This page outlines the academic skills support available for postgraduate research students.

Featured support activities

'Shut Up and Write' Research Writing Group Meet-ups

Get that thesis moving!

'Talking about your Research'

An advanced course in oral communication

What else is available?

Academic skills workshops

The Learning Centre offers academic skills workshops that focus on, or explore, different tasks. Many are designed for postgraduate students, such as Writing a thesis proposal, Writing a literature review and Giving your first Conference paper. Workshop programs run throughout semesters 1 and 2. Please see the Workshop page for details.

Workshops can also be organised on request. Any group of five or more research students who would like a specific workshop or thesis writing program can contact Pam Mort (p.mort@unsw.edu.au) to discuss this.

Short courses

Learning Centre courses
• Advanced Academic Writing for HDR ESL students
• 'Talking About Your Research': an Advanced Course in Oral Communication

Faculty-based courses on thesis writing and research management

• Thesis Writing For Art and Design
• Engineering
• Arts and Social Sciences

Thesis Writing Support program

For students who are writing their thesis. Students meet in small groups to edit and review each others work over 10 weeks. For further information see Thesis Writing Support Program

'Shut Up and Write' Cafe Meet-ups for HDR students

The Learning Centre at UNSW is launching a series of ‘Shut up and write!’ café meet-ups for Higher Degree Research students. They are open to any HDR student and there is no registration or roll call. You come, you write, we chat, we go. Further information here

Individual consultations

Make an appointment with a Peer Writing Assistant for an individual consultation to discuss aspects of your writing.

Academic skills resources and links

Here you will find links to useful resources for Postgraduate research students.

UNSW academic skills guides

Information for current UNSW Research Students

UNSW Library services for postgraduate students

Writing your Thesis Proposal - A guide from The Learning Centre at UNSW for students who are enrolled in a postgraduate research degree and who have been asked to submit a thesis proposal.

Getting Started on Your Literature Review - A short guide from The Learning Centre at UNSW with a few suggestions to get you started.

How to write a PhD Thesis - Notes on preparing and writing thesis at UNSW from Associate Professor Joe Wolfe in the UNSW School of Physics.

The Last Scramble: Submitting that Thesis - A very useful point-form list of advice on thesis writing. UNSW PhD graduate Ben Searle produced the paper for a Postgraduate Board seminar and it is now available to all research students via the website.

From Finish to Start: Writing your thesis with the end in view (PDF) - Notes from Sue Starfield's presentation at the Thesis Submission Seminar 2006. For further details, visit the Graduate Research School website.

Other thesis writing resources

Thesis writing sites

Writing a thesis - A great site for postgraduate research students from the University of Queensland.
Climb the Thesis Mountain - An excellent guide to producing a thesis from Monash University.

Writing Dissertations: A Guide for Graduates - From the Royal Literary Fund, UK. This site offers writing skills advice for dissertation writers and thesis writers.

Writing and Presenting Your Thesis or Dissertation - by S. Joseph Levine, PhD., Michigan State University in East Lansing. A useful site with good links.

Re-envisioning the PhD - from the University of Washington Graduate School. A great portal site with some good advice included.

The nuts and bolts of producing a thesis

Techniques for Managing Theses Using Microsoft Word - very helpful guide from the University of Waterloo.

EndNote and Refworks - Bibliographic software that allows you to store, organise and manage your references to create in-text citations and bibliographies in the referencing style that you require.

Conference and research presentations resources

Some dos and don'ts of giving a good 15 minute talk - Scott Keogh, ANU. Advice for preparing a short talk at a professional conference, where time is strictly limited.

Ten tips for presenting a conference paper - Advice from a guide prepared by two academics will help you to impress a conference audience.

Conference papers - a guide from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Books

Some very useful books on thesis writing and doing a research degree (* = available from The Learning Centre)


While aimed at academic writing in general, this book has sections on thesis writing that covers a lot of key areas. There are also chapters on managing academic writing, the mechanics of academic writing, writing a literature review and other academic texts such as journal articles and books.


Patrick Dunleavy shares his accumulated wisdom as an experienced doctoral supervisor and academic writer in the social sciences. Focussing on the links between writing and thinking, his book takes students through the process of planning, drafting, writing, revising and shaping the thesis in an engaging, insightful and sometimes amusing way.

This small but comprehensive volume should be required reading for all commencing postgraduate research students and their supervisors. It is one of the best there is.


A highly-recommended, easily accessible and comprehensive guide that focuses on writing the various sections of the thesis based on the writers’ extensive experience of supervising and supporting students in Australia.


A key text that all students in the social sciences should be familiar with before starting their literature review.


A thorough and comprehensive handbook aimed at supporting students doing a master’s dissertation in the social sciences. It has sections on formulating a topic and finding a format, on research design and methodology, on ethics and a final section on writing.


Although not specifically aimed at doctoral or masters students, this book is one of the few that helps qualitative researchers understand that the writing process is an integral part of doing qualitative research and becoming a qualitative researcher. It considers the particular challenges confronting qualitative writers as they attempt to ‘find their voice’.


This book covers many key issues for research students such as time and self-management and making the most of available resources. There is also a very useful chapter on writing a high-quality thesis.


One of the few books that actually takes student writers through the process of writing a thesis at the various stages of the PhD. It cannot be recommended too highly. It is a book to be dipped into again and again depending on the particular problem encountered and will prove an invaluable source of inspiration and encouragement.


Now in its fourth edition, this ‘classic’ covers issues such as the PhD process, the nature of the PhD, and what students expect from their supervisors, university and departmental responsibilities.


Well, they’ve now been written down and are worth reading!


**Advice and humour**

**Introduction to postgraduate study** - From Massey University in NZ, this site discusses planning and writing and producing theses and conference papers.

**The Thesis Whisperer** - A blog dedicated to helping research students everywhere. It is edited by Dr Inger Mewburn of RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia and has contributors from around the world.

**How to fail your dissertation** - Humour with some good advice!

**How To Write A Dissertation or Bedtime Reading For People Who Do Not Have Time To Sleep** - Purdue University

**Piled Higher and Deeper: Life (or the lack thereof) in Academia** - A comic strip by Jorge Cham

**The Keogh Lab: Resources and advice for students** - From Scott Keogh, Australian National University

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