Twitter Thread by Nina Nesdoly



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I've had a fantastic MSc experience (almost done!) and have been talking to a lot of incoming or current students. Some topics / questions come up a lot. Here's what I know!

■ Tips for an awesome MSc experience.

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1/ Ok to start, some context: I started my MSc in September 2019 in Organizational Behaviour. I start my PhD this September.

A lot happened in my MSc: I won several scholarships, my Dad died, I submitted my thesis work to a major conference, annnd there was the pandemic.

2/ Let's get into it!

Choosing a thesis topic: Read read read.

What are you interested? Pick an umbrella topic and start reading. Follow the rabbit holes. Write questions, answers, more questions. When you find questions you cannot answer, you might have a thesis topic.

3/ Don't get stuck on the idea you came in with.

My first semester a professor said "if your research ideas don't change, you haven't learned anything."

No one is going to pull up your SOP and hold you to whatever you said you were interested in upfront.

4/ Pin down a thesis format

What will you do, broadly? One study? Two? A review paper? Meta-analysis? As early as possible, find out what YOU actually need to do to complete your thesis. ESPECIALLY if you're in a lab with lots going on. What is YOUR requirement?

5/ Timeline

Make up a timeline with your PI. Consider your goals: do you want to submit to a particular conference? Conduct a follow up study? Work backwards. When do you need data? Ethics? Your proposal done? The best thing I did was set goals and work backwards to time it.

6/ Ethics

If you do human or animal research you need ethics approval. Look into the process right away. Different schools follow different procedures. Black out dates, differing protocols depending on your sample, etc. could all impact your timeline. Look into this ASAP.

7/ Referencing software

I use Mendeley, others use Zotero. It doesn't really matter, just use one starting immediately. It will save you HOURS and help you stay organized. Make it a top priority to get comfortable with a referencing software.

8/ Librarians are the best

I guarantee you that your department has a badass and under utilized librarian. The first time you do a lit review, see the librarian. Writing your first paper? Librarian. Unsure about how to cite/reference? You guessed it. Librarian!

9/ Scholarships

This could be a whole other thread, but in short: apply to everything you are eligible for. Put them on your calendar, get crystal clear on the requirements and START EARLY. I have held 4 scholarships during my MSc worth $45,000.

10/ Relationships w/ faculty.

You're going to work one-on-one with your PI a lot but there are other people in your department who will make your experience better. Stop in the hall and talk to them. Read their papers. Still online? Invite them for virtual coffee.

11/ Supervisors

You have probably heard that your relationship with your supervisor is important it SO TRUE. If you still have some choice, choose someone who get along with, whose mentorship style works for you, and who supports your goals.

12/ Elevator pitch your research. Be able to sum up your thesis simply in a single sentence. Why? You'll quickly find that very few people understand if you use jargon - even in your own department. People are working on different stuff than you!

13/ Research masters are very self-directed.

You will need work ethic and a plan, particularly once you no longer have courses and the structure ends. I work in time blocks. Find what works for you and work every day.

14/ On obstacles

Grad school is not a straight line. Things happen. Like I mentioned, I had a major blow: my Dad died. I have learned, though, that the more you work consistently and the more you have a plan, the more you will be buffered against the blows.

15/ Care about SKILLS

Don't just track of your accomplishments; pay attention to what learned to do. Data analysis. Lit review. Grant writing. These are transferable skills into both PhD and industry. Think about this - constantly.

16/ Doing too much.

If you ever look at your schedule or consider taking on a project and think “Ok... if I stick to this EXACT schedule... ” then you have over done it. If sleeping through your alarm would make your life fall apart, it's too much.

17/17 That seems sufficient for a thread... feel free to ask me questions in the comments.

My friend and I are also hosting a Clubhouse Room tonight at 8PM EST on these topics and more. All are welcome! https://t.co/RJCF2vlNjG