

UXDN597

Master of User Experience Design
Research Portfolio Outline 2025

UXDN597

Master of User Experience Design Research Portfolio Outline 2025

This Research Portfolio Outline is supported by the <Master's Thesis Regulations>, <the Assessment Handbook>, and <the Library Statute>.

All relevant documents for the MUXD Research Portfolio and postgraduate policies may be found on the MUXD Teams site.

General: 90 points as part of the Master of User Experience Design (MUXD)

Assessment: Assessment of a completed research portfolio is based on the mandatory requirement outlined in this document

MUXD Programme Director: Bert Aldridge, Room TA323, Ph: +4 886 5720, Bert.Aldridge@vuw.ac.nz

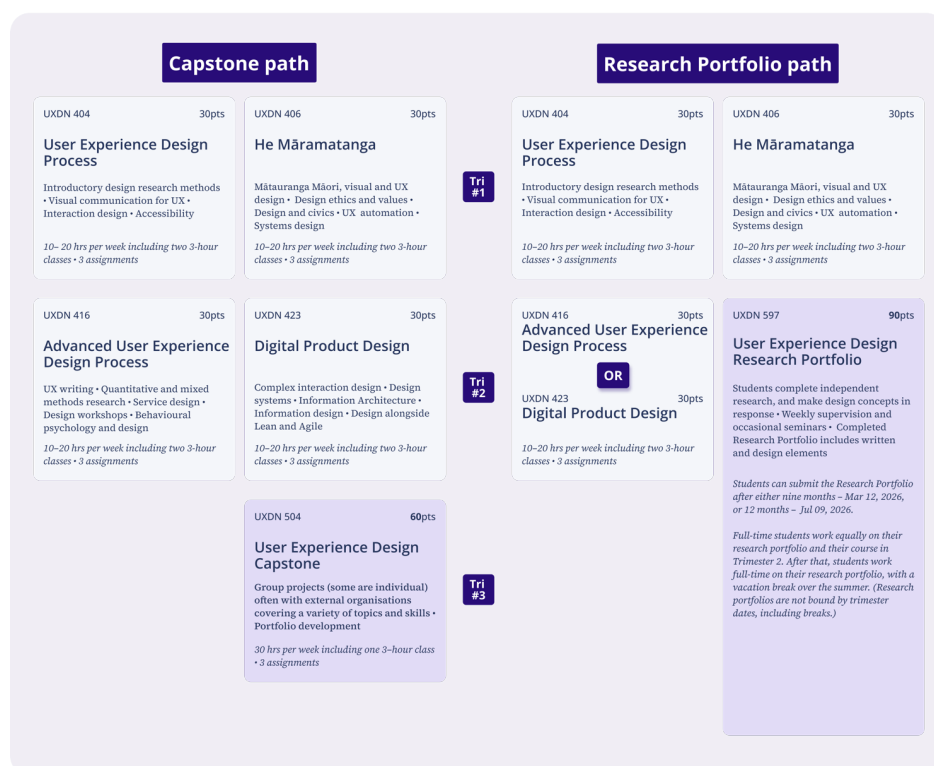
Supervisors: <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/design-innovation/about/staff#academic>

Location: WIG201 research space and seminar rooms (tbc)

The MUXD research portfolio

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.

Students enrolled in the Master of User Experience Design (MUXD) may choose to undertake User Experience Design Research Portfolio (UXDN597) as part of their MUXD programme. UXDN597 replaces one of the two courses offered in the second trimester of the MUXD (UXDN416 and UXDN423), as well the User Experience Design Capstone (UXDN504) in the third trimester. UXDN597 Research Portfolio is available as part of the MUXD programme only.



Key dates – 2025

Jul 7 (wk01, Tri 2)	UXDN597 begins
Jul 25 6pm (wk03, Tri 2)	Draft Research Proposal Due The draft research proposal will be reviewed and feedback will be provided by the Primary Supervisor. A research proposal template will be available to students upon registration via Teams.
Aug 01 6pm (wk04, Tri 2)	Research Proposal Due The one-month research proposal is submitted to the School Research Committee for approval (pdf submitted digitally). The committee review the soundness of the proposed research. The proposal is expected to be between 1500-2000 words and follow the approach and template presented in seminars to students.
Week beginning Sep 15 (wk 09 Tri 2)	Work-in-progress workshop Students share work-in-progress materials with an invited group of academics and UX professionals in a two-hour studio workshop. As a group, attendees will review, discuss, and offer feedback and advice.
Sep 26 Nov 19 6pm (wk 010 , Tri 32)	Three Four-month Report A progress report will be completed by students and their primary supervisor to ensure they're making adequate progress and that the supervisory relationship and any external party arrangements are working well. Report templates will be made available on Teams and emailed to students one month prior to the submission date. The writing of the progress reports is a joint responsibility of the student and supervisor. Student and supervisor 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 MUXD Programme Director, Head of School, or Associate Dean, Postgraduate Students, at any time.

Formatted: Font color: Text 1

Formatted: Font color: Text 1

Formatted: Font color: Text 1

Nov 19 ¹⁹ 6pm (wk01, Tri 3)	Progress review submission Students submit work-in-progress materials to be shared with an invited group of academics and UX professionals.
Week beginning Dec 08 (wk 04, Tri 3)	Progress review sessions The invited group review and discuss the materials submitted for the progress review. Students do not attend these sessions. The invited group provide notes, feedback, and advice for each student.
<u>Feb 5, 2026 6pm</u> <u>(wk 10, Tri 3)</u>	Reminder – confirming submission date <u>Students will be asked to complete a notice of intention to submit, to confirm whether they intend to submit in group #1 or group #2 below.</u>
Mar 12, 2026 6pm (wk 03, Tri 1)	Final submission #1 Students submitting for the first examination period submit by this deadline. This is the earliest point students can make their final submission, after nine months of full-time enrolment.
Week beginning Apr 7 (Wk 07, Tri 1)	Examination period #1 Examinations for research portfolios submitted for the first period are examined this week.
Jul 09, 2026 6pm (wk 01, Tri 2)	Final submission #2 Students submitting for the final examination period submit by this deadline. This is the last date students can make their final submission, after twelve months of full-time enrolment. Format and assessment details below.
Week beginning Jul 27 (wk 03, Tri 2)	Examination period #2 Examinations for research portfolios submitted for the second period are examined this week.
Mid-Late August (Exact dates tbc)	Exhibition of Work Students <u>can</u> choose to display their Research portfolio work as part a postgraduate exhibition by the School of Design Innovation. Students are to remove their work at the end of the exhibition.

Formatted: Font color: Text 1

Formatted: Font color: Red

After decision to award degree has been made	Submission of Research Portfolio to Library 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 self-deposit service, <u>and fill in the 'Degree completion' form.</u> 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: https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/library/research/thesis-guide/submit-your-thesis
--	---

Formatted: Font color: Text 1

Formatted: Font color: Text 1

Note – Students completing the research portfolio as part of the MUXD typically complete the examination process and graduate in December. Those completing the Capstone path typically graduate in May.

Research portfolio structure and process

MUXD research portfolios include a written component and creative outputs. They vary in emphasis and span a range of UX design approaches. Students design their own process for the research portfolio. The process begins with the articulation of an original research question/postulation in a research proposal. Typically, each student's process will include the following aspects, although with different emphasis and timing depending on the needs of their project. Students:

- undertake primary and secondary research to explore their topic broadly
- develop areas of focus for a design response
- complete extensive concepting in different fidelities, and from a variety of perspectives, with multiple iterations, and with further primary research to evaluate and refine their concepts
- reflect about the work overall, and its implications.

Because the research portfolio for UXDN597 normally includes a significant proportion of creative outputs, the School's requirement for the written component the UXDN597 is for a minimum of 8,000 words and a suggested maximum of 15,000 words for the written component of the research portfolio. This word count includes the abstract, acknowledgments, chapter text, image captions, footnotes, and/or endnotes, references and essential appendices. All students can go over the suggested

maximums above and up to [the absolute maximum of](#) 30,000 words without specific permission. However, this would be unusual and would need careful consideration from the student and supervisor(s).

Group work

Group work of up to 15% is allowed in VUW's [postgraduate research Master's Thesis](#) regulations ([section 6.c](#)). This means there are various scenarios where students can work together on some parts of their research portfolio. Some examples:

- Students work together to help each other in their problem framing process
- Students support each other in primary research process (for example, note taking for primary research interviews, helping with research analysis on each other's projects)
- Students could centre their research portfolio on different aspects of a broad territory / problem. In this case, students might share and support each other in with secondary research process.

Students must seek approval from their supervisors for group work as part of their approach, and detail the group work component in their final submission.

With special permission from the Head of School a group of students can do up to 75% group work so long as the inter-dependency does not affect an individual's ability to complete the project. For example, students could work on a larger complex project with final outputs that are individual aspects of a larger whole.

Workload

When the Research Portfolio begins at the start of Trimester 2, full-time students will also be enrolled in either UXDN 416, or UXDN 423. Full-time students are expected to work equally on their research portfolio and their selected course in that trimester. After that, students work full-time on their research portfolio. Please note, research portfolios are not bound by trimester dates, including breaks. Students work from their beginning date until completion after nine, or twelve months, with a vacation break over the summer.

Ethics

The MUXD programme has ethics approval for the following types of primary research in all courses including UXDN597: Semi-structured interviews, Observations, Usability testing, Intercept usability, Surveys, Diary studies, and Design workshops. (Ethics approval # 2024/HE000231). The requirements of the ethics approval are available to students in Nuku and in Teams. Research portfolio students who wish to conduct primary research under the MUXD ethics approval will identify and describe the primary research methods they will use as part of their research proposal submitted to the School Research Committee, and acknowledge their understanding of the ethical processes they must work within.

If a student wants to conduct primary research beyond the stipulations of the MUXD ethics approval they are required to submit an individual ethics application with their supervisor.

Materials and equipment

Students will need to provide all design materials and equipment as necessary for the completion of required design work. VUW has a Resource Agreement for Thesis Students which applies to thesis students in all schools. The agreement includes your own study space on campus, and other amenities. For more information, see: <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr/current-phd/resourcing/rafts>

Supervision

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.

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. Supervision will occur on a regular basis satisfactory to all parties either individually or in small group tutorials. Supervisors will keep a record of these meetings.

Examination

Each research portfolio will be assessed by a panel recommended by the Head of School and appointed by the Associate Dean (PGR). The examination panel will include academic staff members from the School of Design Innovation and external members from another university and/or senior design practitioners with extensive experience in UX Design. Examiners assess the work independently before meeting to discuss the portfolio, providing an examiner's report and recommended grade. The research portfolio is graded as a whole and a single letter grade is awarded

Formatted: Strikethrough

Research portfolio assessment criteria:

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

Final grade

UXDN597 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 MUXD degree are included in the calculation of the final MUXD 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.

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

Variations of enrolment 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.

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>

Formatted: Strikethrough

Formatted: Strikethrough