

Nancy began her degree in 2005 and joined the study the year after. Earlier, she had left her European homeland to move elsewhere in Europe for her undergrad (different language). After meeting her future partner on an exchange program, she moved to Canada to join him and taught part-time at the same university as him (he was in a permanent teaching position). She continued teaching during the degree to partly fund her studies. On completing, she hoped for a research-teaching position but was open to other options since she and her partner did not want to move. What struck us about Nancy's story was:

Managing work-life balance (personal) Financing the PhD and collaborative research on the side in her later post (work experience)

Changing career intentions and growing confidence in leadership role (career thinking)

Year	Personal	Work experience	. Career Thinking
PhD Year 2	Partner financially stable so able to support her. Enjoyed a social life with personal friends, joint network of friends.	Passed comprehensive exams: asked real questionsthings to think seriously about.  Applied for fellowship.	Enjoyed teaching courses she could not have taught without working on PhD; her expertise was valued.
PhD Year 3	Helped partner with grant proposal; applied what learned from fellowship writing.	Took time away from her PhD work.  Thesis proposal accepted; writing it satisfying: thoughts and questions becoming more concrete.  Collected and analysed data; challenged to put thinking into action; but would lead to her contribution.  Got fellowship.	Learned new things about grant writing which will come in handy when applying for 'big' grants in future. Still teaching.
PhD Year 4	Partner an ongoing support. Risky to move; hard for partner to relocate; enjoyed the life they had.	Writing thesis in some ways tedious.	Still teaching; job hunting locally for teaching jobs (no research- teaching available); applied for 5.
PhD 5 Post-PhD Year 1	Job not 100% of what imagined, but a job she enjoyed doing.	Submitted thesis.  Teaching, educational administration with research 'extra-curricular'.  Submitted paper for an award (publication); not successful but revised and re-submitted elsewhere.	Offered 2 jobs; accepted 3-year teaching contract where her partner worked.
Post-PhD Year 2	Life really shifted from being a student and part-time instructor to a full-time teacher.  Partner and she scheduled 1 day a week when no work done; helped tremendously towards work-life balance.	Continued to teach, do administration.  Administration work involved engaging peers in group decision-making; getting consensus and agreement.  Effort to publish disappointing; revised paper; revised version not returned to original reviewers but to others who wanted more changes.  Began collaborative research project with departmental colleagues.	Growing confidence in what is considered a 'leadership role'.
Post-PhD Year 3	Mostly managed to keep free 1 day per week.	Succeeded in getting 1st article (noted above) published after 2nd revision.	Prepared renewal dossier; reported on teaching, administration and any research.
Post-PhD Year 4	Social and home life good.	3 articles under review based on collaborative research.  Started working with a different team to apply for national research grant.	Contract renewed for 3 years; next time for 5 years; very happy in position.
What struck us	Managing work-life balance.	Financing the PhD - mix of sources. Collaborative research on the side, publishing.	Changing career intentions. Growing confidence in leadership role.
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