



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)

Graduate Research School

- www: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/research/graduate/otago004145.html>
- twitter: <http://twitter.com/#!/OtagoGRS>
- facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OtagoGRS>
- **Dean:** Professor Rachel Spronken-Smith rachel.spronken-smith@otago.ac.nz
- **Manager** Andrew Lonie andrew.lonie@otago.ac.nz – for one on one confidential advice about supervision issues (both for students and staff), queries regarding policies and examinations
- **Māori Postgraduate Support Adviser** maori.postgrad@otago.ac.nz – Dr Pete Russell provides one-on-one advice as well as running a series of events such as hui and writing retreats to support Māori research candidates
- **Personal Performance Coach** brian.johnston@otago.ac.nz – he provides a free consultancy service to assist with issues such as procrastination and motivation
- **Doctoral Information** <http://www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/study/phddoctoral/programme/index.html> – for any advice regarding doctoral administrative processes from admission to enrolment, progress reporting and examination. The key contacts are Tina Shaw, Andy McCready and Belinda Kerrison or email phd@otago.ac.nz.
- **Scholarships** <http://www.otago.ac.nz/study/scholarships/> – for any advice on scholarship types and eligibility (scholarships@otago.ac.nz). A great contact is Mel Adams (mel.adams@otago.ac.nz or ext 5291) who can help ascertain whether a potential candidate is likely to get a scholarship
- **Postgraduate publishing bursaries** – these are available for candidates who complete in a timely manner (4 EFTs for PhD and 1.5 EFTS for Masters), within a month of completion and who intend to stay on campus. The bursary is scholarship equivalence for up to 3 months while the candidate writes up their research for publication. See publishing.bursary@otago.ac.nz.

Key Policies

- Resources for graduate candidates – what does your department need to provide? <http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago003277.html>
- PhD regulations <http://www.otago.ac.nz/courses/qualifications/phd.html>
- PhD Handbook <http://www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/study/phddoctoral/programme/otago400006.html>

- Masters' research – note these vary by degree so check out the Calendar
- Master's research degree Handbook <http://www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/study/researchmaster/programme/index.html>

Learning support

- Student Learning Centre <http://hedc.otago.ac.nz/hedc/learning/> and the Graduate Research School (<http://www.otago.ac.nz/research/graduate/otago041922.html>)
 - Workshops, short courses and one-on-one advice
- Library <http://otago.libguides.com/thesisinformation>
 - Workshops, subject librarians, distance support team
<http://otago.libguides.com/distance>
- Technology Services helpdesk@otago.ac.nz
- Disability Information & Support <http://www.otago.ac.nz/disabilities/>
- Blackboard site for doctoral research degree support – only accessible to doctoral candidates. If access wanted contact Muhammad Yasir in the Graduate Research School (muhhammad.yasir@otago.ac.nz) to be added in as a user

Pastoral care

- Within the department
 - Postgraduate Coordinator
 - Peer Group Forums
 - Induction
- International Office <http://www.otago.ac.nz/international/otago004129.html>
- Queer* Support <http://www.ousa.org.nz/support/queer-support/>
- Chaplains <http://www.otago.ac.nz/Chaplain/>
- University Mediator, Jennifer Anderson mediation@otago.ac.nz
<http://www.otago.ac.nz/mediation/about.html>
- Ethical Behaviour Network <http://www.otago.ac.nz/mediation>
- Support for the future
 - Supervisor is very important
 - Career Development Centre <http://www.otago.ac.nz/careers>
 - Student Learning Centre and Graduate Research School
 - Postgraduate Publishing Bursaries publishing.bursary@otago.ac.nz