Transferable skills training & time management

1st October 2025

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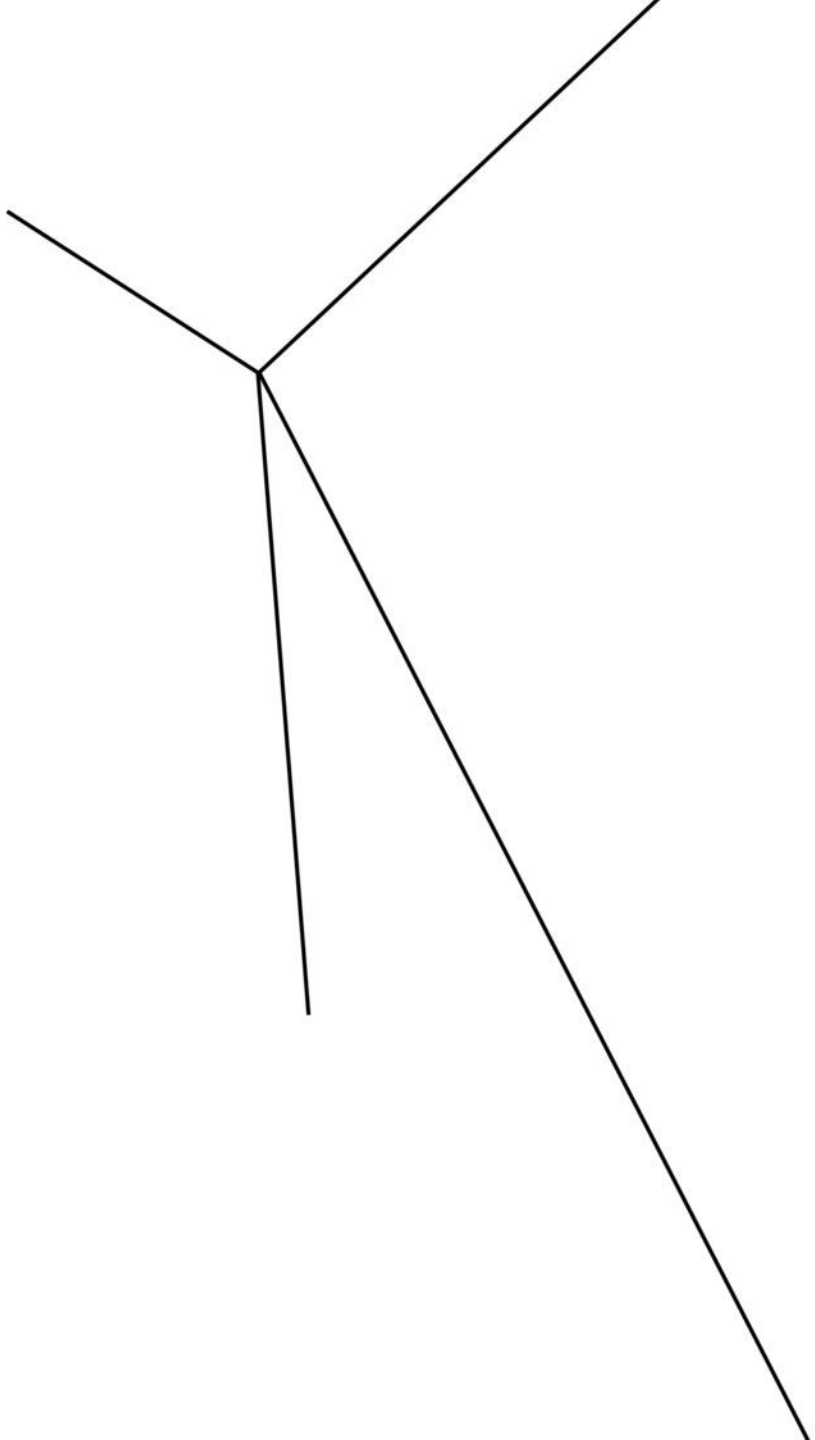


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Transferable skills training

What do we mean by that?

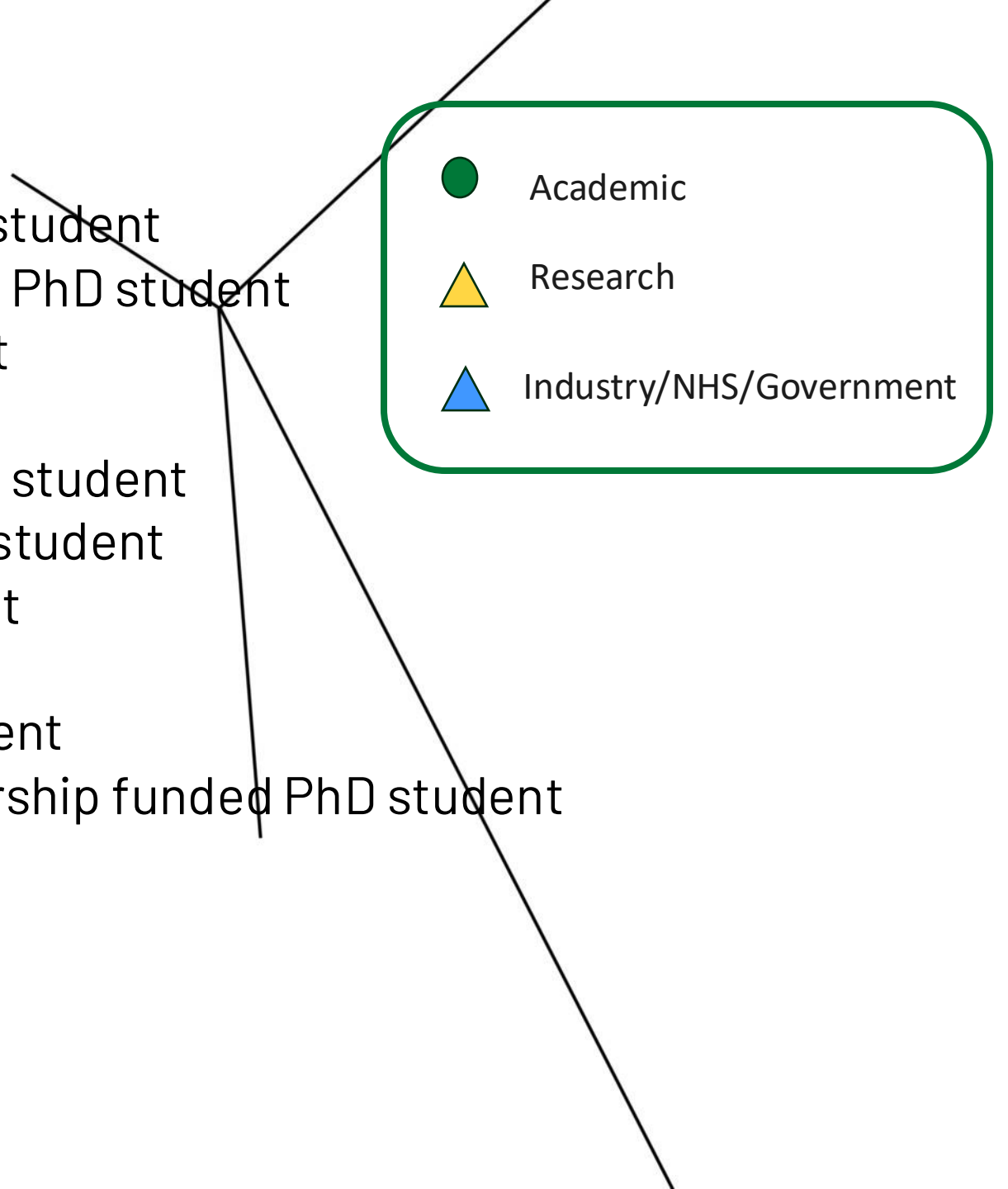
Why is it important?



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PhD students

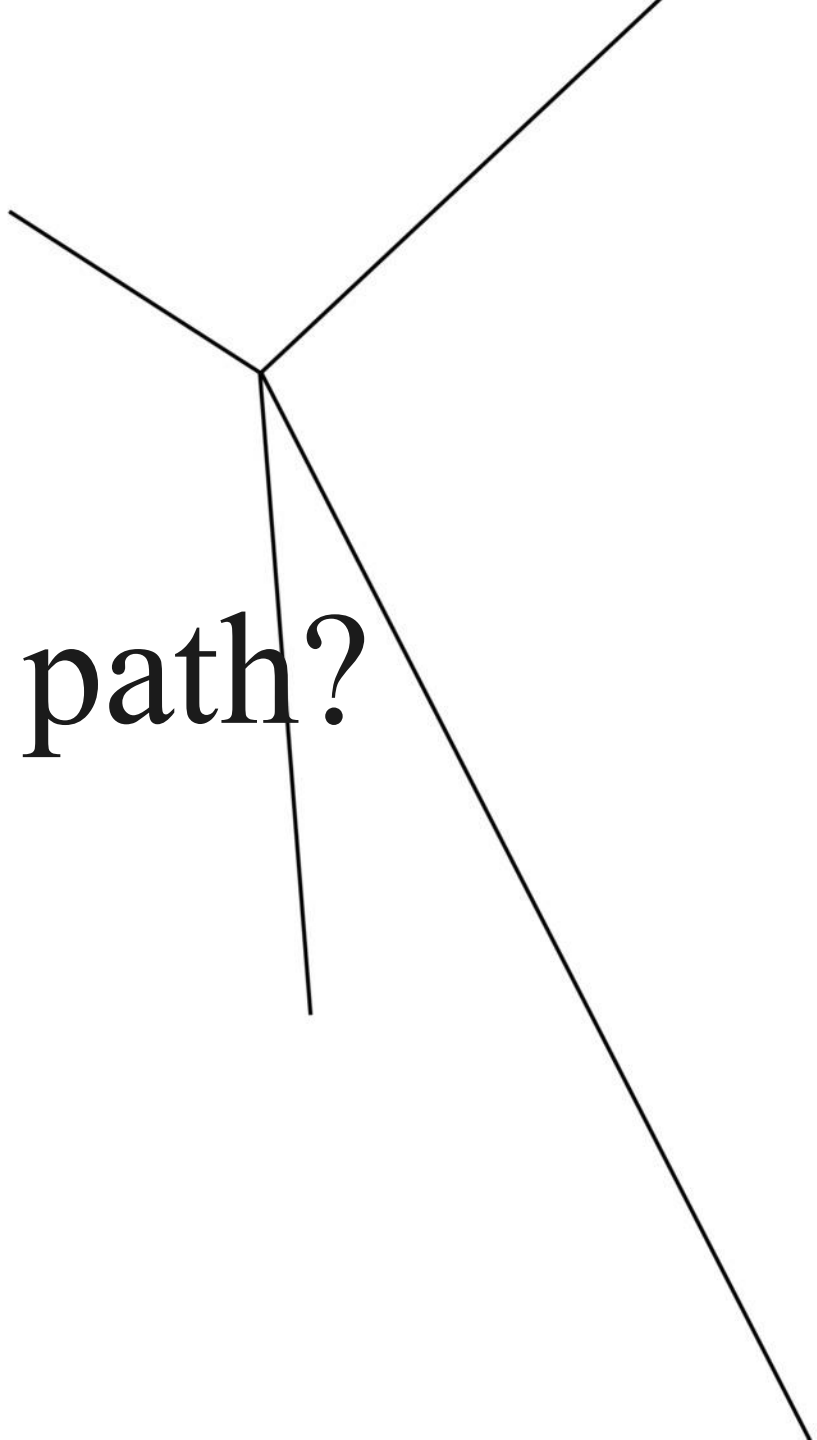
- •2024 Izzy, BBSRC MIBTP funded PhD student
- •2024 Rhiannon, BBSRC MIBTP funded PhD student
- •2022 Rachel, ERC funded PhD student
- •2022 Ele, ERC funded PhD student
- •2022 Holly, BBSRC MIBTP funded PhD student
- •2020 Rebekah, MRC DTP funded PhD student
- •2018 Helen, NERC-funded PhD student
- •2017 Tian, PhD student
- •2017 Alastair, NERC-funded PhD student
- •2016 Yi, BBSRC & Chancellor's Scholarship funded PhD student
- •2015 Ian, NERC-funded PhD student



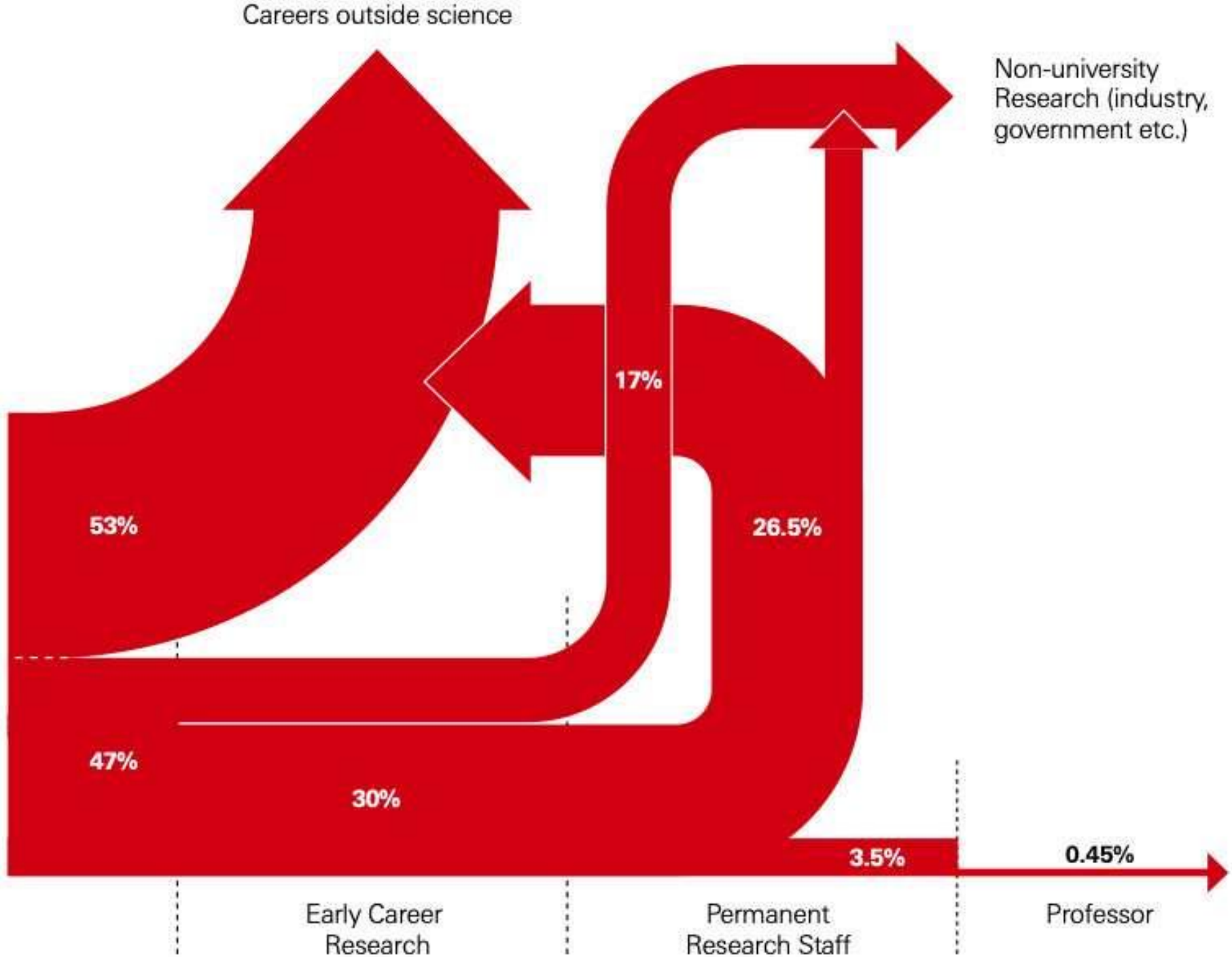
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Vote:

what is your career path?



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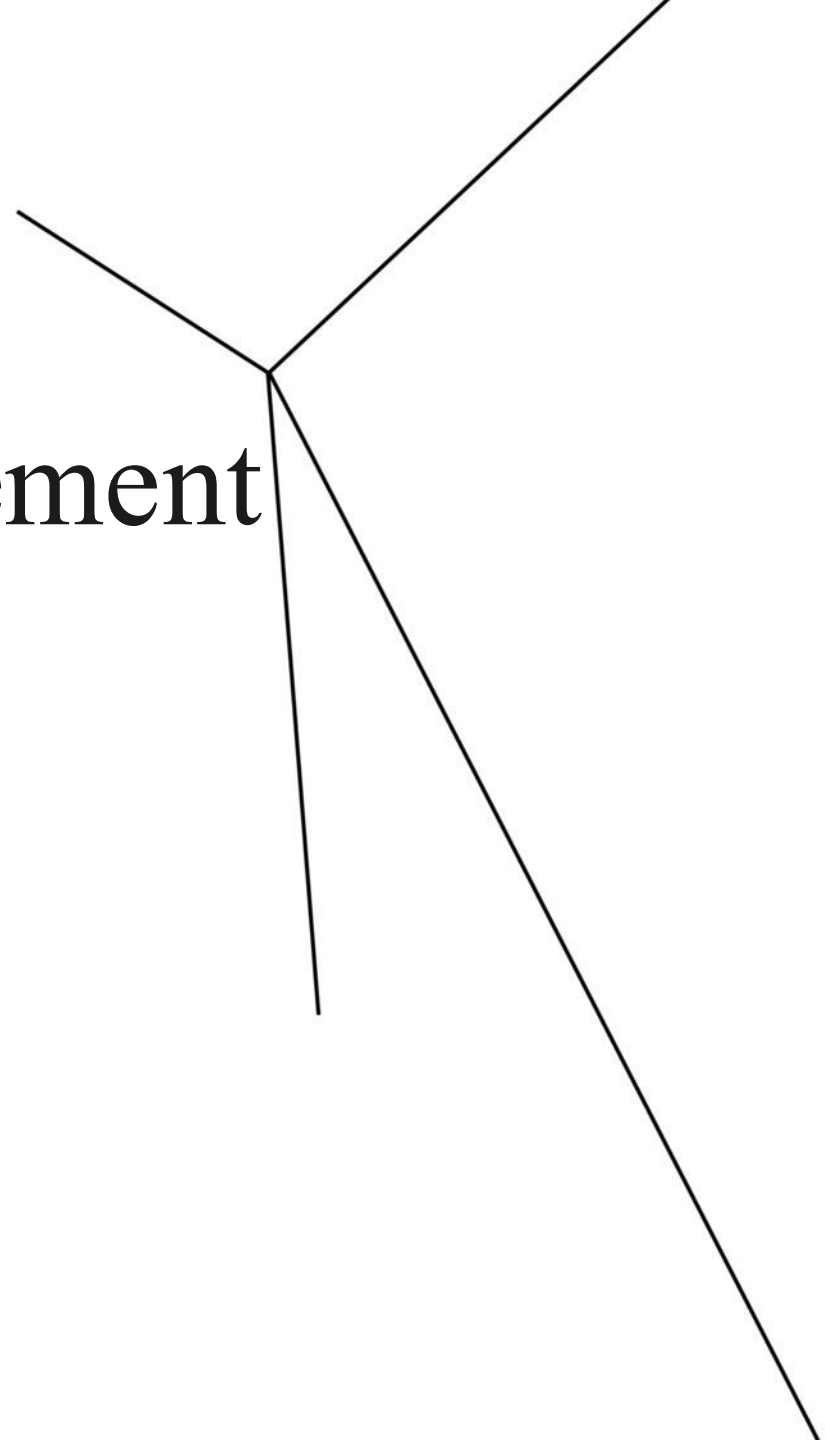
Transferable skills training

Transferable Skills

Postgraduate study is an opportunity to develop a range of skills that will be valuable in whatever career you decide to go into. By the end of your studies, you should be able to demonstrate a number of skills such as

- time management,
- project organisation,
- using software such as endnote,
- ability to work independently and think creatively,
- ability to communicate difficult concepts to an audience.
- ability to work as a team and collaborate (Coniston, end of yr 2)
- enterprise and entrepreneurship (ERIC, Emerging Researchers Innovation Challenge, end of yr 2)

Time and Project Management

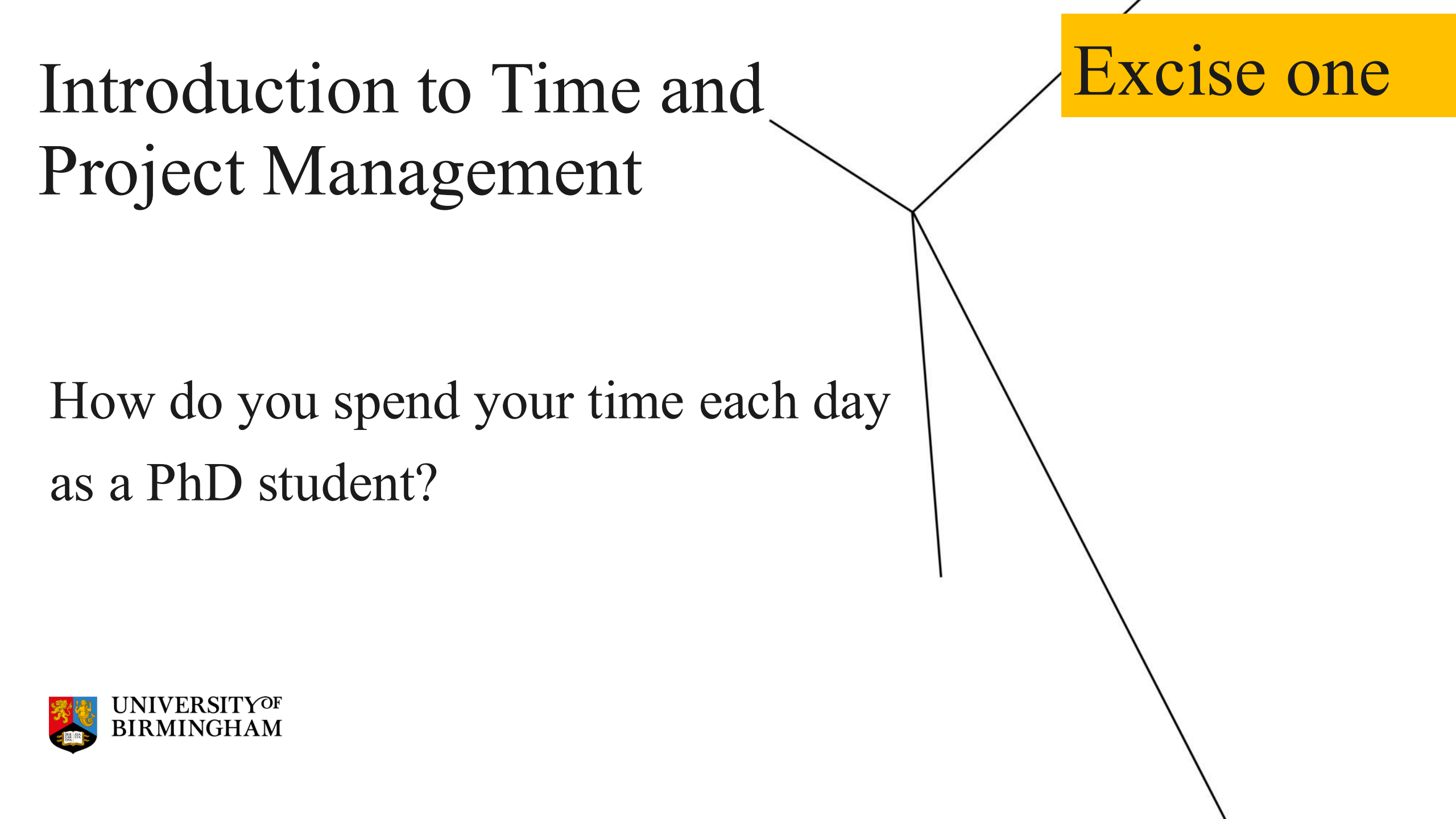


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Introduction to Time and Project Management

Excise one

How do you spend your time each day as a PhD student?



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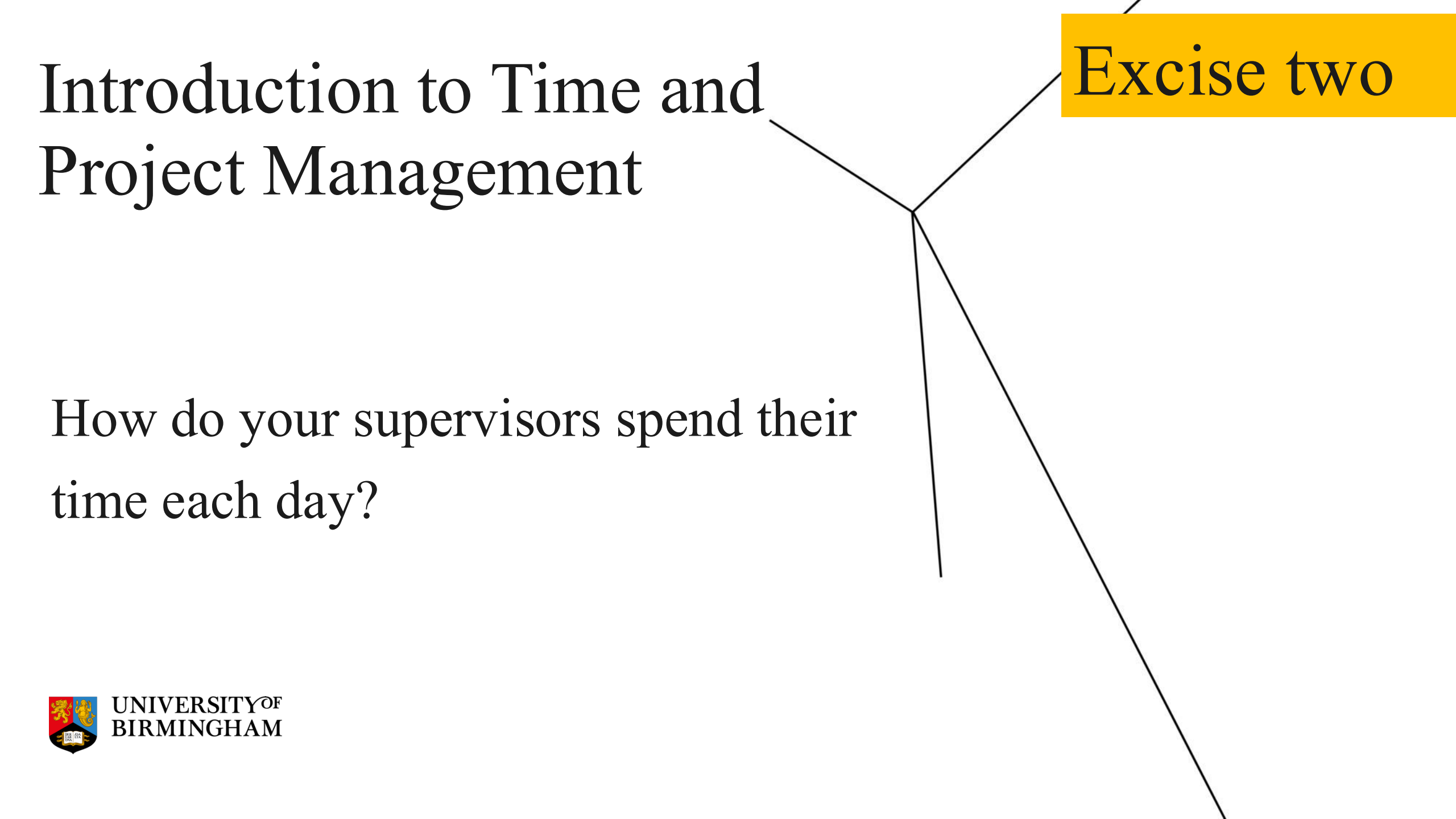
Excise one

- Collecting data (& troubleshooting)
- Analyzing data (& troubleshooting)
- Writing reports/ chapters/ papers
- Necessary admin inc. H&S, filling forms, ordering chemicals/reagents
- Liaising with collaborators
- Attend scientific meetings/ networking/ annual symposium
- Teaching new lab members/ UG demonstration/ PGT/R demo
- Lab social / theme social

Introduction to Time and Project Management

Excise two

How do your supervisors spend their time each day?



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Excise two

- Research
- Teaching
- Administration

- 1-2-1 meetings with PDRA, PhD students
- Research group meetings
- Perform lab experiments
- Analyzing data
- Writing research grants
- Writing/revising research papers
- Reading PhD thesis/ chapters
- Reading annual reports/ project reports
- Discussing data/ new ideas with research collaborators
- Sorting out risk assessment/ procedure risk assessment
- Filing patents/ discussing with industrial partners
- Writing rebuttal letters- research grants/ submitted papers
- Scientific meetings
- Give talks at HEI
- Review grants/papers for colleagues
- Attend mock interviews

Excise two

- Research
- Teaching
- Administration

- PGT/PGR/UG lectures
- Tutorials
- Supervising lab practice/ marking
- Marking tutorial assays/ exam papers
- Marking posters / talk presentations
- DTP master classes/ induction days
- Writing risk assessment for final year project students/ PGT students
- Pastoral meetings
- Writing references for personal tutees



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Excise two

- Research
- Teaching
- Administration

- DTP management meetings
- GRS3 management meetings
- Student staff liaison committee meetings
- Attend Coniston
- University open days
- Outreach activities/ X/ Linkedin / social media promotions
- Review papers/ editorial responsibilities
- Review grants
- Attend grant award panel meetings
- Review promotion cases
- Discussing grant budget with finance
- Discussing lab space, lab safety with H&S officers
- PhD/Postdoc/academic interviews

Randy Pausch (October 23, 1960 – July 25, 2008)

An American professor of computer science and human-computer interaction and design at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

“Time Management”



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Randy's advice

- Remember that time is money (what are you worth an hour?).
- Time must be managed, like money
- "The Time Famine"
  Bad time management = stress
  This is life advice

  The overall goal is FUN!

Two hours wasted per day

Messy desk
Can’t find things
Miss appointments
Unprepared for meetings
Tired/unable to concentrate

Being successful doesn’t make you manage your time well.
Managing your time well makes you successful

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Goals, Priorities, and Planning

Why am I doing this? What is the goal?

What happens if I chose not to do it?

Doing things right vs. doing the right things

Planning

- Failing to plan is planning to fail
- Plan Each Day, Each Week, Each Semester
- You can always change your plan, but only once you have one!

To do list

- Break things down into small steps



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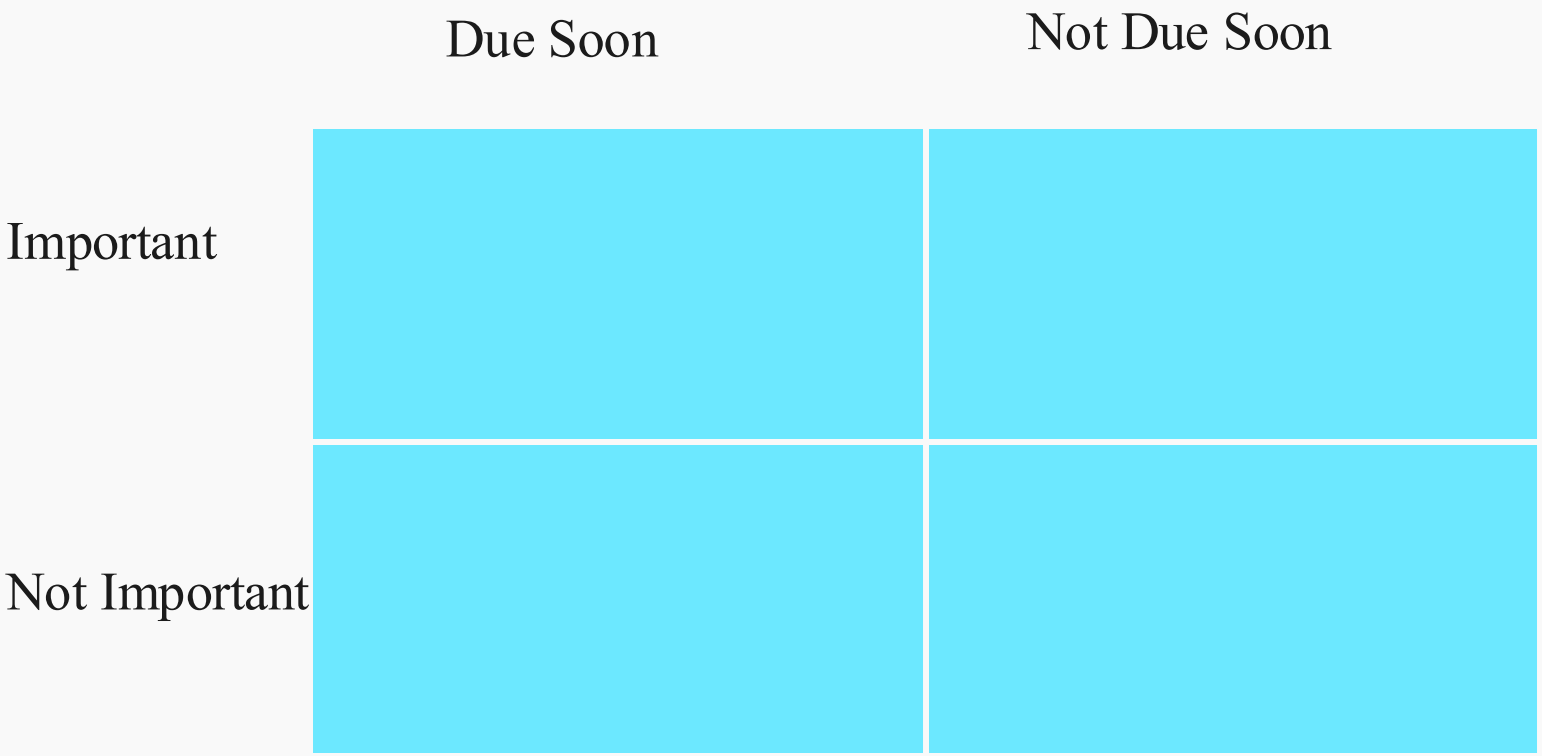
How do you arrange your to do list?

Pause

- Email inbox
- Monday/Tuesday/…….
- Jan/Feb/Mar…….
- Experiment1/experiment2…
- Chapter 1/ chapter 2……

Four-quadrant TODO

Learn to say no!



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Challenges during your PhD

Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year four
• Uncertainty • Lack of structure • Getting going • Overwhelmedness!	• Managing others • Maintaining motivation • Keeping track	• Multiple tasks • Time pressure • Perfectionism	• OMG! • What next?

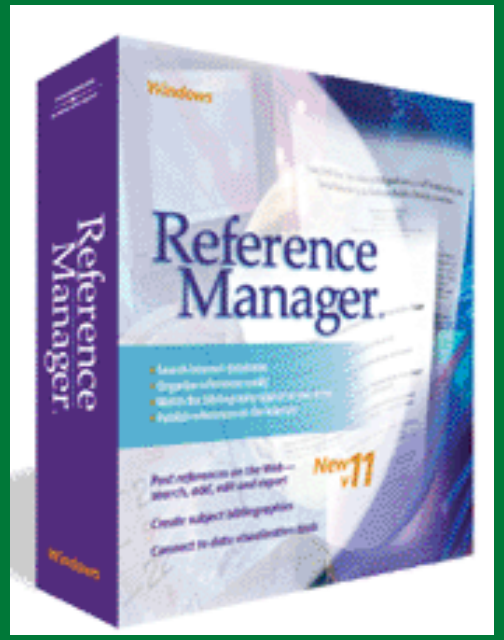
Randy's Advices?

- Sort out your systems NOW
- Manage your supervisor
- Get involved
- Output not hours
- Break it down
- Planning your time



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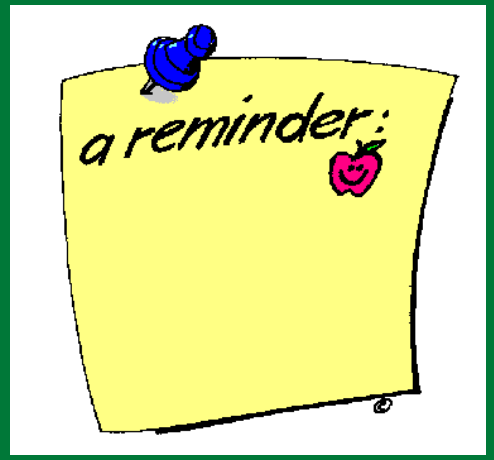
Sort out your systems NOW







Manage your supervisor







Get involved



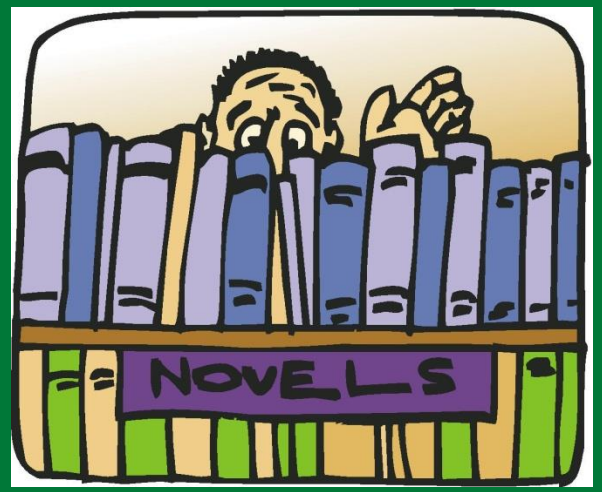




Output not hours







Planning your time: Project planning techniques

- Mind Map — try to think of everything relevant to your upcoming tasks
- Drill Down — think about each aspect of those tasks in detail
- Risk Analysis — Think what might go wrong; how disastrous that might be; what you can do to mitigate that.
- Gantt Chart — Put the tasks in order; work out how long they will take; create a work flow; who will do what (in a team); dependencies.
- Milestones — Tangible and discrete outcomes from the whole of the project or a subproject

Top tips

- Sort out your systems NOW
- Manage your supervisor
- Get involved
- Output not hours
- Break it down
- Planning, planning, planning
- ……

Transferable skills training & time management

30th September 2025



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Mind Map

Mind Map

Write down all the different aspects of your project

Brain-storming

No particular order

Some teams come up with great designs, others do not produce anything that is functional

Drill down

Drill Down

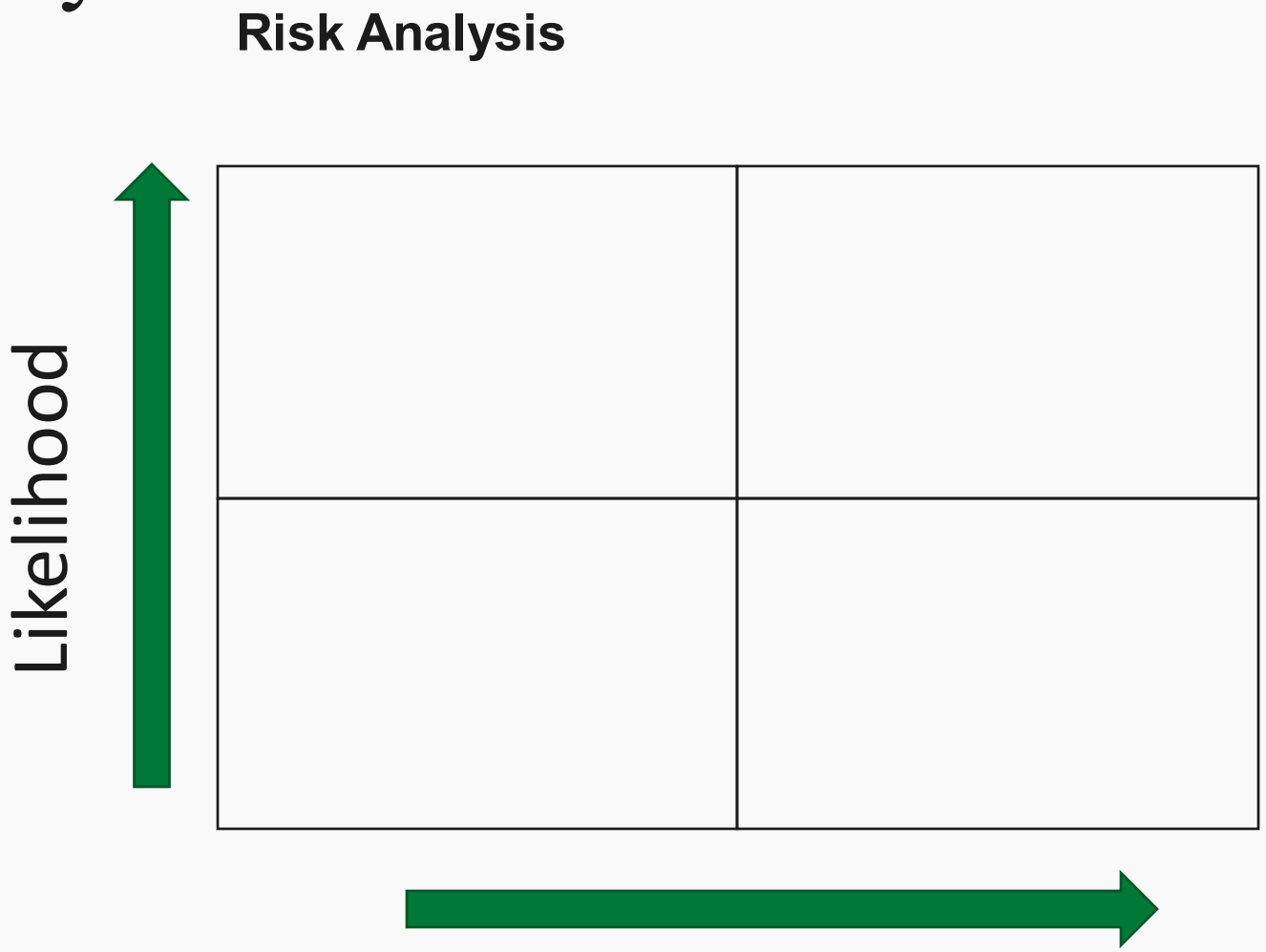
Start to order the topics

Drill down to identify sub-topics

Break down each subtopic into individual steps

Put them in the right order

Risk analysis



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Contingency Planning

Contingency Planning

What if……?

- The first design does not work at all?
- The first design takes too long?

Breaking your project down into tasks

Breaking your project down into tasks

Describing the tasks

Organising the team – allocating tasks

Planning the order of tasks

Milestones

Milestones

Tangible and discrete outcomes from the whole of the project or a subproject

Provide a way of knowing if progress has been achieved

Allow one to work out what work is needed for each stage and how long it might take.

Having a prototype ready to test?

Creating a Gant Chart

Creating a Gantt Chart

Helps to visualise the interplay between when you want to have achieved a milestone and how long it can take to do that

If something is urgent then you give people less time

Eg after testing your prototype you will not have long to rectify any defects

Creating a Gant Chart

Creating a Gantt Chart

MS Project will create a Gantt chart for you

Helps plan actually how much time will be involved in each job

Prevents you allocating tasks that add up to more time than is available

Factor in your other commitments

Dependencies

Dependancies

Some things in a project can’t start until others have been completed

So if one thing is delayed then it may have knock on effects

Sometimes it is obvious

In other cases there may not such a direct connection