Returning to studies after a break

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Common concerns:
• Where to begin?
• What if I’m not good enough?
• How hard are things going to be/how stressful can this year be?
• I’m a really, really slow reader...
• It’s been a while since my UG…. What if I’ve forgotten everything?!
• How tech savvy do I need to be? I’m a bit of a jinx with Computers.

Where to begin?

Always check your programme/course guides/handbooks, ask your programme director/personal tutor/supervisor for specifics.

study
(verb) - the act of texting, eating and watching tv with an open book nearby

Agree? Disagree? Unsure?

I’m really good at multi-tasking, especially during class or studying.

Multi-tasking = good?

• Focussing on one task at a time is more effective than trying to do several things at once (divided attention)

• Cost of switching

Agree? Disagree? Unsure?

The longer you study, the better the results.

Longer = better?

- Effective learning depends on how you study
- You do need to put time into your studies, and students often underestimate the time needed for assignments
- But length of time alone does not guarantee results


Agree? Disagree? Unsure?

You should take notes whilst reading.

Top tip #1

- Work SMART
  - Specific
  - Measurable
  - Achievable
  - Relevant
  - Timely

What if I’m not good enough?

SCQF descriptions

- Characteristic 1: Knowledge and Understanding.
  - Level 10: A critical understanding of the principal theories, concepts and principles.
  - Level 11: A critical understanding of the principal theories, concepts and principles.
  - Level 12: A critical overview of a subject, including a critical understanding of the principal theories, concepts and principles.
  And: A critical, detailed and often leading knowledge and understanding at the forefront of one or more specialisms

http://scqf.org.uk/
• **Characteristic 2: Practice: Applied Knowledge, Skills and Understanding**
  - Level 10: In executing a defined project of research, development or investigation and in identifying and implementing relevant outcomes.
  - Level 11: In planning and executing a significant project of research, investigation or development.
  - Level 12: In designing and executing research, investigative or development projects to deal with new problems and issues

**SCQF descriptions**

• **Characteristic 3: Generic Cognitive Skills**
  - Level 11 (12): Deal with complex issues (and/or new issues) and make informed judgements in situations in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.

• **Characteristic 4: Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills**
  - Level 11: Communicate, using appropriate methods, to a range of audiences with different levels of knowledge/expertise.
  - Level 12: Communicate at an appropriate level to a range of audiences and adapt communication to the context and purpose.

• **Characteristic 5: Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others**
  - Level 11: Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities.
  - Level 12: Demonstrate substantial authority and exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities.

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**Level 10 vs Level 11/12**

Critical*

3 : 7

* Fully informed, capable of supporting in-depth analysis and assessment.

http://scqf.org.uk/

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**Top tip #2**

“... your task is to build an argument, not a library.”


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**Becoming the expert**

• By the end of your postgrad, you will be the expert...
• But how do you get there?
  - Read
  - Consolidate
  - Connect
  - Anything else?
Time

It will take longer than you think to think, read and write!

Thinking improves reading, reading improves writing, writing improves thinking

Top tip #3

“Thoughts can be improved by communication; the act of communication alters what is thought.”

So practice, practice, practice... and practice some more!


How stressful will it be?

Work/life balance... is there such a thing?

Time management

Planning and prioritizing

Important

Urgent

Do this now

Start it before it becomes urgent

Do it if you can

What are you...

• Early bird?
• Night owl?
• Permanently exhausted pigeon?

How DO you study again?

• Highlighting
• Re-reading/writing notes
Top tip #4
What works:
• Self-testing
• Distributed practice


Top tip...
Laminate your notes so the tears roll off

Have you tried switching it off and on again?

Lots of technology
• Virtual Learning Environment (vle) e.g LEARN
• Library
• Power points
• Collaborate
• Turnitin
• Word/Excel
• Office 365/Outlook/Email
• Calendars
• Google docs/Sharepoint
• The ‘Cloud’

Top tip #5
Get a reference manager… and learn it and use it!

(Apologies for yet more IT…)

What’s it like to study at postgraduate level?

‘Higher level study achievement to open more careers doors.’

‘Little bit more special having achieved it (compared to getting a BSc).’

‘…chance to really explore a topic in depth, acting like a researcher.’

‘...opportunity to work with peers collaboratively was very important.’

‘...you have to think in semesters, but always know that there is an end in sight!’

‘…bit of pride in achievement – and for me doing this part-time whilst employed.’

http://www.ed.ac.uk/iad/postgraduates
Always check your programme/course guides/handbooks, ask your programme director/personal tutor/supervisor for specifics.

Resources for PGT students

- [http://www.ed.ac.uk/iad/postgraduates](http://www.ed.ac.uk/iad/postgraduates)

Other sources of support

- **Careers service**
  - Jobs (now, future), CV advice, PhD opportunities, interview advice
- **Student Counselling**
  - Online and on-campus, BWW, apps, self-help, counselling (incl. email), workshops
- **Student Disability Service**
  - Support for some health conditions, learning differences, disabilities and some temporary injuries, adjustment schedules incl. exams,
- **English Language Education**
  - Independent study materials, workshops, online and on-campus