

The Transition from Masters to PhD

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PhD Classics and Ancient History student Liv writes about the transition from Masters to PhD study at the University of Birmingham.

When I started at the University of Birmingham in 2016 studying Ancient History as an undergraduate, I didn't dream that I would still be here in 2024 starting my PhD in the same discipline. Birmingham has become my academic home, allowing me to flourish every step of the way.

In my opinion, the most challenging transition, but ultimately what I believe will be the most

rewarding, has been the transition from my masters in Antiquity to starting my PhD. In order to face some of these hurdles, I have developed a toolbox of tips to help cope with the transition that will hopefully be beneficial to anyone wishing to continue their academic journeys.



Liv's Top Tips

Break it down

When you start your PhD it can often feel incredibly overwhelming. There is so much to read, to see and to write. To counter this, I break down my main research goals into manageable tasks by creating to-do lists with achievable objectives. I find it much more productive to focus on the research I can do on the here and now then get too caught up with the next four years.

Talk, talk, talk

One of the most important parts of beginning your PhD journey is creating and maintaining a relationship with your supervisor and your peers. It can be intimidating when starting a research project to talk to individuals with so much more knowledge than yourself however everyone you speak to has started in the same position. They have experienced the same worries and concerns you have and it is essential to communicate openly about the challenges you face and seek guidance from those who have been in similar situations.

Passion at heart

Sustaining passion is a cornerstone when progressing from Masters to a PhD. The prolonged commitment to your research project demands a high level of motivation and a genuine interest in the subject matter. You might not love your subject everyday but preserving your passion helps you to cope with the inevitable hurdles you will encounter in doctoral research.

Hold your horses

Another important element of PhD studies is transitioning from the sprint-like pace of a Masters thesis to the marathon of PhD research. It is essential to recognise the need to decelerate for the sake of your mental well-being and embrace a slower and more deliberate pace.

Final reflections

In conclusion, the transition from a Masters to a PhD isn't just a progression in your academic journey but a personal development. Hopefully by incorporating some of these strategies detailed above, you can both navigate some of the challenges a PhD can throw up and enjoy the journey.

