

# 25 from 300

Top 25 tips for Media and Communication Students  
at Swansea based on 300 years  
of educational experience.

The staff all gave their tips for a successful time in our department – if you follow these, you'll be doing all the right things and giving yourself the best possible chance to succeed... these are the top 10 mentioned by almost everyone, followed by the rest...

1

This was number 1 by quite some distance. **Talk to your academic mentor.** He or she will become part of your support network while at university and will offer advice unique to you. You will have several compulsory mentor-mentee meetings throughout each term. Ask for meetings beyond these compulsory ones and keep in touch regularly throughout your degree. You can discuss feedback and assessments, texts and theory, how you're coping with research and more. Be proactive and drop into your tutors' offices, let them know who you are, ask for advice and support rather than waiting for it to come. Your module coordinators are here to help you too. They have years of experience in guiding people through the assignments.

2

**Seek help - it's available in all forms.**

In addition to the academic modules offered from our media experts, you can find useful courses from our Academic Success team here

[www.swansea.ac.uk/academic-success/](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/academic-success/)

The University has a huge number of support services for students, from Wellbeing to help with academic writing. More broadly, make sure you take advantage of all the various sources of help available to you. It is very unlikely that the thing you need help with isn't catered for – there will be experts ready to help you.



3

**Read your feedback.** You will receive detailed feedback for many of your assignments and this will be written in such a way to help you for the next one. We can see who has read their feedback and who hasn't. It won't be a surprise to hear that those who take note of the feedback almost always do better than those who don't read it.

4

**Check your university email every day, at least once.** We have other open channels like Discord and so on, but we will only ever communicate officially via your university email. Students who have not checked this in the past have missed all sorts of things and announcements. It has really cost them dear.

5

**Try to move towards things that are unfamiliar.** This is your chance to learn new and different things beyond your current experience rather than to repeat things you are already comfortable with. Step outside your comfort zone and you'll never know what you'll find or where it might lead. Consume as much different media as you can, read outlets you wouldn't normally consume, watch films / TV you wouldn't normally watch, go on different social media you wouldn't normally use. Perhaps think of HE level learning like building muscle. If you don't shake, the muscles aren't building! Reading something hard or discussing something that stretches you is how you develop on from a secondary school level... think of it as mental muscle shake. And don't compare yourself and your academic performance to other students. Just focus on your own performance – that's something within your control!

6

**Make the transition from school or FE quickly** This isn't school any longer – the way you learn and the interactions you will have with staff are not what you have been used to. Think of lecturers more like senior work colleagues. For instance, if you want to be a journalist, we're your editors, if you are interested in film then we're like your producer, if you want to enter PR then we're the senior account managers. This is probably the last stage before you move into the world of work. We want to help you prepare for that. Your boss in a few years will expect things done by deadline, done well, and done to the best of your abilities, and so will we. Embrace your university life, dive in full-heartedly, commit to your course 100% because this precious 3-year experience only happens once!

7

**Connect with people and build networks.** While academic endeavour is the beating heart of your time at university, its lifeblood is enriched by the relationships you will make – with your lecturers, academic mentors, support staff and of course, the friends who will be with you long after you graduate.

8

**Reference everything that you use in your work.** It's far better to have too many references than too few – they show that you've read widely around the topic and know what you're doing. Download and use a piece of referencing software from the start. Endnote, for example, is excellent and will do most of the referencing work for you.

9

**Take advantage of the work experience opportunities that will come your way over the next three years.** They will allow you to develop the skills and experiences that will add heft to your CV so that it lands with a loud thud on prospective employers' desks. Enroll on [Swansea Employability Academy's Digital Jobs Board](#) so you can explore voluntary work opportunities, as well as part-time jobs and internships. Read the monthly newsletters we produce too – there are some great opportunities there as well.

10

**Consume media creatively and effectively.** As media students, you naturally consume a vast volume of information on a daily basis from a wide range of sources including social media. Nevertheless, you benefit a lot more from the effective consumption of quality information from credible news sources. Watch good films, read interesting magazines, seek out good journalism and opinions that might be different to your own. And go international. Try out CNN, DW, Al Jazeera English, France 24, etc. You are studying the media so it's important to have an active curiosity of that subject beyond your lectures.

Here are some tips to help your plan and manage your studies and routines, as well as some more general advice...

11

**Create a physical calendar of your term to help you plan well.** Mark down all your deadlines, and then work out how you are going to meet them. Hang the calendar on your wall. Work out a productive time management schedule. Lectures and seminars are just the start of learning – you need to give yourself time to do the rest so plan your time. If you're unsure about anything, contact your lecturer early to make sure that they can set you on the right path. Try not to leave it till the day before the deadline!

12

**Check where your lectures and seminars are beforehand** - it's always good to know where you're going and then you won't be late and miss some important content.

13

**Access Canvas on a laptop** at least when you are able in addition to accessing it via your phone. Mobile views can be restrictive, and you might miss something.

14

**Create new social media accounts that are more professional.** Potential employers will look at them, so think of it as a digital CV / portfolio, to advertise yourself, your work, your passions and interests. Think about your Twitter handle, private email address or Insta page – do they say all the right things about you?

15

**Learn to enjoy reading and read something every day.** Begin with the recommended readings but go beyond these as the term progresses. Academic journal articles are a great way to access current academic debates on any aspect of media and communication. Read the abstract first (the summary introduction at the start of the article) to see if it is worth your while reading the whole article. Then try to read with no distractions - no TV, no smartphone, no music with lyrics. Have a Word document (or equivalent) open and dictate useful sections into that document. Save it with the correct bibliographic referencing. Use post-it notes to physically bookmark the pages.

16

**Seek and accept advice and help with your writing.** Each year, for example, a Royal Literary Fellow (a professional writer) is available to help you. Fellows offer individual appointments where students can discuss all aspects of their writing, such as structuring an argument, making the essay clearer and improving style. The sessions are free, confidential and independent of the university.

17

**Os ydych cyflwyno aseiniad cyfrwng Cymraeg,** cofiwch ddefnyddio meddalwedd Cysill i wirio gramadeg a sillafu eich gwaith. (Remember to check the spelling and grammar of your Welsh assignments by running them through Cysill)

18

**Read and prepare for each seminar** and make a list of things you feel you're not clear about. The seminars are an excellent place to clear up any confusion. Have some faith that the work you put in will help you understand the material covered in the modules.

19

**Get down the Gower and breathe some fresh air at least once a week.** Failing that have a walk around the park. It's all about balance. Study, socializing, self-care, rest and fresh air are important for a healthy and enjoyable experience at uni.

20

**Call out racism / sexism / xenophobia and all forms of discrimination.** As content creators, analysts and scholars, we are the custodians of all that is good, truthful and real that others will have access to. Have high standards and don't compromise.

21

**Believe that your voice matters** - in seminars, in lectures, amongst your peers, to us as your tutors. Your ideas, point of view, interpretation and experience have value. Believe that we believe in you.

22

**Aim to get to know one other student in your class each month.** This will make you feel comfortable in lectures and seminars and will enrich your social life. Talk to other students in your year and in the second and third years. Perhaps organise a regular reading and writing group. You aren't alone. If you're struggling with an assignment, so, probably, are most of your coursemates. Talk to them and share your burdens.

23

**Be curious.** Ask questions, not just of us but of the world around you. Why is it like this? What else is going on? Be open-minded, curious and fully engaged. Never be afraid to ask questions. We're all here to help you, and there's no such thing as a trivial question, or one that's too big to answer – chances are that we've heard it before and can guide you appropriately. And start thinking critically. That doesn't mean you have to criticise everything; it means you need to challenge and not accept what you read/hear/see without good reason and solid evidence.

24

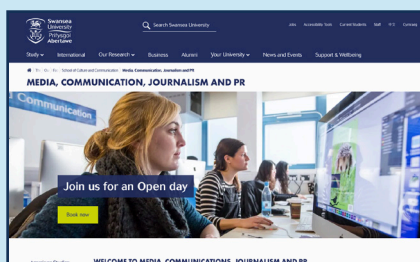
**Join the Media Society** and one other society which reflects an interest, passion or a hobby that you may have. This is relevant whether you live on campus or not, as it will enable you to meet others and make friends beyond your own department. University is the best opportunity you'll have to do this. Join in at the *Waterfront*, *Xtreme Radio* and *SUTV* media community. Write for the *Mumbler*. Produce some content. Start doing the job you plan to do when you leave.

## And Finally...

25

**Keep hydrated!** (Mostyn wrote this one, but he didn't say what you should hydrate with. I am positive he means with water 😊)

# Media @ Swansea



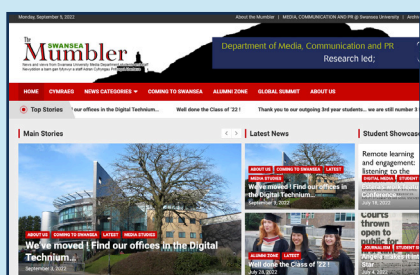
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The Swansea Mumbler is a community website for all those connected to the Media, Communications and PR Department within Swansea University

The  
**SWANSEA**  
Mumbler

News and views from Swansea University Media Department students and staff  
Newyddion a barn gan fyfyrwyr a staff Adran Cyfryngau Prifysgol Abertawe

