Minimum Resources Agreement (MRA) for Thesis Students
Interim Agreement

The Postgraduate Students’ Association (PGSA) and Victoria University of Wellington (the University) have negotiated this agreement in order to make clear the basic resources that will be provided to all postgraduate research thesis students. Both the PGSA and the University encourage Schools to exceed the requirements recorded in this agreement wherever possible. These resources are to be provided in addition to the general services provided to all students at the University.

The Minimum Resources Agreement will apply to both full and half-time students carrying out a degree by research: a professional doctorate, a PhD, or a Master’s degree with a 90 or 120 point thesis. Further, this agreement applies to students who are revising or making corrections to a thesis after it has been examined and before it is lodged in the library. This agreement is in place for a period of 5 years.

Postgraduate research thesis students, like other students, have access to University services including library, career development and employment, student learning support, Victoria International, Māori student services, disability support, accommodation services, student health, counselling, child-care, financial support and the recreation centre, and these functions are thus not given special mention below.

I. There are three general phases of a research programme. These phases are:
   a) Initial literature review and proposal development;
   b) Data\(^1\) gathering and analysis; and
   c) Producing the thesis.

   It is noted that for some students a) and b) may be undertaken simultaneously and that during c), b) may be continued.

II. There is a variety of different types of research, which for any given student are as established by the conditions at the time of enrolment, which can be summarised as:
   a) Desk-based
   b) Lab-based/Studio-based/Clinic-based
   c) Mobile – able to undertake research anywhere working through Victoria’s digital research infrastructure
   d) Off-campus – accessing research resources not provided by Victoria, e.g. archives, fieldwork, interviews

   It is noted that for some students they may do a mix of the above and that the type of research may change as they move through different phases, but that for most students they would be predominantly one type.

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\(^1\) Data is defined to be fully inclusive here and to mean any form of the active undertaking of the research.

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1. Induction

A. All students will be provided with a checklist to ensure that they receive information relevant to their School and Faculty. There are three elements to the induction provided to students:
   a) School-based, pertaining to things specific to the School and discipline requirements;
   b) Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR)-based, a University-wide introduction to the research programmes for doctoral students; and
   c) Central, a general introduction to the University environment and facilities available.

B. Students will be made aware of the MRA during their induction sessions at the School and the FGR. The MRA can be download from the FGR website - www.victoria.ac.nz/fgr.

C. Postgraduate coordinators and Supervisors, or their delegates, will ensure that students are introduced to people relevant for their work.

2. Office Space and Furniture

A. Specialised space (e.g. laboratory, studio) and equipment resources that are required by a student in order to undertake their research programme are to be discussed by the student and the supervisors in conjunction with their home school and formally documented.

B. The University undertakes to provide students with a suitable space to do their research. These places will be configured differently according to discipline, but must provide environments to gather, analyse, develop, create and communicate the outcomes of research.

C. Where possible, the facilities listed below will be provided for students on the same campus as relevant academic staff, in the area of the school or faculty where their research is focussed. If this space is not close to space occupied by staff in the relevant school, it will be in a student group environment. Twenty-four hour access to office and laboratory space will be available unless there are overriding and unavoidable security and health and safety issues.

D. Each student will be provided with access to the following in agreement with the supervisor and school:
   • a desk and ergonomic chair
   • a university desktop computer
   • a lockable storage unit
   • shared shelving, pinboard and whiteboard
   • any common room facilities available for staff, unless equivalent postgraduate student common space is offered.

These facilities may vary depending on the classification of the type of research that the student is undertaking at Victoria and the phase of that research as defined above in I. and II. Furthermore, exact facilities provided will likely vary across the University. In particular, these facilities may range from dedicated space, shared facilities, or facilities that students can book depending on requirements, levels of utilisation and availability.

E. Those students enrolled part-time or choosing to predominantly work elsewhere will not be able to command dedicated space.

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If the issues raised cannot be resolved through these channels, the complaint will be forwarded to the Vice-Provost (Research) for resolution.

6. Agreement Review

This document is an Interim Agreement\(^3\). The normal term for the Agreement is five years, however this Interim Agreement will be in place for a period of 12-18 months.

To ensure that research students and schools are aware of the MRA and schools are MRA compliant, the PGSA or Victoria can request a review of compliance at any time during the tenure of the Agreement. This review would be undertaken by PGSA and FGR.

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Signed: ..........................................
Kate McGrath, (Vice Provost (Research))

Date: 13/12/2017

Signed: ..........................................
Jordan Anderson, PGSA President

Date: 13/12/2017

\(^3\) An Interim Agreement is in place while a fuller range of options under 2. D. of the Agreement are explored.

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3. Resources and Support

A. Specific resources that are required by a student in order to undertake their research programme are to be discussed by the student and the supervisors in conjunction with their home school and formally documented.

B. a) All students will have access to a computer, which will provide access to the following:
   i. all library resources;
   ii. the internet; and
   iii. email.

   b) Students should be aware that the University will email them through the email address that is provided in their profile, noting that this defaults to the official VUW email address unless students change their email address in their profile. This is the case whether the staff or student domain is used by the student².

C. The University-provided computers will have standard supported software. Specialised software that is required for research purposes should be arranged by negotiation with the schools/supervisors, noting that access to such software cannot be guaranteed. Software requests are reviewed on a case by case basis. Students can access free or discounted licences for some software for their personal computers through ITS: https://downloads.victoria.ac.nz/Content/SoftwareTitles.aspx

D. Schools will set and publicise an annual or trimester-based allowance for student use of printing, photocopying and postage for research purposes, and rates for students who exceed that allowance. Any use of a University phone for toll calls must be arranged at School level.

E. Office consumables are provided at the discretion of the School.

F. Courses or training for professional development (other than coursework specifically required for the research degree), are paid for at the discretion of the School. Such requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

4. Health and Safety

In all cases the Health and Safety Standards set by Victoria University policy will be required for all parties concerned. (See: http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/policy.html).

5. Protocol for Addressing Concerns

Postgraduate research thesis students with concerns that the University is not meeting the provisions of the MRA can approach:

- their School’s Postgraduate Coordinator or Head of School
- the PGSA or the VUWSA advocate
- the FGR

² If students do not want to use the VUW email address they must manually change their email address in their profile.