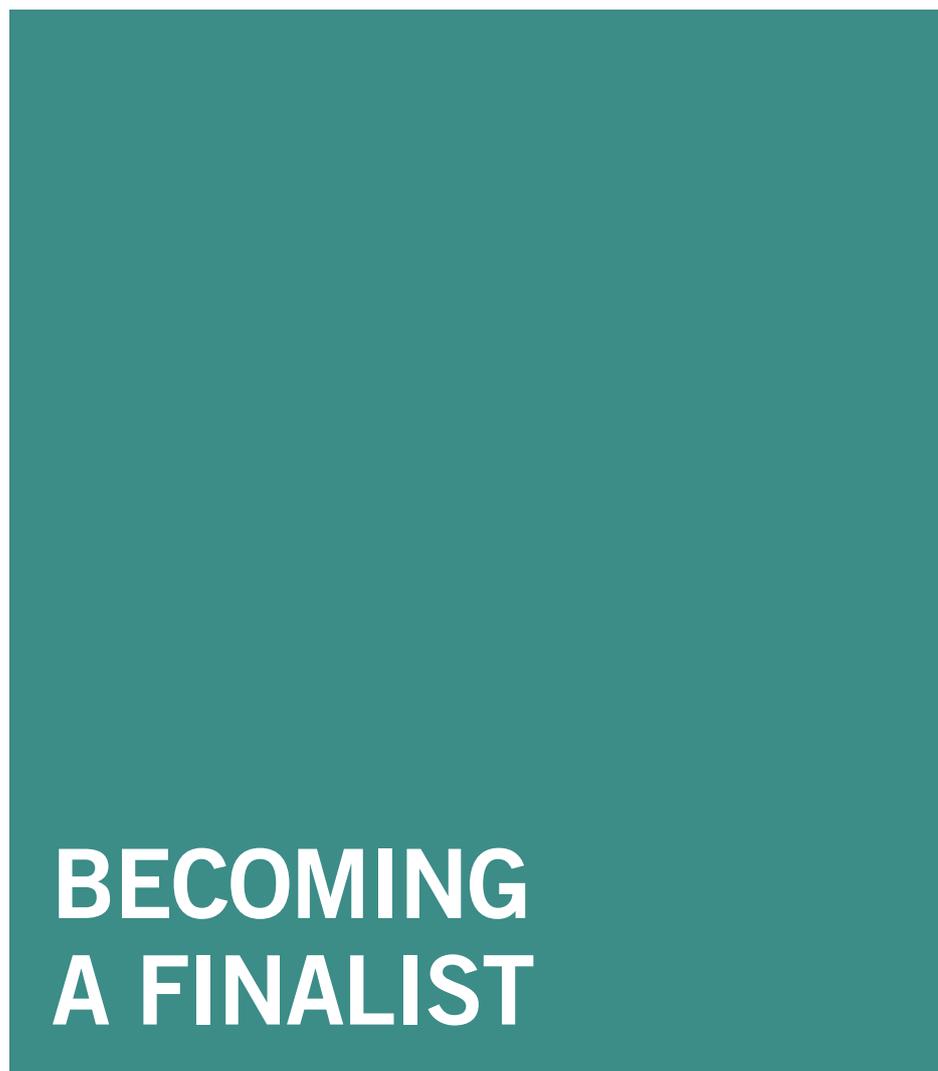


Lifelong Learning Centre



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



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Important information

Information provided by the University, such as in presentations, University brochures and on the University website, is accurate at the time of first disclosure. However, courses, University services and content of publications remain subject to change. Changes may be necessary to comply with the requirements of accrediting bodies or to keep courses contemporary through updating practices or areas of study. Circumstances may arise outside the reasonable control of the University, leading to required changes. Such circumstances include industrial action, unexpected student numbers, significant staff illness (where a course is reliant upon a person's expertise), unexpected lack of funding, severe weather, fire, civil disorder, political unrest, government restrictions and serious concern with regard to the transmission of serious illness making a course unsafe to deliver. After a student has taken up a place with the University, the University will look to give early notification of any changes and try to minimise their impact, offering suitable alternative arrangements or forms of compensation where it believes there is a fair case to do so. Offers of a place to study at the University will provide up-to-date information on courses. The latest key information on courses, entry requirements and fees can be found at www.leeds.ac.uk/courses. Please check this website before making any decisions.

About this Guide



Written with input from current students, the aim of this guide is to support your transition as you enter the final stages of your journey as a student here at University of Leeds.

Feedback from previous 'finalists' tells us that your final year of study can often be an emotional experience – the culmination of your hard work as well as a sense of worry about 'what happens next'. Know that these feelings are perfectly normal, are shared by your peers, and use this guide as a tool to focus you to prepare for this next stage.

As well as giving practical advice, hints and tips (see page 17 for web links to all resources mentioned in this document), the guide should also be used as a reflective tool to encourage you to think about what being a finalist really means and to help think through a plan of action for the next few months and beyond as you start this exciting last period of your undergraduate journey.



Your final year: Academic skills

Whether you are going to be going into your final year full time or your final two years part time, this can feel weird. Some people feel like they have struggled to make sense of the year just gone and can't wait to enter the final year(s), to move closer to the goal. Others feel like they are peaking and don't want this feeling to stop and are, perhaps, a bit nervous about heading towards the end (or nearly the end) of their studies. Many people feel a mixture of emotions, which vary depending on what day it is.

Let's face it, studying is challenging and with a block of time approaching when you don't have to be in University or reading or writing for a deadline, it might be difficult to focus. It is really important that you use the summer to have some time to yourself and regain some energy for the year ahead. Then again, you will also want to use the summer to prepare for starting again in September/October, so that it is not a massive shock when you need to get back into the swing of studying.

So, what can you do to keep your brain ticking over?

We have suggested some activities along with rough timings for when to do each of them, but you can decide whether you want to leave gaps in between them or work through all of them in a couple of weeks. We do think it is useful to work through them in this order and over a longer period of time, but these are just ideas, so do feel free to be creative and make your own plan.



Activity 1 – How has the year gone?

It would be a good idea to do this during June.

First of all it will be useful to take a bit of time to critically assess your year. Either on your own or with a friend, spend a little time going through each module you have studied this year. You might want to ask yourself the following questions:

- What was that module about?
- What three key things did I learn about the subject?
- What three key things did I learn about myself while studying this subject?
- Did I engage with the module well?
- What motivated me about this module?
- What did I find de-motivating while doing this module?
- What I did well was.....
- What I could have done better was....
- What did I learn from the assignments?
- From the feedback received what do I need to carry on doing?
- What do I need to start to do?
- What do I need to stop doing?
- What do I need to do differently?

Do this for **each** module from last year from semester 1 **and** semester 2 (you might want to go back over the year before last as well.)



Example reflective exercise

	MODULE 1	MODULE 2	MODULE 3	MODULE 4	MODULE 5	MODULE 6
Key subject						
Three things I learned						
Three self-learning points						
Did I engage?						
Motivating?						
De-motivating?						
What I did well						
Could have done better						
What did I learn from the assignments?						
Feedback – to carry on doing						
Feedback – to start doing?						
Feedback – what to stop doing?						
Feedback – what to do differently						

When you have gone through all the modules you should be able to identify some themes coming through about the way you work and what strategies work well for you AND what sorts of things you need to work on.

For example, you might identify that you need to:

- Stay motivated, otherwise my interest drops and I stop engaging with the subject.
- Manage my time better.
- Understand exactly how to cite my sources.

These points will help you to write an action plan for the summer, but first you need to think about the coming year.

Activity 2 – What is happening next year?

It would be a good idea to do this by the first week of July, especially if you have school age children.

Now, think about the final year(s). You could map your modules out in the format below:

SEMESTER 1	SEMESTER 2

It might be useful to answer these questions about each module:

- What is this module going to be about?
- Which modules that I have already studied will this module build on?
- What resources have I got to help me engage with this module?
- What do I want to achieve in doing this module?

	MODULE 1	MODULE 2	MODULE 3	MODULE 4	MODULE 5	MODULE 6
Key subject						
Previous relevant modules						
Relevant resources						
Goals for this module						

If you have a major research project/dissertation to work on you will already have started thinking about this with your tutor before the summer. Part of your action plan will include some structured reading about your topic to inform your literature review, to help you to hit the ground running,

but do not expect to do all the work for this over the summer. It is highly likely that once you start the dissertation in October your tutor will ask you to develop your ideas further, to become more focussed.

Activity 3 – Your Summer Action Plan

It would be a good idea to do this by the middle of July, especially if you have school age children.

Try to make it:

- Realistic – don't set yourself too much to do or try to do everything all at once.
- Enjoyable – think about the timing of the tasks. You might like to set yourself something to do on a Friday so that, once you have completed the work, you can then enjoy the weekend. Or you might like to do a little bit on most weekdays, so that it is spread out.
- Relevant - keep motivated, by linking your work to the modules or your short term and longer term goals.

In the plan below the lessons learned from last year (stay motivated, time management, learn how to cite), are actually built into the plan later in the summer as it might be better to work on these closer to the start of term. The reading for the dissertation can be started early on in the summer, to give you time to develop your ideas about the themes you are going to be studying and to think about what else you might need to do to explore these in a more focussed way. Remember these are just suggestions; we have provided a blank grid below for you to develop your own plan.

An example Summer Action Plan:

What are you going to do? (Is this realistic?)	What resources do you need?	How are you going to do this (Is this fun?)	What is the goal? (Is it relevant?)	When are you going to do this by? (Is this realistic?)
Identify key texts/theorists for the dissertation	Google Scholar and Library search	Identify themes to explore in more detail	To develop real familiarity with the subject	15/07
Search for key debates related to the subject you are focussing on.	Library search and Google Scholar and texts from first action point	Use reading strategies to get an overview of key texts and make notes, including references	To become familiar with the gaps and tensions in the research and increase motivation	Theme 1 31/07, Theme 2 14/08, Theme 3 31/08, theme 4 14/09, Theme 5 30/09
Find examples of research interventions and applications in practice	Texts and search engines	Read for examples and make note. Include referencing information.	To identify how the subject is currently applied and make connections between themes	As above
Look at guides to citing in Leeds Harvard	Library website and guides that have been provided.	Read through the guide and contact the skills team if it isn't clear	To be more confident about citing in written work	Beginning of September
Make a plan of the study week for term time	Paper or digital calendar	Map key dates and also think about weekly commitments	To get a balance between social, family, work and study demands	By end of September, but to be reviewed regularly



My Summer Action Plan:

What are you going to do? (Is this realistic?)	What resources do you need?	How are you going to do this (Is this fun?)	What is the goal? (Is it relevant?)	When are you going to do this by? (Is this realistic?)

Strategies to help you to follow your plan

We can all struggle to keep motivated, but there are some strategies you can use to help you to follow your plan through.

- Talk to your tutor before the end of the year to discuss your plan and identify any areas of concern.
- Share your plan with a friend and ask them to check in with you on specific dates or just regularly.
- Arrange to meet up with a friend or group of course mates to do some work on your dissertation reading at specific times. This will give you some target dates to work towards or when you will do the work.
- Continue to use the libraries over the summer when they are quiet.
- Arrange to meet with the Skills Team (to chat about your plans or to check in with some notes).
- Create a shared chat group online or using social media to help to share ideas at a distance.
- When you are on the point of coming back for the start of term make sure you spend some time in September getting your head round the work you have done in preparation for the new year.
- Skills@library has a really useful resource about engaging with the final year, called The Final Chapter: <https://resources.library.leeds.ac.uk/final-chapter/>

Don't forget you can book an appointment with any of the Skills Team over the summer



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Kat

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Rachel

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Rachel has even written a more detailed guide to Getting Organised for your Research Project, which she will send you if you email her at r.e.walls@leeds.ac.uk



Case Study: Sarah Hudson

I was feeling very blessed with what I had achieved throughout year two. Not only my work load but I had been lucky enough to have done an internship throughout the summer at the university. This meant that I was gaining so many more skills and my confidence was growing so much. I felt a great sense of personal empowerment as it was obvious to me that I had grown as a person so much by the end of year two.

I guess I was already built up and equipped for the final leg if we are thinking in mental attitude terms. However, I did recognise that I needed self-discipline in taking care of my own well-being. You can easily burn out with the mental labour that goes into university work. So, I set aside time and lots of alarms! To remind me to take regular 'digital detoxing' walks out in nature and to have consistent intervals of meditation and relaxation to avoid tension headaches, brain overload and unnecessary anxiety.

In all honesty, the third year has been extremely difficult. It is a busy year and it's your most important one, so naturally tensions rocket. However, from that rocket view, there are moments of sheer clearness where I see the stars and think 'one more rev and you're there girl'!

If I could have done anything differently up to this point then practically, better preparation and organisation. Physically, definitely staying more active and keeping fit alongside the long hours of sedentary study sitting. Emotionally, be less hard on myself and talk down my internal mean voice! Mentally, give myself head-space and not nose dive into my work! Socially, stay connected and surrounded by those that keep me feeling happy. Spiritually, be kinder to me, more self-love.

I would strongly suggest that you stay connected with people that keep your spirits lifted, don't manifest in negative energies. Keep at it the best way that serves you. When the going gets tough, because it will, have a self-supporting mantra and recognise how far you have come. Enjoy the process, own it and be proud, if 'I Can, You Can, We Can'!

Your final year: thinking about life after university

Don't know what you want to do after you finish your degree? Use the summer vacation to start exploring:

- Find out about what graduate roles are available. Try the job profiles or the job sectors pages on the Prospects website. It can give you ideas about careers you perhaps hadn't considered, or even been aware of. TargetJobs provides similar information.
- Book a guidance interview, either at the University Careers Centre, or at the LLC. We are here all summer! (in fact it might be easier to get an appointment during this time). Guidance can help you to explore your interests, values, motivations, skills and strengths with a view to identifying possible career paths.
- Look at Career Planner and/or Job Match on the graduate careers website Prospects.

Have a few ideas but not entirely sure?

- Try to get some work experience in the sector/role over the summer. Many summer internships have already started by now, but some organisations are still recruiting; look at the Vacancies section on MyCareer, using the filters on the left hand menu to search specifically for summer/vacation opportunities. You can also check the work experience information pages on the University Careers Centre website which provide links to external sites advertising work placement vacancies.
- Get involved in volunteering which relates to some of your ideas – you can do this over the summer and/or during your final year. The University's Volunteering Hub has lots of local opportunities and many organisations are particularly grateful to have volunteers over the summer when many full-time students have left Leeds. You can also find opportunities on the national volunteering database, Do-It (search by postcode and/or area of interest)
- When the new term starts, sign up for events where you can meet employers and find out more about sectors/roles. Plan to visit the University Graduate Jobs Fair in early October and look out for other sector-related events such as the Criminal Justice Fair. Check the Events section on MyCareer to see what employers are coming and when; book early for the ones that interest you.

Have some fairly definite ideas about future plans?

- Graduate jobs (to start in the summer/autumn after you graduate) will be advertised from the autumn of your final year, so begin checking vacancies from September onwards. The University Careers Centre facility MyCareer has a vacancies section; you can sign up to be alerted as new ones are added. You can also find a list of graduate job websites on the LLC Alumni webpage

Research when and where graduate vacancies will be advertised in your area(s) of interest and don't miss any deadlines. For example:

- The Civil Service Fast Stream applications deadline is usually at the end of October
- 'Big name' graduate schemes (e.g. KPMG, PWC etc) will usually have closing dates before Christmas
- Applications for teacher training via UCAS usually open in early October (the Teach First graduate teacher training scheme opens during the summer and runs through to the following spring but popular routes will close as the vacancies are filled)
- Get ready to compete for graduate jobs by brushing up your CV over the summer; it's unlikely you will actually use a CV for graduate job applications (most are through online forms) but it saves a lot of time and effort if you gather all your 'careers' information together in one place and a CV is a really good place to store it – you can then cut and paste (carefully and selectively!) into parts of online applications. Check out information on CVs on the University Careers Centre website or look at some of the books in the LLC student resource area. For one-to-one support there is a drop-in at the Careers Centre every weekday afternoon during term time, or you can book an appointment at the LLC.
- Familiarise yourself with what to expect in selection activities for graduate roles. The application form is only the first stage in the process! Use the University Careers Centre website to find out about aptitude tests, Assessment Centres and interviews, so that you are ready for any (or all) of them. The Careers Centre also offers mock interviews and brings employers in to run mock Assessment Centres; check these out via the Events tab on MyCareer and book in for some during the autumn term

- Thinking about self-employment? The University Careers Centre has a team, Spark, which provides support for students interested in setting up their own business.
- Thinking about postgraduate study? Have a look at TargetPostGrad as a starting point.

For some graduate roles, further study may be required. For example, if you want to be a teacher, social worker, healthcare professional (e.g. nurse, physiotherapist), lawyer/solicitor, librarian/information technologist, psychologist, guidance worker or journalist it is likely that you will need to get additional qualifications. Check out Prospects for more information about professional qualifications for the roles which interest you, or book an appointment with a careers adviser, either at the University Careers Centre or the LLC. However, if you've been bitten by the academic bug, you might like to do postgraduate study anyway, perhaps specialising further in a particular subject or developing and broadening your interest in a related area. Postgraduate

study is open to anyone, so if you're interested, why not explore this option? The LLC doesn't offer postgraduate courses but there are plenty of opportunities in the University and locally at other universities. Look out for Postgraduate Open Days during your final year (the one at Leeds is usually in early February). Check out university websites and/or pick up prospectuses (the University of Leeds one is available from the Student Services Centre in the Ziff Building). Most postgraduate courses are a year full-time or two years part-time (most offer a part-time option). Check application opening dates and deadlines carefully, early in your final year. Two notes of caution: firstly, you normally need a First or a 2:1 to do a postgraduate course (but not always, check with the individual department). Secondly, the funding system is quite different from the undergraduate one, so make sure you get advice about this before deciding to take up postgraduate study. A free guide to postgraduate funding is available from the LLC.



Case Study: Sohail Iqbal

Towards the end of the second year I felt satisfied with the progress I had made, and also allowed myself to assess the weaknesses within me. I had a clear view of what I wanted to do once I was to graduate. This pathway was laid out for me by the LLC who continued to provide ample support and opportunities and if I perhaps had more time I could have done a lot more. The year also helped me to balance my time efficiently around my work, university and family life. I feel as a student it's important to establish a strict routine. To prepare for my final year, I began asking graduates and also students how they felt and how they coped. They all said something which was personal to them so the answer to my question was to find something which works for me, nobody is the same. I was still a little confused as to what I should do my final year project on, and to tell the truth I still am but hopefully I'll come up with something very soon.

If I could have done anything differently I would most certainly say don't leave today's job for tomorrow, like my essays which is practically the story of every student's life. If you can deal with this effectively then you most certainly will attain the best grades and be successful! Don't put your eggs in one basket, remember that if something doesn't go well the first time you can always try again...or, there are always other options.



Your final year: Taking care of yourself

Many students report feeling a heightened sense of emotion as they move through their final year of study – feelings of being overwhelmed, anxious, frustrated, worried about the future etc. What may have previously felt like minor setbacks can now feel like major insurmountable issues!

It is important to remember that these emotionally charged moments are a perfectly normal part of your undergraduate experience. Remember how you felt in your first few weeks here at University? Excited certainly, but also worried and more nervous than usual and perhaps 'out of your depth' but after a while those feelings eased! As you go through this final year of University it is perfectly normal to feel nervous about what you are going to be doing back in the 'real world' once you graduate. Hopefully this guide may ease some of those concerns, and the Lifelong Learning Centre will also be supporting you towards the end of the next academic year with its 'Becoming a Graduate' guide and workshops.

In the meantime:

1. Don't stress over the summer

Reward yourself for the successful completion of the previous academic year. Take some time away from thinking about study and assignments and revision! Recharge your academic batteries and try to have a restful break!

2. Supporting each other

Don't forget that if you are feeling a certain way then the chances are that your peers will be too. You have already supported each other this far throughout your studies. Reach out to them if you find yourself struggling or in need of a friendly, empathetic ear.

3. Support available from Lifelong Learning Centre

When writing your dissertation or focusing on your research project, you might find yourself away from campus and the LLC more than before. This could possibly lead you to feel isolated. Feel free to remember that we are still here for you throughout the year, both as a physical space(s) where you can study but also providing one to one support – careers, academic skills, finance, guidance and pastoral support. Don't hesitate to let us know if we can help with anything.

4. Online resources

The Student Counselling Centre have a wealth of really good support resources which provide a wide range of help and guidance, both online and people you can speak to. While some of these are based at the University, some are groups and contacts in the wider community.

5. Group workshops

There are a range of regular and one off sessions taking place across the University on key topics, important to students and student life, which offer an opportunity for students to get together and interact with each other. These include sessions delivered by the Student Counselling Centre (e.g. 'From Setback to Success' and 'Tackling Procrastination'), Skills@ Library (e.g. 'Boost your productivity' and 'Managing your workload') as well as the Lifelong Learning Centre's ongoing programme of personal and professional workshops.

6. Extra-curricular opportunities

Have there been things during your time here at University that you have wanted to attend, visit or take part in? Perhaps you've never quite found the time to pursue some of those interests or activities. Try to protect some of your time in your final year to experience some of those things while you have the opportunity. Keep an eye out for things such as Healthy Week, the LLC's 5 Days to Wellbeing, Jump into January, Step into September, Campus Catchups etc. And if there are activities that you would like to access but are unable to due to financial barriers then don't forget that the LLC Opportunities Fund may be able to help.



Case Study: Emma Binks

To whoever is reading this - Congratulations for getting this far...

Moving from level two to level three, is a daunting experience. I never really took much notice of the levels I just worked to my best ability utilising the guidance provided by the excellent tutors within the LLC. However, for some reason the idea of moving up to the final part seemed much greater than any other year.

My LLC journey happened on a part-time basis, whilst working full time. I began with my Foundation Degree and moved on to top-up to my BA (Hons). The notion of moving between years in the three-year Foundation Degree appeared seamless. Tutors were so supportive at each step and within the lessons/lectures, that I felt I had the knowledge required to complete any essay given.

Towards the end of my final year of the Foundation Degree I began to doubt my ability in completing the top-up and the unknown jump in academic requirement from level two to three. I am aware that many of my colleagues had similar thoughts (imposter syndrome). Therefore, I tried to complete small amounts of reading over the summer break and kept in contact with the tutors about various aspects of the next year. I think keeping regular contact helped me to feel I had support and envisioning the end goal really helped me focus.

In the third year the tutors were so supportive, and the lessons were tailored to meet our needs. Again, I found that if I kept focussed and utilised my time effectively that the year actually wasn't as daunting as I had previously expected.

I think that the key point I would take, when looking back is to make clear time frames and stick to them. I felt I had so much time at the beginning, however it soon passes very quickly. By keeping focussed and setting myself clear boundaries and times to write helped me to refocus my efforts and help me keep on track to complete my dissertation. Sometimes it felt a little selfish, yet sometimes I had to remind myself that there is a much bigger picture to the present and that this overall view helped me to not feel as bad, as I knew that in the end I would be providing a better life for my young family, even though I may need to sacrifice a little time now.

My advice to anyone reading this in their second year is, be true to yourself. Break down your research project in to manageable chunks. I used a chalk board and wrote on dates in which I wanted each part completed, e.g. lit review, methodology, findings. Also, even when not in university, try to keep that day for university study time, as you're already in the routine of studying on that day, even if it's now with a cuppa and biscuit sat at your dining table rather than a classroom in the university.

Finally, give yourself something to aim for and remember you can do this, you are amazing, and you wouldn't be where you are now if you couldn't!!!!

If you still need some motivation visit the link below and listen:
<https://youtu.be/w-Ng5muAAcg>

Case Study: Burman Ramushu

I spoke to a few current third year students and asked my tutors who taught in third year for advice. Based on what they all said, I had to reflect my own capabilities and prepare the relevant equipment and infrastructure around me to make it work for me. Such as choosing subjects not necessarily suited with the work I want to do when I leave university, but by subjects that I could make work for me, for example, 'Development Approaches' module (Discovery Module) works well with core module 'Global Perspectives' and so on. I researched on the various subjects available and which ones I could cope with. At the end of the day, it's not about what subjects you specialise in, but it is about passing and attaining your degree. When you want to specialise, then do that at Masters.

Third year has been tough for me, not due to the work but external circumstances which have taken a great toll on me. However, with the support and help from the LLC team, I'm coping. I even challenged myself by taking on the Course Rep role, which I thought would be easy on the basis that my cohorts and I are on the same page, turns out it's more challenging than that. I'm learning people interaction skills which will go a long way with my CV no doubt. However, all this aside, third year has been a great year, not due to the fact of seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, but for knowing that I can now start applying for jobs that three years ago I would not have even thought of applying for.

I took too long to seek out help and advice. The LLC has a great team of people who each has their own skill set, which when put together, greatly complements every aspect a student would need. One just must swallow their pride and ask. There is no stupid question or issue. It took me over two and a half years to put my hands up and ask for help, it turns out I'm dyslexic and have dyspraxia and ADD, of which had this been picked up in early enough, with the right tools in place, it would be a breeze with my school work. Swallow that pride and be real. Also, I would have taken as many skills sessions available offered by the library.

Your hardest year has just been, they throw everything at you in year two and if you're still standing at the end of it all, that means year three is easily achievable if you remember all your last teachings. Also, just because you've finished level 2, do not take an academic break, stay engaged with the work, start planning for level 3, because the moment you take a break, it'll be difficult to reconnect with your work. It can have a great impact on your percentages as well, so keep momentum going, slow down but DO NOT totally switch off.



Links and Resources

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Careers Centre

<http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/>

Lifelong Learning Centre

<https://www.llc.leeds.ac.uk>

LLC Opportunities Fund

<https://www.llc.leeds.ac.uk/students/personal-and-professional-development/financial-help>

MyCareer

<https://mycareer.leeds.ac.uk>

Skills@Library

https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1401/academic_skills

Student Counselling Centre

<https://students.leeds.ac.uk/counselling>

Volunteering Hub

<https://leedsforlife.leeds.ac.uk/Opportunity>

The Final Chapter

<https://resources.library.leeds.ac.uk/final-chapter/>

EXTERNAL:

Do-It

<https://do-it.org/>

Prospects

www.prospects.ac.uk

TargetJobs

<https://targetjobs.co.uk/>

TargetPostGrad

<https://targetpostgrad.com>







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