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 Start thinking about your career as early as possible and have a plan, tailoring your PhD to the next step.

I completed a 10 month Research Assistant position in the Physics department at Birmingham before moving to the University of Liverpool for 3 years working for Prof. Matt J. Rosseinsky, FRS in the Chemistry department. There I spent just over a year as a Research Associate before becoming Research Theme Leader over the 'Functional Oxide' Theme of a £8m EPSRC Programme Grant. I had 7 post-docs and a PhD student. From there I moved to Imperial College in the Materials department under Prof. Neil Alford, FREng in September 2011 to work as a Research Associate and apply for my own research funding. I have since been offered a Research Fellow position at Warwick University in the Physics department and I start in July. I will be in charge of the Pulsed laser Deposition facility and will be applying for my first research grants.

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

I get to work in a lab on my own research ideas

How has your PhD helped you in your Career?

Without my PhD I would not be able to pursue a career in academia. Without a PhD from Birmingham, having the supervisor I had (Dr Tim J. Jackson), I would not have had such a head start in my career, having travelled to several conferences a year, having had my supervisor promote my work and me as a scientist to the community, and allowing me to take the lead and the credit for all the research.

What advice would you give to current PhD students?

Get involved in as much as time allows. Get involved in the research group, and department, get involved in other research projects and be constantly assessing the next step for you project and career. Start thinking about your career as early as possible and have a plan, tailoring your PhD to the next step. But, also, have fun! Get involved in University societies and activities away from your PhD, it is important to have a work/life balance. It is so easy to let your PhD take over your life and this can lead to high stress levels and low productivity. It is important to have downtime, you'd be surprised how clear work problems become during time away from the lab.

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