

PGR Tips: Effective reading

Effective reading is vital to completing your doctorate, whatever your discipline. Below are some tips to make your reading more effective

PQRS method

Preview-initial reading to gain a general idea of content to select
Questions to identify the information you want to extract
Read the material, actively seeking answers
Summarise what you have read in notes

Preview and selection

You can't read everything; read thoroughly only when you are sure the information is relevant. Use skimming (as you would newspaper headlines) and scanning (as you would a phone book) to help you to choose what to read; Use skimming to

- preview a selection of text prior to detailed reading
- refresh your understanding of the text after detailed reading
- Use scanning for
- introduction or preface
- first or last paragraph of chapters
- concluding or summarising chapter
- book index

Critical questions

- What do you want to find out?
- What questions does the paper address?
- What are the main conclusions of the paper?
- Does the data actually support the conclusions? What is the quality? Are there any other possible interpretations or explanations?
- Why are the conclusions important?

Reading

Read, actively seeking the answers to the questions you have set. Experiment with increasing your reading speed to see if that is useful for you.

Summarise and keep notes

Note-making isn't just about having something to refer to later – it is part of the learning process itself

- Be clear *why* you are making notes (to select, understand or remember?)
- Be selective – only include the information that is relevant to the current task
- Use colour and space to organise your notes, adapt your note making style to the task
- Experiment with different formats such as index cards or mind maps
- Ensure that you keep good notes in a systematic way so that you can use them throughout your doctorate

Talk to other researchers about what works for them and see what a difference effective reading can make.

Are you keen to use the skills you have gained during your doctorate in a prestigious, quantitative investment banking career? Careers in Focus: Investment Banking for PhDs on the 23rd September 2008, Glaziers Hall, London is your ideal opportunity to find out how to do it and what will be involved when you get there. This an interactive one day event is hosted by employers keen to recruit PhDs in quantitative subjects and with experience of computer modeling? For more information visit www.vitae.ac.uk/cif. Places are limited so apply now! Deadline: 3 September.