

From Undergraduate to Graduate

While most students intuitively sense that being a master's/graduate student is different from being an undergraduate, most are not fully prepared for the transition. The following three ideas will help you prepare for this new experience and will also set you up for long term success.

Be Your Own Guide

Undergraduate students receive a lot of assistance with the selection of their classes, information on the requirements, etc. and most rules and policies are spelt out for them. Master level is different. While students still attend orientation sessions and receive schedules and information on the requirements, etc., policies are not often discussed in detail and there may not be as much guidance as you would expect based on your previous experience. Students who rely on others to inform them of all aspects of their student life may be disappointed when they miss important deadlines or find that they have not completed a task. "I didn't know" or "No one told me" are not good enough excuses and will not help you in the long run. Read up on policies (see below), ask questions, and develop a good relationship not only with tutors and staff (Student Centre Administrators and the MSc Programme Director) but also with other graduate students.

Successful graduate students take their education into their own hands. They seek information on requirements, course scheduling, etc. Useful sources of information are the following (after you have enrolled and have received your log-in details at the start of the academic year):

- Student Handbook – on the Intranet
- Study and Examination Regulations – on the Intranet
- Tuition Fee Regulations – on the Intranet
- MSc Budapest 2018 / MSc Vienna 2018 – a Moodle page dedicated to Master's students (in Budapest/Vienna depending on the location of their studies) where timetables, workload tables, dissertation schedules, student lists, etc. are uploaded

Likewise, successful students keep track of required courses and periodically evaluate their own progress towards the degree. Remember that no one cares as much about your success as you do. You are the best person - and often the only person - who will ensure that you are making consistent progress towards completing your degree.

Protect Your Time

Graduate students use their time in different ways than undergraduate students. Less time is spent in class (roughly 1/3 of the time required to complete the programme) and more time (about 2/3) is spent on academic activities outside the classroom, such as reading, research, group discussions and preparation, etc. Graduate students tend to have a flexible schedule but lots of work that needs to be completed in that time. Keep track of your responsibilities by using an **academic calendar** and **to-do list**. IBS will also provide you with a weekly **timetable** and a **workload table** with all key deadlines for the semester.

Remember, however, that everyone needs some time off too, so be sure to schedule in some time for recreation and social activities to maintain your mental as well as physical health.

Take Initiative and Be Tenacious

Much of the work you do as a graduate student will be solitary in nature - for example, reading case studies, analysing data, preparing for presentations and writing assignments. Initiative and motivation are essential. Successful graduate students not only have good ideas but they take initiative and carry them out. They also take the initiative in asking for help when needed: IBS operates an open door policy and tutors are there to assist you - send them an email or ask for an appointment. Finally, successful students are tenacious - they don't give up. Set backs are inevitable – not only is this a whole new experience that you must get used to at the beginning of the academic year but even later on files may get lost and other accidents will also occur. Successful graduate students plan well, work through problems, and do not waste time and energy complaining. Instead, they determine what went wrong, seek assistance, if necessary, and start over.

Good Luck and Enjoy Your Graduate Studies!