

It's time for a re-set (Facebook Forum post 16 April 2020)

We have a mid-semester break for a number of reasons.

One of the most important reasons is also one of the most over-looked: we need a chance to re-set for the new term.

Obviously there is a load of academic work you need to be doing:

- Most pressing will be the **assignments** many of you are working on – you don't need me to remind you about those....
- The break is also a really good time to make sure that you're **on top of the material from first term**. Have you watched all the lectures? Have you done all your tute problems or were there a few you skipped? Are there any concepts you didn't fully understand first time around that would benefit from being revisited?

Now's the time to block out a day or two to plug those gaps.

Ideally, by the end of the break you'll be able to look back on the term and feel confident that you have it nailed, and that will be a really solid foundation to build on for next term.

- Another really useful thing to do is take the time to take an hour or so to **organize your notes from last term**.

This can be a good job to do if you're feeling a bit tired and unmotivated because it doesn't take much brain-power and it's a discrete task with a defined end-point – but it's enormously valuable, especially if you have exams at the end of the semester. You'll thank yourself come revision time 😊

- And, **looking forward**, there will also be work that would be handy to get under your belt for the new term – texts to read, assignments to think about, prep work for labs to do.

You're likely to only get a small amount of this done, but just putting aside a couple of hours to look ahead to what's on the horizon, perhaps filling out your calendar with classes and key dates, will be hugely beneficial, and help you feel prepared to face the new term.

But you also need to take a break – you need to allow yourself time to re-set.

By this I mean taking a **complete break** from academic work, disengaging from it mentally and psychologically.

Even a couple of days off will help you to achieve this. And you need to give yourself **permission** to do it.

Otherwise one of two things is likely to happen:

- (1) You'll keep plodding on with your work, feeling as if there's too much to do to allow yourself to take a break – but you'll be working less and less effectively, and won't be in a good place to start next term; or

(2) You'll take time away from work, but you'll spend the time you should be relaxing feeling really guilty because it won't feel as if you've 'earned' it.

Neither is good! Instead, you need to build in time to rest, and recognise its importance. Resting isn't about being lazy or avoiding work. It's about **giving yourself time to recharge and get your energy back**.

There's loads of research pointing out the benefits to your health and wellbeing from taking a period of time out.

But it also has a **hugely positive impact on your productivity**. Again, there's a lot of evidence showing that an individual's workplace performance improves after a period of rest – and this is particularly the case if your work involves any sort of creative thinking or problem-solving (which of course is what you're doing with your academic work). You'll work better and more effectively after a break.

So – **what would this look like?** It's up to you ... but I'd suggest, for a mid-semester break, you take off at least two consecutive days, ideally three. Allow yourself a balance between unstructured relaxation, and absorbing activities that you enjoy doing. And try to take a break from your phone for at least a few hours each day.

This is particularly important after what we've all been dealing with over the past few weeks: we've all experienced the psychological strain of adjusting to new ways of doing everything because of coronavirus. Don't underestimate the impact that this strain and low-level anxiety will be having on your energy levels.

Be kind to yourself, and allow yourself time to recover and recharge.

If you need any help prioritising your academic work over the coming 10-12 days to enable yourself to find a few days you can free up, don't hesitate to message me or someone on the Academic Team and we'll be happy to help out! But note that I'm away from Tuesday to Friday next week ... re-charging 😊