

Helen Lees, PhD Education, 2010



Current role

Research Fellow, Laboratory for Educational Theory (LET), Stirling Institute of Education, Pathfoot Building, University of Stirling.

Career experiences

By paying attention to what is required to pursue an academic career. I'm passionate about my research areas and enjoy working with people in a university environment. I am very interested in public engagement: it gives me a huge sense of fulfilment to do work that people find interesting and useful and I think it's very important to make sure that the work is communicated in an accessible and enjoyable way to wide audiences. Right now I'm doing what I love and that is a tremendous privilege.

What is the best thing about what you are doing now?

Colleague collaborations, thinking, discussing, hearing about other people's work, researching, reading, writing, presenting and engaging with end-users of research.

Why did you originally apply to Birmingham?

Clive Harber inspired me to write academically when I read an article he had written and he was a professor at Birmingham. I wanted to work with him.

What were the best bits about your time here as a student?

The facilities and training courses are really good and very well run: they help you to develop yourself into a rounded researcher. The library is pretty good.

How did you grow as a person by coming to University? Did it change your life?

Yes, it did change my life! I can say that the university has been one of my best friends for the positive impact it has had on every aspect of my existence. For the support it has given me I will love it (literally) for the rest of my life.

What did you think of the learning experience within the University?

I made the most of the various seminars and so on and the courses on offer. I did almost everything at least once.

Did you find the degree programme at Birmingham challenging or easy?

Doing a PhD is not an easy task because it is a long and complicated project set within a vast and dynamically changing terrain of higher education in society. It's sometimes a rough ride but you have to hang on and if you love your topic it's an amazing journey that is also hopefully beneficial to others at the end of the day in some way.

Did you find the University or your degree helpful to you in getting your first job?

Yes, actually. I got incredible support from various people in the education department and without that support I would not have got the job I now have. I'm very grateful.

Advice for current students

Stick with it and remember that what you are doing is valuable in many many ways to both yourself and others. Research matters!