

Getting the Most from Your MA

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Content

- Objective
- Seeing the Bigger Picture
- Building your professional profile
- The Intellectual Leap
- The Practical Leap
- The Personal Leap

Objectives

To improve your capacity to understand what and how you are learning and to review, plan and take responsibility for your own learning/future

This will help you to:

- become a more effective, independent and confident self directed learner;
- understand how you learn best and relate that learning to a wider context;
- improve your career management skills (which includes preparing for a PhD)

Exercise1: Seeing your 'bigger picture'

- Why are you doing an MA? Why this MA? Why the University of Manchester?
- What do you expect from the next year (or two for p.t. students)?
- Are there any other ambitions you hope to achieve during this time?
- What do you expect from your lecturers, the University and yourself?
- What obstacles or difficulties do you anticipate during your MA?
- What are you most looking forward to?
- Do you know what job you might like to do when you finish your MA? What industry you might work in? What career path you might follow?
- Would you like to study for a PhD? If so what programme? Do you intend to apply for funding? Who might supervise you?
- What do you want to be able to say about yourself, your abilities and your plans for the future at the end of the MA?

Try to find 3 key words for each – in pairs – 10 minutes

No 'one size fits all' answer!

What you get out of your MA will depend on your own unique ambitions, experience and skills

Keep the **bigger picture** in mind

But you are wise to keep a written record of your progress in the next year or so

- skills acquired and required
- progression and experiences through your MA
- key contacts and resources

PLP & SEQ

So, what *do I* think an MA is?

- A bridge/stepping stone...not 'the end of the line'
- Deeper engagement, but brings more responsibility
- A chance to develop & practice transferrable skills
- Opportunity to build professional profile & networks and work with professionals (academics, support staff & outside visitors/institutions)

You will need to be:

- self-managed, self-directed
- prepared, plan for meetings & seminars: **organise your time wisely!**
- AND develop your own agenda, growing out of where you want to get to

Some agility required...

The Intellectual Leap

What are the 'horizons' of your discipline?

What is epistemology, and what are the big epistemological issues in your discipline?

What have been the main methodological innovations recently? How have they challenged and changed the practice of your discipline? With whom are they associated?

Resources: CIDRAL, Divisional Research Seminars, Journals

The Practical Leap

- Using electronic resources, search engines
- Finding your subject's key publishers (book series?) and journals
- Working with primary sources more intensely (Deansgate Special Collections)
- Building research networks
- Avoiding plagiarism
- Planning & executing an innovative research project

Resources: John Rylands University Library, 'Google Scholar', JSTOR, PGT Skills Sessions, artsmethods, Electronic Databases

The Personal Leap

- What are you going to get out of the MA *in addition* to the qualification? What other skills are you going to develop? What skills do you need to develop to achieve your ambitions?
- Where do you think you're most likely to encounter difficulties or stress, especially with your dissertation/project? Think well outside the classroom...
- **Transferrable skills: PLP & SEQ**

Moving to the next level...

The intellectual leap involves exploring horizons, seeing the big picture of your discipline and beyond, being original, pushing boundaries, developing your own ideas and confidently using the ideas of others

The practical leap involves researching your essays, handling different types of sources & methodologies, getting to grips with an MA-level research project, bibliographies, quality of writing, IT skills

The personal leap involves developing your interpersonal skills, managing your own time, solving your own problems, career development

I WILL LEAVE THIS ROOM DETERMINED TO DO MY BEST AND

- **Start/participate in a reading group or a study group (GS space available for this)**
- **Attend training to develop my skills, horizons & thinking (Artsmethods/PGT Skills Sessions)**
- **Attend every seminar, research event, and public lecture possible!**
- **Network with the diverse body of PG students**

I WILL LEARN INDEPENDENTLY & SMARTLY!