

Part-Time Students: How to Find the Right Balance between Job, School, and Family

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How am I supposed to handle all this? I have to hand in a home assignment next week, I need to organize the next meeting of the managing board, and it is my son's birthday this week. Part-time students are often confronted with situations like these and they always try hard to reconcile their job, studies, and family. With the help of structured time and different stress management methods this so-called Work-Study-Life-Balance can be reached.

Studying part-time - how does that work?

The part-time students of HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management work full time in addition to studying at one of the HHL's different programs. One of the students is Sven Prager, he is currently in his third semester as a part-time MBA student at HHL. The married father of three children has been working for Porsche in Leipzig for three years now and decided to apply for further management education in 2014. Since then, he spends one weekend per month at the HHL campus, regularly writes term papers and develops case studies, and he plans to start writing his Master thesis next year. It is important for Sven Prager that professors are aware of the part-time students' situation and to organize deadlines for term papers or other works individually and flexible ahead of time. Additionally, part-time students should have access to the university's library on weekends and should always be able to obtain literature online. "The flexibility of HHL plays a significant role in regard to time management. The school has a special focus on part-time programs be it the MBA or the MiM?•, says Prager.

Foresighted planning and priority setting

Since Sven Prager has started the MBA program at HHL, he constantly tries to do justice to each of his commitments. These are his job at Porsche, his studies, and, of course, his family. "At the beginning, I wanted to reach 100 percent in every part of my life?•, says the father of three children. "But I soon realized that it does not work and that I have to set priorities. At some points, compromising is unavoidable.?• Alongside with priority setting foresighted planning plays an important role. "Students should start talking to their families about the decision to study part-time from very early on?•, recommends Martina Beermann, Psychologist and Director of the Career Center at HHL. Especially the family duties should be clearly split in order to avoid misunderstandings and problems. Moreover, it helps to structure the available time and divide it into different parts of everyday life. "Part-time students should schedule binding study days or study hours and, at the same time, they should set up time for their families?•, says Beermann. The employer can also contribute to effective time management. "Previous to the beginning of an MBA or MSc program, general conditions should be clarified with the employer?•, suggests the psychologist. In doing so, the employer and the student could, for example, agree on shorter working hours, which provide constant days off for school.

Finding compensation for job and school

Foresighted planning, priority setting, and communication with professors, employer, and family is sometimes not enough to find the right balance between job, school, and private life. Collisions could emerge insofar that students miss deadlines or cannot fulfill their private obligations. Such situations can cause enormous stress and students, who study part-time, have to fight against this stress especially at the beginning of their studies. "Stress management plays a meaningful role in regard to studying part-time?•, says Martina Beermann. In order to reduce stress from early on, there are countless possibilities, for example different kinds of sports or meditation. "I like to play basketball during my leisure time or I try to find time to read a good book.?• Finding compensation for job and school is important in order to relax and have a rest?•, says MBA part-time student Sven Prager. "Handling stress is a very individual issue. Every student, who studies part-time, should figure out the methods he can integrate best in his everyday life as early as possible?•, recommends psychologist Beermann.

No fear of the future

Stress and time management also mean that part-time students should start thinking about the time after graduating early. "This can reduce stress enormously?•, says Beermann. "For example, students can try to visualize their future at the beginning of their studies. After a few months, students can go back to this visualization and they notice which goals they have already reached?•, suggests Beermann. Oftentimes, students are not aware of their reached goals and methods, like the visualization of the own future, can reduce pressure that part-time students are confronted with because of job, school, and family. Besides individual strategies to plan the future, HHL also offers different consultation possibilities at the Career Center in regard to the time after graduating.

Tips for everyday life

Techniques to manage stress can be easily integrated in the everyday life of a part-time student. "There are often days when we come home in the evening and think that everything has gone wrong on this day?•, says Martina Beermann. "Sometimes it helps to think concretely of short moments of luck or success. At the end of the day, people realize that the day was not that bad actually and sometimes a short talk with colleagues or a nice breakfast can lift the mood?•, recommends Beermann. Short meditation phases at the beginning or end of each day can also help to start off well or end the day in a balanced way.

6-point plan to find the right balance between job, school, and family

- ? Foresighted planning
- ? Priority setting
- ? Constant communication (with employer, professors, and family)
- ? Finding compensation through sports, meditation, etc.
- ? Early career planning
- ? Visualization of the future

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Pressekontakt

HHL gGmbH

Herr Volker Stößel
Jahnallee 59
04109 Leipzig

hhl.de
volker.stoessel@hhl.de

Firmenkontakt

HHL gGmbH

Herr Volker Stößel
Jahnallee 59
04109 Leipzig

hhl.de
volker.stoessel@hhl.de

HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management

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Anlage: Bild

