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Three tips for a good summer of study

Studying during the summer months can be a challenge, with the stress of impending exams and a lot of distractions, it can be easy to turn your brain off to your studies and your wellbeing. **Brian Murphy** outlines three simple tips to help you keep your focus during this time.

There are many things that can distract you from keeping your focus and harming your wellbeing this summer. Here are a few tips to make sure you keep both in tip-top shape.

Plan

You need to prepare a detailed plan for each day, week and month. The old motto of fail to plan, plan to fail comes to mind. The key to a successful plan is that it is realistic but at the same time stretching. Your plan also needs to be adaptable. Here are some suggestions:

- **Break your day into three slots**, the morning, afternoon and evening. Focus your morning on technical content, your afternoon on practicing questions and applying the technical content reviewed in the morning and, finally, evening is for an overall review of material or content of the day.

- **Take breaks.** You must designate time during the day for exercise, activities and meal breaks too.
- **Identify the areas and topics** that are not your core strengths and put considerable focus on these in your plan.
- Use the competency statement and learning journal as the anchor documents to ensure each area of the course is covered in your plan.
- **Aim to cover each area** of the course at least twice.
- **Don't leave out areas/aspects of the course.** Everything on the course is examinable.
- **Set aside a Friday afternoon** as a 'catch up' day.

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Talk to your colleagues and friends who are also on study leave. Everyone is in the same position so focus on motivating one another

Find balance

It's important for you to balance your time between studying technical content and exam approach/ past exam paper practice.

In preparing your plan, you need to consider three aspects of study:

- **technical material review** (you may need to revert to Cap1 and Cap2 material);
- **case studies**; and
- **past exam papers**.

It's important to get the balance between the three aspects correct. It is pointless attempting case studies and past exam papers if you haven't done the necessary study of the technical material and content.

When attempting case studies and past exam papers, focus on applying the knowledge you have assumed during your review of the study materials. In practicing past exam papers, focus on your time management. You will have approximately 25 minutes per indicator in the exam, so you need to practice questions under this time pressure.

Maintain your wellbeing

Finally, and most importantly, don't lose focus on maintaining your wellbeing.

There is so much written about wellbeing, so a rehash isn't needed; however, I believe the following areas are particularly important as you embark on the summer of study:

- **Physical exercise.** Get out for regular exercise during the day whether that is walking, cycling, running – whatever you enjoy doing most.
- **Maintain hydration.** Mild dehydration can impair cognitive function and can lead to difficulties with concentration and focus.
- **Nourish yourself properly.** Continue to eat healthily and treat yourself periodically.
- **Relax.** Ensure your plan for the coming weeks includes non-study activities such as listening to your favourite podcasts or watching your favourite Netflix series. Allocate time in your plan for this and stick to it, therefore ensuring these distractions don't take over your study plan for the next two months.

- **Sleep!** It is so important that you maintain a regular sleeping pattern during study leave and don't get into bad habits of late nights and late mornings. Try stick to a typical day as you would have had while working.
- **Socialise.** Talk to your colleagues and friends who are also on study leave. Everyone is in the same position so focus on motivating one another. Also, socialise with family members and friends not in the depths of study leave. They will bring a light relief to talking about indicators for the summer.

If you are experiencing stress or anxiety reach out to someone – a family member, colleague, or friend. The Institute is also here to help – CA Support is a dedicated service that provides wellbeing and mental health supports at all stages of your career, including now as you embark on a summer of study. The fully-trained team is available to provide listening support, professional counselling, health coaching and lots more. Check out the [website](#) for more information. The run up to exams can be intense and feel all-consuming at times. It can be useful to remember that this period of your professional life is laying the foundations of a long, diverse and interesting career!

Brian is a Partner of Consumer & Technology Business Audit in Deloitte and lectures on the FAE Core and Audit Elective courses with Chartered Accountants Ireland. He is past Chair of Chartered Accountants Ireland Leinster Society and is the current Chair of CA Support.