



Thomas Chapman Case Study



Public Relations student improves research and saves time with Pro-Study – at university and beyond

Thomas is a Public Relations MA student at Sheffield Hallam. He has dyspraxia, and was recommended Pro-Study by a friend. After a Disabled Students Allowance assessment, he's been provided Pro-Study to help him write essays and assignments.

“ **Something that I thought should take me about three hours to do would end up taking a good ten hours. With the most recent period of assignments, I didn't have any of that because I was using Pro-Study.** ”

- Thomas Chapman, Public Relations MA student at Sheffield Hallam University

Pro-Study makes research easier

Thomas finds it difficult to manage his notes and references. Studying Public Relations, he reads lots of different hard and soft copy resources while learning in seminars and preparing for assignments. While he prefers making handwritten notes, his handwriting can also often be messy, and he can struggle with spelling. In the past, he would find himself losing lots of time rifling through disorganised pieces of paper, or through folders spread across numerous memory sticks. From online research he would also have multiple tabs open, which all require referencing, and tracking. He would regularly have to start over, re-reading books he had already made notes on because he couldn't find notes he had made. Even when he could find what he had written, his notes weren't always easy to read.

“I would often struggle to find relevant notes, even if I could remember having researched specific points before” he says. *“Even when I could find my notes, I would often struggle to pick out relevant information to whatever arguments or themes I wanted to discuss and analyse in my assignment. My notes were usually either far too detailed to the point that I may as well just read the original source again, or I was overwhelmed by the notetaking process and just gave up, in which case my notes were insufficient”* He describes his experience before using Pro-Study as *“a lot more hectic. A lot of those essays were either not referenced properly or they were handed in a little too close to the deadline and I hadn't made good use of my time.”* Now Pro-Study automatically references all of his research.

Since beginning to use Pro-Study in March, Thomas says that it takes much less time and energy to complete assignments than before. Partly, this is because of the way Pro-Study lets him *“dig out all of the relevant information from the physical and online research I've done and be able to organise it in a way that makes sense to me.”*

With Pro-Study, he says *“it's definitely helped me save time. I've just come out of a period of assessments, and I used Pro-Study for that process. That process usually takes me two days, and it took about an hour instead.”*

“Pro-Study gave me a process”

Thomas used to find preparing for assignments hard work. Because he finds it difficult to read from a screen, he would print off research and take notes by hand. Ideally, he says, he would then type up his notes so that they could be organised on his computer. But Thomas found this process so demanding, that he didn't usually have the motivation to finish typing his notes and organising them himself.

But Pro-Study helped Thomas avoid that demotivation because ***“it gives you a process.”*** Pro-Study enabled Thomas to work in a different way. He says: ***“I printed out my sources, I read through them and then I used a highlighter, and then I loaded it up online and used Pro-Study to colour code them and organise them by theme.”*** Another part of this process is Pro-Study's bookmark feature. Instead of leaving dozens of tabs open, Thomas uses the bookmark feature to save specific pages and quotations and organise them by category. ***“I love the bookmark feature”***, Thomas says. ***“It's such a simple feature, but I use it for everything now”***.

Using this approach to organising his time, Thomas has found it easier to find the motivation to do the work, and as a result he was more productive. ***“When it comes to making notes, previously I'd find it quite laborious... But with the new approach with Pro-Study, it just comes to me a bit more naturally. My willingness to sit down and actually do the work, I find it a lot easier to do that with Pro-Study.”***

Of course, making notes is only one aspect of research. Being able to retrieve the relevant information is just as critical. ***“The Pro-Study Centralised Database has made the process of organising research far less arduous and left me with a series of notes that I can easily locate and use.”***

Beyond University

As well as his studies, Thomas also enjoys creative writing, and is considering pursuing a career in public relations. These both present the same challenges as his academic work, as they both need him to plan and organise using different documents at once.

Something that helps Thomas with this is the Pro-Study Assist App. When browsing on his phone, he uses the app to make sure he doesn't lose or forget something he's seen that will be useful for his other projects. "I get the URL, bookmark it on the Pro-Study Assist App, and when I get home, I can just load it up and sync it with Pro-Study. Normally I'd just open a new tab, keep that tab there and then completely forget about it."

Thomas has already used Pro-Study to help with a two-week work placement he did with a PR consultancy, which he says helped him with group projects. He says he will continue to use Pro-Study when he leaves university, where he knows he will need to do a lot of research projects.

"I've been shown how to use quite a few different pieces of software, and the only one that I continue to use every day is Pro-Study."