

# Reflections from a Recent Graduate on the Social Work Doctoral Study Programme

*Anastasia, Russia*

## **Why did you choose the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava (FSS UO) to pursue your PhD?**

In my country, social work is not considered a scientific specialty, which meant I couldn't study research in the field of social work. So, I was looking for a faculty that specializes in social sciences, and specifically in social work. As a leading research centre in the field of social work, FSS UO was the perfect fit for me. And as I understand now, it was one of the best choices in my life.

## **What are the strengths and challenges of studying at this faculty?**

Studying for a PhD at any faculty in the world is a big challenge itself, as you are likely doing it for the first time and feel lost in how to approach your dissertation. However, not every faculty provides the support and guidance like FSS UO. I enrolled in 2019, and the first challenge was the pandemic, followed by the invasion to Ukraine. Only thanks to the work of the UO staff, I was able to get through all of this and complete my studies. Everything was so well organized, and the team worked so seamlessly. People were very responsive and ready to help with any question. And PhD students usually have a million questions. I'm so grateful to the staff for their million answers, with a smile and support.

## **What would you recommend to future PhD students?**

I would recommend a few things. First, don't lose track of time. When you start your studies, it may seem like four years is a long time. But in reality this time is precisely allocated for conducting your research. So, don't waste it. If you're struggling to write, then, second, engage in reading. Open the titles of journals like Social Work and just explore them. Subscribe to channels for doctoral students, listen to podcasts. Inspiration will surely come. It will also help you stay updated on the latest research trends. Third, ask questions. Pose your questions to your supervisor, fellow students, and the study department. They will certainly help, and you'll be able to make your part of the work even better. And last, believe in yourself. You will definitely succeed, just don't give up and follow the first three pieces of advice.

## **What was your strongest experience during your studies, except for a successful dissertation defence?**

Of course, participating in the UO Spring School and in another PhD doctoral school organised by an international academy of cooperating European universities, institutions and organizations. Involvement in such events provides a wealth of knowledge and methodological frameworks. Plus, it involves interesting networking and sharing experiences. Interacting with fellow doctoral students is highly motivating, and getting feedback from professors is valuable.

I want to thank FSS UO once again from the bottom of my heart for the opportunities they provided me. Thanks to them, I secured a postdoctoral position at a European university, and I'm excited to continue my research. Thanks to my studies at FSS, I feel very confident and well-prepared for my academic career.