Using a timer/stopwatch, use the following exercise to structure your use of time during a specific independent study period:

1. Choose a study task to complete that you will give your full, undivided attention.

2. Set your study timer to a realistic time period to focus on the task.

* 30 minutes is a good start!

3. Make a deal with yourself to stay focused on the task during the study period.

* Ask not to be disturbed and avoid distractions such as emails or messages.

4. Work on the task until the timer rings – fully immerse yourself in the task.

* If other tasks come to your attention write them down on a separate piece of paper.

5. Stop when the timer sounds and take a break of 10 minutes to refresh and reward yourself.

* Use the break to drink some water, get some fresh air, a physical or rewarding activity.

6. Before returning to study take a mindful pause (see above) and reflect upon your progress.

* Reflect on what you have achieved. Avoid negative feelings – practise non-judgment.

7. Use the knowledge of what you have achieved to develop awareness of the time it takes to complete tasks.

8. Reset the timer and begin another study period.

* Take a longer break to fully absorb your learning after three timed study periods.

The aim of the exercise is to help you to become more aware of how long it takes you to perform certain tasks. For example, you can create plans quickly but need more time for reading and note making. Factor this in when scheduling tasks.