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ANSWERS to Regular Questions Arising During Degree Studies

A Philosopher's Response

Questions Raised by Students as their Examinations Approach

What can I do if halfway into my degree course if I lose my motivation?

ANSWER: Motivation is never lost; but during stress it can be forgotten. You need to work back on your memory to discover what motivated you to gain a degree course. Then re-apply those same efforts you first used when you first began to study. Most degree students reach a "WALL", either to climb or demolish. If you let the Wall beat you NOW, are you building up further barriers to hold back your business potential and destroying your academic future? Search and research your initial faith in your own abilities: then re-apply yourself again with renewed vigour.

How do degree students maintain their motivation?

ANSWER: There is a very simple answer to your question, especially towards the end of lectures and when you find that studying is so much harder than you expected. You must now, very carefully, re-think all the reasons why you began the course itself! How sure are you that you are on the right course; and that the final outcome will match your convicted needs you had when you began? Serious doubts can most often be an indication that you are not yet suited to studying for **any** degree. If you have attended and benefitted from your teaching, then all will be well; but if your attendance and your attention have been poor, you will achieve nothing by carrying on.

If you are not seriously committed to the efforts needed from you, now, you will do yourself, your tutors and your fellow students a favour by stopping now! Your parents will benefit too. No longer will they need to cope with your

problems each time you return to your studies. Building your hopes on getting an easier ride now is fraught with false optimism. Remember that 'failing to plan is planning to fail'. Continuing on a lost cause at any stage of your study merely puts you even further behind your future ambitions. Perhaps, now is the time to give serious thought to your potential academic future? It could be that this is the time to look for a less stressful training programme, or for preparing you for a different vocational path. You may certainly enjoy it more than you are now. If not, you **must** find a career that will suit your talents. Re-examine your options in detail now.

By giving up you may deliver the strength of will that you obviously need to apply yourself to other, lower-stressed targets instead. If you were an archer, and your arrows continually fall short of the target; you have only two options: stand closer to the target, or get a stronger bow. If you are facing lack of impetus to your studies, what other options do you really have? It remains for you to determine your own future; especially if by doing so, you can apply your personal skills and abilities towards a fresh and realistic target. Using the analogy above, the best method of hitting any target relies on the certainty of achievement.

I am at final stages of my degree. How can I find strength and motivation to cross the finishing line?

ANSWER: The source of all strength and resilience in study lies in your initial and general Motivation. By asking where can you find the strength and motivation is to return to your initial starting point? What prompted you to believe you had the tenacity and ability to begin and essentially, **complete**, the course in the first place? If you cannot really believe in yourself that much, ask yourself if your initial motivation was ill-founded?

However, provided your initial motivation was securely based on your abilities to apply yourself, then going back to those values must surely return you to continue with your efforts

Is it Possible to complete a Three- Year degree through Part time Study?

ANSWER: The short answer is, YES, OF COURSE, but there are various ancillary questions to ask, both of external circumstances, and of your own private and personal capabilities. So, answer these questions first. Does your College or University offer part time training? If yes, investigate if this will fit into your personal pattern of needs. Discuss your potential as a fast-track learner with your tutor or team leader. If you want a short-time training programme do you have the mental resources to complete programmes within a much shorter time frame than most tutors and students are normally capable.

Remember, that generally speaking, European University semesters and time-tables were based around agricultural requirements. All young students went home for their summer breaks, not to rusticate or do world tours, but to

work on their family's land. Harvest gathering was the means by which most parents could afford to pay for their off-spring to build a safe future based on their academic accomplishments. Basic Educational achievements were seen as a springboard from which to aspire to greater things in life. Today, Educational Establishments are moving steadily into the twenty-first Century; but quite often some of their senior academics are holding onto their 19th Century values with great tenacity. However, if enough students ask, or if sufficient students are bright enough, it is often possible to negotiate your own pathway. When I began my Doctorate, my personal Tutor stated at the outset that it had taken her TEN years to achieve her doctorate; therefore there was no way I could ever gain mine in four part-time years. At my graduation, four years later she had the grace to apologise, suggesting that I might have been an unusual student. I might add that during those four years I also survived two heart attacks and various other illnesses.

What are some ways to keep your passion/enthusiasm alive during your degree course?

ANSWER: There is only one way which I know works, because it was my personal path, I can advocate sheer hard work and total enthusiasm for my chosen subjects: both during my Masters' degree and subsequent doctorate. Both were taken through part-time study whilst I was in full-time employment. The essential skills needed are always to keep your targets close and achievable.

Do you have to be a genius to do a degree course?

ANSWER: I do not honestly know. For the past 70 odd years I have achieved a very high score in assorted IQ tests; however, I have always strived as hard as I can to gain a genuine form of academic recognition: my reasoning and resultant motivation was based on a sad period of over six months when I was in a main isolation hospital instead of school. With only two children in the hospital at the time we had to share a visit from an infant teacher. I was left on my own; which meant reading anything and everything I could find. On return to school I found I had been relegated to the Remove, home of the slow learners. This immediately scuppered my plans to read law and become a Solicitor or Barrister. It was a further fifty years before I was able to progress through my own direct efforts to qualify as a teacher, and eventually a teacher-trainer, and finally as an A.E.B. Chief Examiner. All of this was accomplished through part time learning, and led the way to taking both Masters' and Doctoral degrees, in sequence, through the Institute of Work-Based Learning, as part of the **School of Life-Long Learning** at Middlesex University in London. Mathematic guru, Albert Einstein, once defined genius as 1% motivation; 1% dedication and 98% perspiration.

How do Degree students, in the final stage of their journey, feel about their future?

ANSWER:

Sadly, most degree students reach what is known as “The WALL”. This is the stage, usually very close to the Final Examination or VIVA, when an amount of panic and fear is created based around thinking that there is no way the student will be able to pass their examinations. There are two options to be faced: if the fear is genuine then the student needs to clear all their challenges (problems!). If the fear is not real the student needs to make a calm approach (if necessary talk with Course Tutor). There is no doubt that most students face WALLS in some form or other. Quite often (perhaps two thirds) of the challenges are not serious. However, in the remaining cases, there is an urgent need for the students to change their approach to their studies. Talking it through with the tutor – as soon as possible – will nearly always solve the Wall challenge. HOWEVER, should the Tutor agree that failure is imminent, then urgent discussions with the Tutors and Course Leaders, MUST take place; and plans made for facing the essential needs for the future.

What is the fastest way to finish a degree?

ANSWER: The simplest and most effective way to complete a degree successfully is for EVERY student to have a ‘**Game Plan**’, right from the beginning. The ‘**Game Plan**’ must include an agreement to work hard and keep up-to-date with all projects as agreed with the Course Tutors and Leaders from the outset of the course.

What is the best way to motivate oneself to finish a degree?

ANSWER: Motivation is a peculiar word that has a totally different meaning to different people. Quite often it is a shared experienced based each student’s personal attributes and recognition of abilities and skills, coupled with an ambition to achieve success. To gain the accreditation of Course Tutors and Leaders, it is essential that students are totally honest about their commitment to learn. Students MUST ALWAYS commit themselves to a total devotion to all the learning needs of the COURSE.

How does it feel to complete your final degree ?

ANSWER: Absolutely **FANTASTIC**. You will have achieved a life time’s ambition.

Or it could even be the starting point for a great Academic Future?

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