

## Seminar Discussion: Problems of the Transition from School to University

English Language Centre, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

1. **Moderator:** The topic of the seminar today is problems of transition from school to university. The purpose of the seminar is to think of ways to help students to better cope with their academic work. Let's start by talking about two problems faced by the first-year students. They are time management and working in groups.
2. **Well, I think** university students seem to have a lot of free time available, and there could be a whole day without any lectures or seminars. **So, in other words,** university life is sort of unstructured compared to school. We often have to hold discussions and do assignments in groups, which can cause lots of problems for first-year students. I know you have searched for useful materials in the library and on the Web sites, so let's see what we have found out. **I'd like to start off by asking Dennis to tell us about** time management.
3. **Dennis:** As I see it, the most important thing is to learn and use organizing and time management skills.
4. **Jennie:** I think you're right. The books say we should make three kinds of timetables such as the semester planner, the weekly planner, and also the diary for everyday work.
5. **Dianne:** Go on.
6. **Dennis:** OK. The semester planner is for things you must do and don't change such as tests and exams, and assignments you get. A weekly planner is for you to put down classes and extracurricular activities, while the diary is an action list *where you can take for* [which you can use for] everyday work such as the [ ] readings, homework, and family *functions* [events]. They help students organize their time in a systematic way.
7. **Dianne:** To a certain extent "yes," but they are not always helpful. Research shows that it may be difficult *to stick to* [to follow] planners. *Like* [For example], it may be difficult to control time for collecting information for *papers* [reports] and projects.
8. **Moderator:** *I couldn't agree more.* [I agree 100 percent.] It's hard *to fit in* [include] a part job, extracurricular activities, and a social life with academic work. Some social activities just *pop up at the last minute* [appear suddenly just before the event], and you feel bad *turning down* [rejecting] invitations.
9. **Dennis:** It seems to me that I spend too much time on time-wasters such as chats, phone calls, [ ], watching TV, browsing the Internet, etc. I must learn to say no.

10. **Jennie:** I've got something from an interesting Web site, and they say we must learn how to research effectively, such as we can attend the workshops organized by the library, and we can also ask teachers for help outside of class time, or even make use of the consultation hours. These things are important because in a week we need to do a lot of readings and assignments in a short period.
11. **Moderator:** Well, we are running out of time so let's move on to the next problem. What is your view of working in groups. Jennie?
12. **Jennie:** That is a problem because group work requires communication in different ways such as working face-to-face, phone calls, e-mail, which *take up* [use] lots of time.
13. **Dianne:** As far as I'm concerned, the problem is you need to work with people that you don't know. Group work is never easy because sometimes people are dominating and others [ ]. Very often I find the time is spent unproductively, and I often feel frustrated.
14. **Dennis:** I agree with Dianne about knowing our team members. It's crucial to get to know our team members—their backgrounds, strengths, and interests—so we can know what they like to do, and what they are good at so we can build up a good working relationship.
15. **Moderator:** Well, my readings say that to get better grades we should clarify the assignment requirements such as the purpose of the project and the skills we need to demonstrate in the project.
16. **Dianne:** I think you're right, and after understanding the topics we can bring them down to some tasks and see which can be done on our own and what can be done in a group.
17. **Dennis:** Then we need to agree on a plan and a deadline. Someone should be chosen *to take on* [accept the responsibility for] the leadership role to guide the process.

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**Note:** This document is a private transcription for non-commercial, educational use. Vocabulary notes have been added. **Source:** The Transition from School to University. Videotape of a seminar discussion. English Language Centre (ELC). Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Accessed April 17, 2006.  
<<http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/EAP/Activities/seminartransition.htm>>.