

2) Failure

I embarked on my MA degree studies at XXX University's leading School of Economics only a few months after I began working as a Deposit Specialist at the Deposit Department of XXX Bank. The decision to apply to an advanced academic program was not easy, since I knew that with a full-time job, I would not be able to devote as much time and effort to my studies as I would ideally hope to. Still, I estimated that the study load would facilitate full-time work and mollified myself with the idea that given my strong analytical skills, I could somehow 'wing it' (and excel). Also, I was eager to learn more about a field that intrigued me and to satisfy an inherent drive to be studying.

Unfortunately, managing a full-time job and a full-time study schedule proved unfeasible almost immediately: As it unfortunately turned out, the program's highly demanding nature left me inadequate time for assignments, readings, and participation in study groups. My work, which bore more obvious professional consequence (MA Economics studies are geared specifically toward an academic career), could not be compromised, and I decided to reduce the number of credits I was taking per semester to improve my performance. Still, as time passed, I realized that even in this configuration, it would be impossible for me to participate in the more advanced classes required for the thesis-gearred course in which I was originally interested, and I reluctantly assumed the less demanding path leading up to a final extended seminal paper only. At times I considered putting my studies on hold, or quitting altogether, but my motivation to learn and my aversion to leaving things unfinished prevented me from doing so.

From a purely academic perspective, I probably should have. After four years (rather than the usual two), I completed my studies – in a condensed version - with an 86% GPA (a minimum of 90% calls for distinction). That, to me, spelled failure. Still, I could not overlook the fact that the experience included also tremendous positive impact. Learning from world-class economics specialists (such as Prof. XXX) alongside brilliant peers was intellectually stimulating, and I gained important experience translating stories into numbers and using them to understand patterns that influence business. Also, the opportunity to participate in a number of MBA classes shed light on the relevance of an MBA degree and steered me in that direction. Most importantly, however, the experience taught me an important lesson about myself. I learned that rather than relying on my talents to 'get me by,' I must carefully assess resources required for the pursuit of a given undertaking. My time and energy are limited commodities, and outcomes will be compromised if I am pulled in too many directions. In this case, I now realized, after better-researching the program's stipulations, I should have either shelved my academic aspirations, reducing my scope of responsibilities, or alternatively - prepared myself for possible academic insufficiency, accepting compromise. Success requires a delicate, premeditated balance.