

## PGR tips: Keeping a part-time PhD part-time

Gaining a postgraduate degree through part-time study is an increasingly popular option. Reasons vary considerably but competing demands on time is a common characteristic for many studying part-time, ranging from wanting to remain in employment while studying to fitting studies around family commitments.

Whatever the reason for studying part-time, the following tips may help you to ensure you are managing your time well:

- **Have well defined time for work, study and 'your time'** – if working from home, go through your diary with your partner, family or friends, and plan in the times you can spend with them and times when you need to be working alone. If you are able to create a separate space for your work. Having to unpack your work every time can be demotivating and wastes valuable time getting back into the work
- **Build strong networks that provide a way to remain 'connected' with the research community when balancing work and home with research:**
  - maintain good contacts with your supervisory team, supervision meetings, if held electronically, may be more effective with the simple addition of webcams at both ends, and they will be a good opportunity to stay connected. Other collaboration tools may be available at your university
  - find out about Graduate Schools, training programmes, counselling services, and other services for groups with specific needs that are available to you in your institution
  - join or start face-to-face or online communities based on research field, socialise with others from your institution, to identify ways to develop yourself and share experiences with others studying for their postgraduate degree; your peers are a good source of support, especially if you tend to work alone
  - read more about building networks and find ideas for getting the information you need at [www.grad.ac.uk/networking](http://www.grad.ac.uk/networking)
- **Appoint a project manager** – appoint a family member, or someone you live with, as your project manager, as you may not see your supervisor very often. Tell them in advance what you hope to achieve on a given day or week. You will have someone who can check on you, encourage you, and celebrate with you when you have reached a goal.
- **Learn to say no to unrealistic demands on your time at work as well as in research** – don't be afraid to say no, each area of your life will take priority at different times.
- **Make sure you know what is available to you:**
  - if you are local to the University, make full use of all facilities for sports, social life and study. The relevant administrative offices are often open into the evenings and the libraries open at evenings and weekends during term time
  - if you are distant from your University, make the most of face to face visits – check on available seminars and training courses during your stay and arrange to meet up with other part-time researchers
  - often universities hold research days with poster presentations and talks of on-going research – make sure you participate if at all possible not only to get feedback on your work but also to get practice in presenting and defending your research and more chances to build a network
  - check what is available on-line at your institution. Many will post videos or slides from seminars or training courses on their Virtual Learning Environment

Look for further information available on Just for Postgrads section of our website [www.grad.ac.uk/jfp](http://www.grad.ac.uk/jfp). and for experience and views from other postgraduate researchers, subscribe to our free online magazine GRADBritain, and receive the next issue 'hot off the press'. [www.grad.ac.uk/gradbritain](http://www.grad.ac.uk/gradbritain).