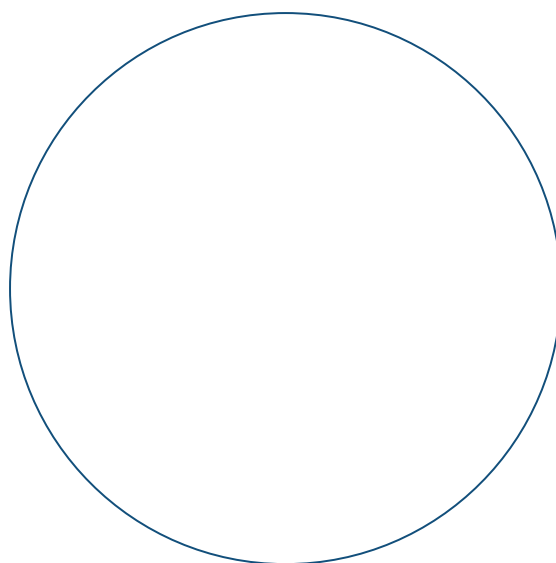
Actual time

This exercise will help you clarify how much work time you actually have and how you are spending it, which will in turn form the basis of any changes you wish to make. In other words, you will now review how you have spent your time, both in terms of how large your trunk is and what you have packed inside of it. To begin, determine the number of hours you have spent working during these weeks by reviewing the time points in your weekly schedule. Are you around 35, 40 or 45 hours, or more? Write down your average number of hours per week.

What percentage of your total time is dissertation time? You can return to your weekly schedule to see what you have done at different times of the day or during different units in order to determine this number. Now write this number down.

Reflect on the results. In general, did your actual time and percentage of work time match what you thought they would be? If not, do you want to make any changes based on this exercise? And is the time you are spending on the work in line with your valued direction? (Feel free to revisit the value compass from exercise 34.) Write down your reflections.

Comments: This PDF has materials you can use for this exercise, such as a pie chart that can clarify what percentage of your total work time is spent on your dissertation.



Share of dissertation time of total
working hours

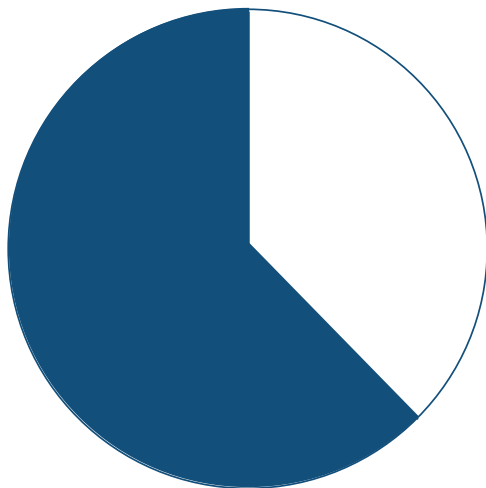
Exercise 37:

Evaluate SMART goals

Setting SMART goals is a challenge and improving your goals so that they truly are SMART is a continuous process. And that is exactly what this exercise will help you with. Reflect on which dimensions of SMART goals you are already fulfilling in your goal formulations, and which characteristics make them work. Write down your conclusions.

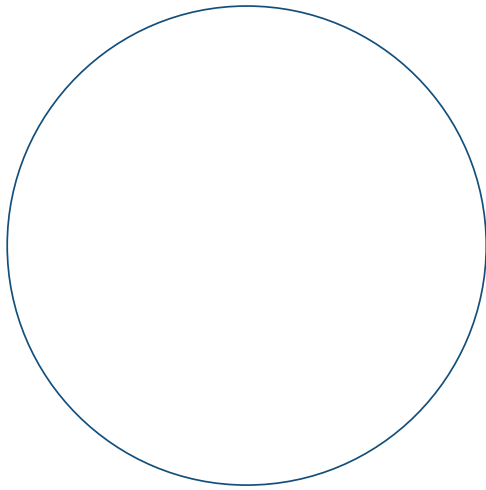
Investigate whether there are any dimensions that you have not truly fulfilled in your goals in the past four or five weeks. Focus on correcting these dimensions in the future. Write down what they are and how you can do this.

EXAMPLE



Share of achieved goals of total share of goals

Conclusion: I achieve 60% of the goals which makes it difficult to plan and evaluate my work. The goals are often unrealistic. Moving forward, I need to break them down further into subgoals to correctly estimate how long it takes to achieve them and also reduce the scope of my goals.



S ____
M ____
A ____
R ____
T ____

Share of achieved goals of total
share of goals

Exercise 38:

Number of finished pages per week

This exercise will help you answer the question: how many complete pages per week do I need to write in order to be finished within the allotted time? Comparing this answer with your writing pace so far will help you get an indication of whether or not you are on track.

Materials: Weekly schedule, calendar, dissertation binder.

1. Review your weekly schedule and calculate your average number of pages for these five weeks. Write down the number.
2. Use your dissertation binder and a calendar to determine the number of pages you need to write per week in order to be finished within the allotted time. Write down the number.
3. Next, take note of whether or not this was a fairly typical period of work for your doctoral program: is it reasonable to believe you will write about the same amount during other five-week intervals? More? Less?
4. And finally: what conclusions can you draw from the exercise? For example, do you need to pick up the pace or is your pace good as it is? Or are you even ahead of schedule?

MY IDEAL WEEK

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Number of units _____, of which _____ are dissertation units
 Achieved goals
 Output (number of pages) _____ that are _____ % complete

Three SMART goals:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

Exercise 41:

Quality criteria

This exercise aims to clarify which quality criteria are relevant to your field. Use the suggested quality dimensions in the book appendix as a basis for discussion with your colleagues or supervisors on more specific quality criteria applicable in your field.

Do your supervisors and the researchers agree on the quality criteria, or are there any criteria that are not as relevant in your field? Is there any criterion that need to be added to the list? How do they rank the importance of various quality dimensions and sub-groups?

When I have carried out this exercise, most researchers agree on the criteria, but there is less consensus on their relative importance to each other or the weight of the different criteria in relation to each other. You can also review a number of external reviewer statements in your own field and change the suggested criteria in the appendix based on the results of your discussion and/or external reviewer statements in your field.

Exercise 45:

Which are your vital few?

This exercise will help you identify your next step in continuing to use the approaches and techniques that worked well for you. Describe how you will continue using them in your work moving forward.

Exercise 43:

Follow up your goals

This exercise will help you follow up your original goals for your work with this book. Turn back to exercise 2. What do you want to do differently as a result of using these approaches and techniques? Write down your reflections on how things have gone.
