

# Research Methods Assignment 2

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## 1 Abstract

This research assignment's goal was to further my own understanding on the topic of getting a Ph.D., and the general culture associated with the academic world. Three research articles were read in preparation for this assignment.[2][3][1] As a result of doing this assignment I now have a better understanding of what is expected of me, what I should expect or look for in other students and faculty, and the basics of using Latex to write papers. These results will allow me to be a better graduate student overall, and give me a better chance at graduating.

## 2 Introduction

The role of a Ph.D. student at a university is hard to understand just by hearing someone speak about it. A Ph.D. student who is first starting out may have difficulty knowing what is expected of them, and how to be successful. This assignment attempts to give students a way to find out for themselves what they need to know by doing research. Which, as it turns out, will be what the student will spend a significant amount of time doing for the rest of their career.  
[2]

## 3 Balancing Time

It is very important to continuously work hard, while maintaining some type of social life outside of school.[3] Students have to be able to put in around 20 hours a week into the lab in addition to their course work and teaching positions that they may have. With all the work that the student will do during the week, they need to still find time to have friends and occasionally see them. This is not just to allow the student to have fun, but to keep the student happy and more productive during the week. A depressed student will not be motivated to finish school.

Students need to be wary when it comes to how they decide to spend their free time. Drugs and alcohol could be used by some to try and relieve the pressure that builds on them, but the sad truth is that drugs will lead the student down

a different path. [1] The student will have almost no chance of succeeding the point they turn to drugs. So instead they should plan time during the weekend to recharge their batteries without abusing drugs.

## 4 Reading

First year graduate students should be reading almost all the time. The area of research that we have interest in will have many articles that the student needs to read just to catch up with everyone else. Once they catch up, they will still have to read articles every week just to know what people have worked on so they can build a dissertation around that. [3]

## 5 Writing

In the first year students may not be doing much writing in terms of real research papers. Soon enough, however, they will discover that they should start the writing process of their dissertation very early. They should also join their advisor's research writing group if possible.

When writing research papers, researchers should reach out to people to help critique their work. This can be other students, their advisor, or other people that they met through networking. This can help the student hone their writing skills so that they can effectively communicate their ideas to a wider audience. Which in turn can land them funding, and recognition in the field.

## 6 Finding a Topic

The basic steps in finding a topic is to first find a University which has at least two professors that your interested in their field.[2] This may not be always possible, but finding one professor would still be better than no professors. The next step is to introduce yourself and try to find out if the professor can take on any students. If they can you start reading papers on the field and discover what problems need to be solved, or what project your professor would like you to work on.

## 7 Conclusion

Getting a Ph.D. is not easy. It takes a lot of work and motivation with many speed bumps along the way. The amount of reading, writing, and work that needs to be done to accomplish this is tremendous. The student can learn to cope with this pressure by learning to balance their time and having a life outside of school. They shouldn't lose focus though, as there will never be a time when they run out of work.

## References

- [1] Thomas H. Benton. The 5 virtues of successful graduate students, 2003.
- [2] Marie desJardins. How to succeed in graduate school: A guide for students and advisors. *Crossroads*, 1994.
- [3] Mark Dredze and Hanna M. Wallach. How to be a successful phd student (in computer science (in nlp/ml)), 2012.