

10 STRATEGIES FOR

A SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH JOURNEY

Here are some important strategies for successfully completing a thesis, so you can be productive and happy while writing your thesis.

- 1. Be proactive – Your thesis is your responsibility to complete: it has your name on it!**
- 2. Form or join peer groups or networks with other research students, because:**
 - They combat isolation
 - Academic work is about community
 - You can get feedback on your work and support
 - You are more likely to be finish on time, and with less stress if you have a peer network
- 3. Get support. There will be ups and downs – it is not always a smooth journey**
- 4. Build a productive relationship with your supervisor**
 - It is your responsibility to get what you need from your supervisor, so ask for what you want
 - Your expectations may be very different from your supervisor's, so talk about expectations
 - Find out what your supervisor expects and then negotiate if you want something different
 - Negotiate with them as another adult not as your parent
 - Your supervisor will offer you expert advice, but they are not your boss
 - If you can't get everything you need from your supervisor then go to others
- 5. Plan**
 - Plan for the next ten years – your thesis is only one small task before you do something else
 - Plan for what you will do next so you are prepared before you complete your thesis (e.g. if you want an academic career, then you need teaching experience and publications *while* you write your thesis)

- Use backwards planning – If you want to finish the thesis by x date, what must you have completed one month before? And one month before that...?
- Plan for doing multiple tasks at any point in your thesis journey e.g. write literature review and do lab work this month
- Set micro-milestones that give you a sense of achievement every day

6. Think of yourself as a researcher

- When you begin a thesis you become a researcher, a member of an academic community (or communities), and you become a writer

7. Engage with an academic community

- Being a thesis student is about joining and contributing to a community – make sure you are active in engaging with this community
- Contact and network with others in your field
- Seek guidance, advice and mentoring

8. Be clear about how you contribute to the literature from your community

- Who are you writing your thesis for? What particular field or sub-field(s) will you contribute to?
- Read articles and theses in your field; read for structure and format not content
- Convince the reader that you are contributing to the literature around your academic or professional community

9. Start writing *now*

- To write a high quality thesis, it is more effective for you to write first and then clarify and revise
- Write rubbish, revise, get feedback, revise, cut, ... rewrite, restructure, rewrite... edit, finished!
- Avoid perfectionism. Once you are 98% satisfied, then submit

10. Get feedback

- The only way to tell if your writing will convince a reader is by giving it to a reader
- Plan to get lots of feedback about your ideas and your writing from a variety of peers and readers
- Give presentations in your department or at conferences, ask peers for feedback, submit articles...

Extra support for Graduate Research Students (in addition to your supervisors or advisory panel and your departments)

Learning Support

- [Student Academic Skills](#)
 - Workshops, online resources, and 1-1 consultation
- Disability information and support: www.otago.ac.nz/disabilities
- Library: <https://otago.libguides.com/thesisinformation>
 - Workshops, subject librarians, and distance support teams
- Graduate Research School: www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research

General Support

- Doctoral information: www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/prospective-phd-students
- Scholarships: www.otago.ac.nz/study/database
- Technology services:
www.otago.ac.nz/its/services/help#:~:text=Tel%20%2B64%203%20479%207000,it%40otago.ac.nz
- Blackboard support: www.otago.ac.nz/christchurch/services/blackboard

Pastoral Support

- Within your department: Postgraduate coordinator, peer group forums, and induction.
- Māori postgraduate support adviser: www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/study/maori-postgraduate-support-adviser
- Graduate wellbeing coach: www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/people/graduate-wellbeing-coach
- International office: www.otago.ac.nz/international
- Queer* support: <https://ousasupporthub.org.nz/queer-support/>
- Campus chaplains: www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain
- University mediator: www.otago.ac.nz/mediation/about.html

Key Policies

- Research Master's programme – digital handbook: www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/study/researchmaster
- Current PhD students – digital handbook: www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/current-phd-students-digital-handbook
- Resources for Graduate Research Candidates – Guidelines: www.otago.ac.nz/staff/policies/policy-collection/resources-for-graduate-research-candidates-guidelines

Support for the future

- Career Development Centre: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/careers>
- Publishing bursaries: www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/database/bursaries