

# DSDN592

## Research Portfolio Outline

2025-2026

This Research Portfolio Outline should be read in conjunction with the [Master's Thesis Regulations](#), the [Assessment Handbook](#), and the [Library Statute](#). Candidates will use [Panoho](#) – the new research candidate management system, from its launch in late 2025. All relevant documents pertaining to the MDI Research Portfolio and postgraduate policies may be found on the MDI Nuku site.

<b>General:</b>	120 points
<b>Assessment:</b>	Assessment of a completed research portfolio is based on the mandatory requirements outlined in this document
<b>Postgraduate Programme Director:</b>	Dr Rosie Scott, <a href="mailto:Rosie.Scott@vuw.ac.nz">Rosie.Scott@vuw.ac.nz</a> , TA320, Ph: 04 887 4051
<b>Supervisors:</b>	<a href="https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/design-innovation/about/staff#academic">https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/design-innovation/about/staff#academic</a>
<b>Location:</b>	WIG201

## PRESCRIPTION

This is a project-based 120-point research portfolio that exists within the 180-point MDI degree programme. With the approval of academic staff and in consultation with a supervisor, students undertake major research by design investigation. The final research by design outcome should demonstrate mastery of design thinking, resolution, development and expression.

## RESEARCH PORTFOLIO DEFINITION

A research portfolio is defined as the outcome of independent research, scholarship or creative activity conducted under supervision. Through the research portfolio, students are encouraged to define an individual direction in their pursuit of design research. Master's research portfolios in the School of Design Innovation vary in emphasis and span a range of creative, applied and theoretical approaches and outputs. Research portfolios involve an integrated creative and critical inquiry, communicated in a document that typically includes writing and documentation of creative processes and outputs. A research portfolio may consist either of a written thesis or of a written thesis combined with creative outputs, but it is not permitted to have a portfolio consisting solely of creative outputs. The research portfolio is assessed as a single outcome. Students frame an original research question/proposition, formulate and apply research methodology, and critically evaluate, synthesise and reflect on their outputs and outcomes. Mastery in a particular aspect of design will be evidenced in the outputs.

## KEY DATES 2025-2026

PHASE 1 Months 1-2	Monday 7th July 2025	<b>Start of Registration Period</b>
	Week 1 or 2	<b>TASK TYPE: OFFICIAL ADMIN</b> <p><b>Supervisor Initial Check-in</b> <i>Mandatory FGR Requirement</i></p> <p>In week 1 or 2 candidates and supervisors will meet and discuss their research plans in terms of ethics, resources, external parties and any other important factors. Supervisors and candidates will complete a supplied form (provided on Nuku) and email to the PG administrator. <i>Form completed and emailed to <a href="mailto:MDI-MDes-Reports@vuw.ac.nz">MDI-MDes-Reports@vuw.ac.nz</a> by 7th August</i></p>
	Wednesday 6th August	<b>TASK TYPE: WRITTEN SUBMISSION</b> <p><b>Submission of Written Research Proposal</b> <i>SoDI SRC Requirement</i></p> <p>In the first month of registration candidates will submit a written research proposal via email to the school post grad administrator. The proposal will be shared with the SRC who will assess the soundness of the proposed research and identify and advise any potential issues <i>Submitted by 5pm. PDF emailed to <a href="mailto:MDI-MDes-Reports@vuw.ac.nz">MDI-MDes-Reports@vuw.ac.nz</a></i></p>
	Around Wednesday 10th September On campus event	<b>TASK TYPE: PRESENTATION</b> <p><b>Design-Research Review 1: Research Proposal</b> <i>Not assessed - Recommended</i></p> <p><i>Candidates present their research proposals visually and verbally for review and feedback from academic staff and peers</i></p>
PHASE 2 Months 3-6	Late November/ Early December On campus event	<b>TASK TYPE: PRESENTATION</b> <p><b>Design-Research Review 2: Work in Progress</b> <i>Not assessed - Recommended</i></p> <p>Candidates present their work in progress visually and verbally for review and feedback from academic staff and peers as part of the postgraduate Kōrerorero Hoahoa – Kōanga (spring) event. This is not assessed but is an indicator of student progress ahead of the 6-month academic progress report.</p>
	Friday 12th December	<b>TASK TYPE: MANDATORY ADMIN</b> <p><b>6-Month Academic Progress Report Due</b> <i>Mandatory FGR Requirement</i></p> <p>In the sixth month of registration an academic progress report will be completed to ensure students are making adequate progress and that the supervisory relationship and any external party arrangements are working well. Supervisors and students may use the recent design review 3 as a prompt/tool for reflecting on the progress of the research.</p> <p>Academic progress reports are to be completed in Panoho, however the previous soft-copy templates will be made available on Nuku for student reference, and in the case that Panoho is not live by the deadline.</p> <p>The writing of the academic progress reports is a joint responsibility of the student and supervisor. Students and supervisors will see and acknowledge each other's comments in the reports. Any identified problems and proposed methods of addressing them should be discussed with the student before the report is finalised. Students can raise any issue in confidence with the Director of Postgraduate Programmes, Head of School, or Associate Dean (PGR) at any time <i>Submitted through Panoho by 5pm OR- PDF emailed to <a href="mailto:MDI-MDes-Reports@vuw.ac.nz">MDI-MDes-Reports@vuw.ac.nz</a> if Panoho system not yet live</i></p>
PHASE 3 E 3	Late March On campus event	<b>TASK TYPE: PRESENTATION</b> <p><b>Design-Research Review 3: Advanced Work in Progress</b></p>

		<p><i>Not Assessed - Recommended</i></p> <p>Candidates present their advanced work in progress visually and verbally for review and feedback from academic staff and peers as part of the postgraduate Kōrerorero Hoahoa – Ngahuru (Autumn) event. This is not assessed but is an indicator of student progress ahead of the 9-month check in.</p>
	<p><b>Tuesday 7th April</b> Complete in Panoho by 5pm</p>	<p><b>TASK TYPE: ADMIN</b></p> <p><b>9-month Supervisor Check-in</b> <i>Recommended</i></p> <p>Candidates and supervisors complete the ‘check-in’ on Panoho, reflecting on progress demonstrated through the draft writing and review.</p>
	<p><b>Friday 5th June</b> Email to supervisor</p>	<p><b>TASK TYPE: DRAFT DOCUMENT (WRITING &amp; LAYOUT)</b></p> <p><b>Draft Research Portfolio Due to Supervisors</b></p> <p>1 month prior to submission students to share an advanced draft version of their research portfolio with their supervisors for feedback. Students and supervisors indicate intention to submit through Panoho.</p>
<p><b>PHASE 4</b> Months 11-12</p>	<p><b>Monday 6th July</b></p>	<p><b>Submission of Research Portfolio</b> <i>Assessed as 100%</i></p> <p>Submitted digitally after 7 April and no later than 6 July by 11:59pm (midnight), 2026. Format and assessment details are outlined below. <i>Submit through Panoho by 11.59pm</i></p>
	<p><b>Mid-August</b></p>	<p><b>Presentation to examiners</b></p> <p>Details are outlined below. Exact dates and times to be communicated at nine months</p>
<p><b>EXAMINATION PERIOD</b> 1 Month Post Submission</p>	<p><b>Mid-Late August</b></p>	<p><b>Post-Graduate Exhibition</b></p> <p>Work displayed for the presentation to examiners will remain in place for the School of Design Innovation post-graduate exhibition. Students are to remove their work at the end of the exhibition. <i>Exact dates and times to be communicated at nine months</i></p>
<p><b>POST EXAMINATION</b></p>	<p><b>After decision to award degree has been made</b></p>	<p><b>Submission of Research Portfolio to Library</b></p> <p>Once the research portfolio has been examined and awarded a passing grade, and after required editorial changes have been completed, the digital document is deposited in the VUW Library via the thesis self-deposit service. If any physical objects or other supplementary material has been approved for submission, these should also accompany the research portfolio at the time of submission: <a href="https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/library/research/thesis-guide/submit-your-thesis">https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/library/research/thesis-guide/submit-your-thesis</a></p>

# RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

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**100% of grade**

**8,000-40,000 words**

**Submitted as a Digital PDF Document between 7 April 2026 – 6 July 2026**

Students submit their research portfolio as a digital PDF file, via the thesis submission form in Panoho. Variations in the format of the research portfolio and additional material may be discussed in consultation with the library and approved by the Head of School (or Delegate). The research portfolio is examined on the basis of the PDF copy submitted by the student. The student is responsible for the documentation of any creative components that cannot be reproduced (e.g., an exhibition or performance), and for formatting other physical or digital outputs appropriately for distribution to examiners. Please note students are liable for costs associated with mailing physical objects, and/or setting up physical objects for on-site review by examiners.

The School's requirement is for a minimum of 8,000 words and a maximum of 40,000 words for the written component of the research portfolio. This word count includes the abstract (maximum 300 words), acknowledgments, chapter text, image captions, footnotes, and/or endnotes, references and essential appendices unless specific permission has been granted by Head of School (or Delegate) (see form in Panoho).

The research portfolio will be assessed by two examiners recommended by the Head of School and appointed by the Associate Dean (PGR), with standing in the field of the research portfolio. One examiner will be externally selected, usually an academic staff member of another university or a senior practitioner with extensive experience in the relevant profession, and the other examiner will usually be internally selected as a staff member of Victoria University of Wellington. Examiners assess the work independently and provide an examiner's report and recommended grade.

The research portfolio is graded as a whole and a single letter grade is awarded. The creative and written components of the research portfolio document are assessed jointly as an integrated creative and critical design-research inquiry. Candidates will define the terms and scope of their research in the introduction of their research portfolio document to make the emphasis of their study clear to examiners.

## **Research portfolio assessment criteria:**

1. Critical examination of an existing body of knowledge, histories, theories and contexts relevant to the research proposition;
2. The effective formulation and deployment of research methods appropriate to the research;
3. Application of creative and critical thinking in the development, resolution and presentation of a design research project and any associated outputs;
4. Reflection and critique of the value of the design research undertaken and its relationship or contribution to existing knowledge or practice;
5. The structuring of a coherent research portfolio that clearly communicates findings and outcomes to relevant audiences in an appropriate format.

## Presentation for Examiners

**Presented in August 2025 (exact dates and times will be communicated at the nine-month mark of the Research Portfolio)**

Candidates have the opportunity present their research to examiners orally, with supporting materials such as a digital slideshow, and/or an exhibition of any creative content to be examined (such as models, tactile works, video, installation or interactive work).

The candidate has up to 20 minutes to present followed by a 20-minute question/answer session with examiners. Examiners will have reviewed the research portfolio prior to the presentation. Examiners are permitted to ask clarifying questions and offer comments. Supervisors may be in attendance, but cannot ask questions or converse with the examiners. Other staff, family and friends may be present. Candidates will normally be notified one month in advance of the timing schedule for individual presentations of their work. Alternative arrangements or formats for the presentation should be discussed with the Head of School (or Delegate). All students are expected to participate in this component of the MDI. The display of work will function as an MDI exhibition following the Visual Presentation.

Candidates may request special permission to present via a pre-recorded video from the Director of Post-Graduate Programmes.

## FINAL GRADE

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DSDN592 has one assessed item: the research portfolio. Students will receive a single letter grade and written feedback for this item. Grades from all courses completed towards the 180-point MDI degree are included in the calculation of the final MDI grade.

If a student is required to **revise and resubmit any piece of assessment**, the only grades which can be awarded for that piece of assessment are either C-, D or E. No candidate can be awarded merit or distinction endorsements for any degree for which any part of the research portfolio has been resubmitted.

## SUPERVISION, WORKLOAD AND ENROLMENT

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Students are expected to maintain satisfactory progress throughout the course of the research portfolio programme by submitting their progress reports and attending and presenting at scheduled reviews.

### Supervision

Students will work under the guidance of a primary supervisor appointed on behalf of the University by the Head of School. The primary supervisor will generally be an academic staff member situated within the School of Design Innovation. Secondary and/or external supervision will be appointed as warranted. The primary supervisor will generally be an academic staff member situated within the School of Design Innovation. Supervisors will have regular meetings (not less than one per month) with candidates individually or in small groups. A record of these meetings will be kept by supervisors.

## Workload

The expected full-time workload is at least 30 hours per week. Most of this time will be spent on independent study.

## Variations of Enrolment: Suspensions, Extensions, Half-Time, Termination, Withdrawal

Variations of enrolment will be made through PanoHo and may include: suspension of study; extension of time; change of status from full-time to half-time and half-time to full-time; termination of candidature; withdrawal from the programme. Owing to the examination process being scheduled for the entire cohort many months in advance, suspensions, extensions and changes to half-time candidature will be approved only in exceptional cases. Students can discuss any exceptional personal circumstances and requirement for a variation in confidence with the Associate Dean (PGR). Provisions are set out in the Master's Thesis Regulations. <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/documents/policy/research-policy/masters-thesis-regulations.pdf>

## REQUIRED MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

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Students are provided with a desk, computer, and standard design software. Students can consult with their supervisor on the provision of additional materials and equipment necessary for the completion of their work, but may need to supply materials not funded by the School. VUW has a Resource Agreement for Thesis Students which applies to thesis students in all schools. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr/current-phd/resourcing/rafts>

## ETHICS APPROVAL

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If the research portfolio research requires ethics approval before a component of the research can be initiated, the supervisor should discuss the ethical implications and give guidance on ethics approval process to the student. It is the student's and supervisor's joint responsibility to make the application and ensure that formal ethics approval is obtained. It is recommended that ethics approval is accomplished prior to the six-month academic progress report being submitted. Students must take into account that a normal ethics application takes on average 4 weeks to be considered and approved by the University Human Ethics Committee (HEC). More information is available at: <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/research/support/ethics/human-ethics>

School of Design Innovation Human Ethics Committee Liaison:

Dr Gillian McCarthy

Email: [gillian.mccarthy@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:gillian.mccarthy@vuw.ac.nz)

Office: WIG604

Phone: 4639548

# KEY TERMS

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## SoDI — School of Design Innovation

### AD PGR — Associate Dean Post Graduate Research

The faculty member responsible for approving academic and administrative decisions related to postgraduate research degrees. Our AD PGR is **Prof Joanna Merwood-Salisbury** (joanna.merwood-salisbury@vuw.ac.nz).

### FGR — Faculty of Graduate Research

FGR is the university body responsible for overseeing postgraduate research programmes, including enrolment, progress, and examination. The Dean of FGR is **Prof Neil Dodgson**.

### SRC — School Research Committee

A committee within the School of Design Innovation responsible for reviewing research proposals, monitoring progress, and recommending examiners and grades.

### HoS — Head of School

The academic leader responsible for approving enrolments, overseeing supervision, and ensuring adequate resources are available. In SoDI this is **Prof Leon Gurevich** (leon.gurevich@vuw.ac.nz)

### PD Post-Grad — Programme Director Post-Graduate Research

The PD post-grad coordinates the MDI, MDes and PhD research programmes in the school of Design Innovation. In SoDI this is **Dr Rosie Scott** (rosie.scott@vuw.ac.nz)

### SoDI Postgraduate Administrator

Provides support to candidates and academic staff in managing candidature, events and FGR processes. In SoDI this is **Ava Straw** (ava.straw@vuw.ac.nz).

### Panoho: Research Candidate Management System

The university is expected to launch the new post graduate candidate management system *Panoho* in late 2025. Panoho will be the primary portal for managing multiple aspects of candidature, including submission of theses/research portfolios, academic progress reports, and changes to candidature. As Panoho will go live part way through the duration of this research portfolio cohort some process at the start will be manual (email) and will shift to being through the portal later on. Advice will be given to candidates well ahead of any deadlines as to the manner of submission/management.

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr/about/panoho>

### Full-time / Half-time Candidate

A full-time candidate devotes at least 30 hours per week to their research. A half-time candidate works fewer hours and has a longer completion timeframe.

### Enrolment versus Registration

Enrolment refers to the status acquired by a candidate that starts when they meet all enrolment conditions and ends when the candidate lodges the completed thesis in the University library, withdraws from or fails the qualification, or the University terminates the candidature.

Registration is the period for which candidates are under supervision. Registration excludes periods of suspension and the period following submission of the thesis for examination, unless the candidate is required to undergo a further period of supervision. Fees are charged for periods of registration.

### Suspension

A formally approved break from study during which no tuition fees are paid and no supervision is provided. Must be taken in full month periods. Typically granted in for up to 12 months total.

# KEY POLICIES & LINKS

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## University Regulations and Policies

### Master's Thesis Regulations

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/documents/policy/research-policy/masters-thesis-regulations.pdf>

### Library Statute

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/documents/policy/library-and-information-systems/library-statute.pdf>

### Thesis Submission and Formatting Guide

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/library/research/thesis-guide>

### Thesis Availability and Embargo Policy

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr/current-phd/academic-integrity/thesis-availability>

### Third-Party Content Guidelines

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/library/research/thesis-guide/third-party-content>

### Formats for Theses and Research Portfolios

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/library/research/thesis-guide/formats-for-theses>

### Human Ethics Guidelines

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/research/support/ethics/human-ethics>

## Supervision and Candidature

### Panoho Candidature Management System

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr/about/panoho>

### Supervisor Responsibilities (FGR Guide)

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr/current-phd/supervision/supervisors-responsibilities>

### Candidature Changes (Suspension, Extension, Withdrawal)

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr/masters/candidature-changes>

## Resources and Support

### Faculty of Graduate Research

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr>

### Resource Agreement for Thesis Students (RAFTS)

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr/documents/resource-agreement-for-thesis-students.pdf>

### SoDI Postgraduate Nuku Site

<https://nuku.wgtn.ac.nz/courses/23067>

### PGSA — Post-Graduate Students Association

<https://www.vuwpgsa.ac.nz/?view=calendar&month=06-2025>

### Mauri OraStudent Health and Counselling

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/student-health-counselling>

### Te Amaru Disability Services

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/disability>

### Disabled Students' Association

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/disability/for-students/disabled-students-association>

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