

# “Coin of the Realm” – Graduate Student Lore and Faculty Advice on Research and Publication, A video intervention

*In what ways should graduate students engage in scholarly research and publication, administration, and service during their programs? What might motivate their choices to do so? In this post **Anicca Cox** presents a video intervention depicting the inherent tensions between the advice given to graduate students and the internalised structures of work in the accelerated academy for early career academics.*

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*This post is part of the Accelerated Academy series, you can find all the posts in the series [here](#).*

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Guided by the above questions, this project developed over course of the last three years of my doctoral work and addresses what we might call primary academic currency or “the coin of the realm”—publication of research—and the relationship to it of myself and my academic peers. The project seeks to highlight the disparity between how academic mentors and graduate faculty often advise students to approach the production of scholarship and the lore that springs up amongst graduate students themselves, which seems to varying degrees, to motivate their orientation to their academic work. Specifically, I have wondered, what are the internalised discourses graduate students are operating from, and what tensions, slippages and dynamics do they encounter? How does this show up in their CVs, the record of their accomplishments? The practices developed in our time as graduate students are surely not invented alone and come out of disciplinary, departmental and institutional ecologies so often traced to a lore of success or failure, ability or ambition. But how, I wonder, are graduate students acting in such different ways than the advice of their department would suggest they do?

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In this video, the advice offered by the voices of faculty are representative of my own departmental experience: they are supportive, affirming, contextualised in disciplinary structures and meant to aid students in the discovery of their own scholarly identity. These voices are contrasted with the recordings of graduate students reading their CVs, which seem to allude to a need to publish, perform service and engage broadly in the discipline as much as possible. It is no wonder, given the positioning of these two groups, that we might encounter competing narratives given the relative precarity or security they exist within. We might then engage questions of how “advice” or guidance is taken up by students who are uncertain about how to proceed given the obviousness of an ever-precarious work landscape and the changing nature of academic life in general, where tenure lines and resources are disappearing while expectations for academic performance are increasing. We, as graduate students, are engaged in simultaneously working to *understand* our futures, *design* them for ourselves and *imagine* them as places of success.

How do each of us account for any number of unforeseeable variables in the trajectory of a profession or a career? Both low-wage workers and privileged apprentices, our paths as graduate students through academe are often fraught with uncertainty. How we respond to this uncertainty, particularly when it comes to generating scholarship as well as the service and professionalisation we engage, is a complex, personal and precarious endeavour sometimes done out of love, sometimes necessity. This work is meant to begin to make sense of how we come to embody the knowledge of the necessity of the unpaid labor of research work in an ever accelerating and extractive academic landscape. Even while we get good advice, we work inside of capitalist scholarly production models at the expense of our time, energy and longevity. We burn out, maybe, yet we cannot slow down. The train keeps rolling.



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*Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the LSE Impact Blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [comments policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.*

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