



## Day in the life of an online Master's student

Hello, my name is Jess, and since October 2025 I have been studying a part-time Psychology conversion Master's course online. I studied my undergraduate degree full-time and on-campus, so I have found there to be some differences in my learning experiences that I have had to make adjustments for. This has included finding a balance between academic work and employment, and learning to find ways to make a new style of learning work for me as an autistic student. Understanding how to manage the demands of the course around other commitments and my own requirements before getting started was extremely important, so let me guide you through how I manage a typical week as a neurodivergent online Master's student!

The week for me for this online course starts on a Tuesday, as this is the day of the week each module starts. Often the material is available on the Monday before at some point during the day, which means I can get ahead start with planning how my weeks will look. This usually involves putting assignment due dates in my calendar, setting up my notebook for notes I'll be taking from the lecturecasts, and checking the online office hours of the module leader. Planning ahead is something I would recommend as assignments can be back-to-back and often fall within the first week of a module.

Alongside this Master's degree, I work part-time at a museum which takes 10-20 hours of my week. This requires me to spread the workload of readings, lecturecasts and assignments over evenings and weekends as well as through my days off. On weeks where I have fewer hours at my job, I do take the opportunity to get ahead with the lecturecasts and readings by engaging with material past the current week. This saves the stress of having a lot to fit in on certain

weeks when my time is stretched. I find that I can feel burnt out fairly easily sometimes when I have too much to balance, and thinking ahead about my schedule and adjusting has helped to avoid being overrun and exhausted from having to balance my job and academic work.

It is important to make time for socialising too, as a release from the hard work of the Master's and other commitments. The intensity of the work involved with the Master's can feel heavy so making time for yourself is also important. Once a week, I attend a swing dance class which allows me to switch off from academic pressures for a few hours. I also make sure to keep up with my friends through coffee meet ups or going out for meals, which also allows me to talk about any stresses and problems I may be having with the course as many of my friends have gone through higher education themselves and can offer advice when I'm struggling to find solutions myself. Finding time to take a step away from working is as important a part of my week as focusing on deadlines and course material, as these breaks allow me to feel refreshed and able to produce work that I feel happy with.

Overall, a week for me on this Master's course is very full-on but it is more than manageable as I have very quickly learned how to best balance my time. Self-discipline and time management are skills I have carried over from my undergraduate degree and have adjusted to the requirements of a Master's degree. The online format of the course has given me more independence, both in terms of how I choose to fit work into my own life but also in how I navigate planning and completing each task. This has fit my way of learning really well, making the shift from on-campus to online learning a smooth experience. Undertaking a Master's degree requires resilience in whichever format you choose, and both on campus and online will have pros and cons to consider. However, given what this course is able to offer, I'm finding the experience worthwhile and engaging overall as somebody who didn't always find the on-campus experience comfortable as a neurodivergent student.