

The Research Room

July 2026

Tips of the month

Here are some tips and tricks you can use to make your research experience at VUW much more productive and enjoyable

Planning to have your viva in 2026?

If you would like your doctoral oral examination (viva) to take place this year, you should submit your thesis by 31 August 2026.

While we cannot guarantee that a viva will be held this year for theses submitted by this date, we will do our best to make this possible. Timing depends on several factors, including appointing examiners, receiving their reports, and arranging a date that works for everyone involved.

If you submit your thesis after **1 September 2026**, your viva will be held in **2027**.

If having your viva this year is important to you, please discuss your submission timeline with your supervisors as early as possible. We do not want candidates to rush their thesis submission, but we do want to help you plan ahead and have realistic expectations about examination timeframes. Have questions or concerns? Get in touch with us at FGR-Exams@vuw.ac.nz

As you prepare for this important milestone, be sure to attend the "How to Ace Your Viva" session. This practical workshop is designed to help you prepare effectively for your oral examination and approach the experience with confidence. You'll hear from a range of experts who will share valuable insights into the viva process, common examiner expectations, and practical strategies for success. It's an excellent opportunity to gain firsthand advice, ask questions, and learn tips that will help you perform at your best on the big day.

Kim Rooke, Team leader—Thesis Examinations, FGR, Victoria University of Wellington

Share your story

When utilized effectively, stories can be powerful tools to motivate and change minds. If you need an extra dose of motivation, this story should help you out

Note: This month we have a story of a student who was in the unusual situation of writing up remotely from overseas. The University does not normally allow remote thesis write-up because this is a critical time in the journey, and we believe that students should be on campus and able to meet with and get support from their supervisors. The Dean only approved offshore write-up owing to the student's extraordinary circumstances. Nevertheless, there are lessons in her experience for all students who are writing up.

Finding Resilience in Solitary Writing—Su Min, Yeoh

Submitting my PhD thesis felt surreal. Like many doctoral students, I imagined the final months would be dedicated purely to writing, refining arguments, and preparing for submission. Instead, the last stretch of my PhD became one of the most personally challenging periods of the journey.

Around six months before submission, I encountered unexpected tenancy and financial difficulties. During winter, my flat received an exceptionally high-power bill (over NZD 1k!), which placed significant financial strain on me and contributed to tensions within the household. At the same time, both my tenancy and visa were approaching expiry. Faced with the uncertainty about securing suitable accommodation and managing the financial burden of extending my stay, I made the difficult decision to return home to Malaysia and complete my thesis remotely.

At first, I believed that the transition would make writing easier. I imagined that being home would provide greater stability and reduce stress. However, one of the hardest parts of writing remotely was losing access to the intellectual and emotional support of my academic community. I deeply missed meeting with my supervisors, sharing sessions with my peers, attending workshops, and being surrounded by others who understood the PhD experience. Adjusting to the

excessive heat of a tropical climate (up to 35°C!) also made the process more difficult, especially as I am prone to mosquito bites. During this time, I also experienced stress-related challenges, including insomnia, which further affected my ability to sustain writing.

Writing became a far more solitary and confronting process. There were moments when maintaining motivation was challenging, and the physical distance made the final stage feel isolating. At the same time, this experience pushed me to develop further resilience and independence. To sustain progress, I actively engaged with self-learning resources, including videos and online writing strategies, and stayed connected with my broader network to maintain morale and perspective. I also enrolled in a series of weekly meetings over five weeks with an external writing consultant, which helped ensure that my thesis remained on track in terms of structure, argument development, and overall direction. In addition, the Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR) resources continued to be an important point of connection, helping me feel anchored within a broader academic community despite the distance.

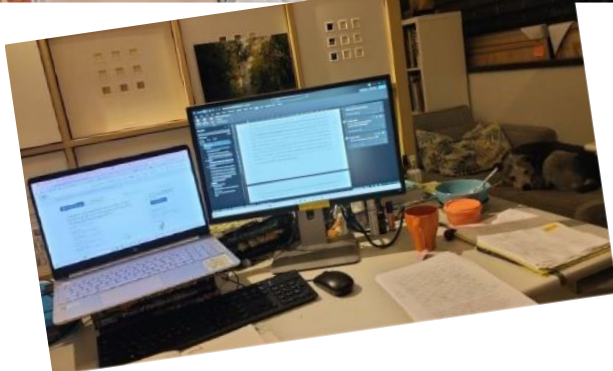
Over time, I established a consistent writing routine that allowed me to focus deeply on my work. I learned to appreciate the rhythm of solitary writing and found satisfaction in entering what I think of as a “deep work” flow, where I could engage fully with ideas and writing without distraction. I also made time to swim and take short walks in nature daily to maintain a sense of wellbeing and mindfulness. Despite the challenges, I genuinely came to enjoy parts of the thesis writing process.

I also realised the importance of actively rebuilding support systems, even from afar. I made conscious efforts to connect with the community around me, despite their lack of academic or scientific backgrounds. One particularly meaningful experience was discovering a local writing residency programme at an arboretum that was specifically designed for local researchers working in ecology and environmental protection. I was fortunate to meet the criteria and be accepted into this nature-

based residency. The whole experience was unique; living in nature also meant occasional surprises, including bats and monkeys making guest appearances in my room! The experience reminded me that support can exist in unexpected places if we are willing to seek it out. Even though daily life was busy, as I had to juggle cooking, self-care and writing (while also fostering four rescued kittens!), being close to nature helped me sustain my spirit too.

Looking back, this period taught me that completing a PhD is not only an intellectual achievement but also a deeply personal one. The journey often unfolds differently from what we expect.

While I still miss the community I might have had in Wellington, I am proud to have persevered through uncertainty and completed my thesis. In many ways, the final stage of my PhD taught me as much about resilience, adaptability, and self-trust as it did about the research itself!



Writing at my local residency programme



Fresh rambutans found in the arboretum

Su Min, Yeoh
School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University
of Wellington
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/suminyeoh/>



Writing buddy at the residency programme

Useful resources

Explore our list of research-related links that will help you throughout your research studies

Make use of tools like [Scopus](#), [Dimensions](#), [SciVal](#), and [Google Scholar](#) to find relevant literature, explore who is publishing in your field, and track citations. Learning how to use these platforms early can save you time, strengthen your literature reviews, and help you stay up to date with developments in your area of research.

Events happening soon

Looking for other events happening at the University and beyond? We go over some interesting events happening worldwide

Opportunities from other institutions

Organizer	Event	Date and Time	Register
Academic Consulting NZ	The Researcher's Guide to Digital Tools (Online)	9 Jul, 11:00-11:45 NZST	Here
Working Voices	Personal impact (Online)	22 Jul, 14:00-15:00 BST	Here
	Critical thinking (Online)	29 Jul, 12:00-13:00 BST	Here
Ideas on stage UK	How to help your team present to prospects with clarity and confidence (Online)	20 Jul, 23:00-23:45 NZST	Here
OECD	Why PISA matters in a changing world (Online)	21 Jul, 23:00 NZST	Here
	How expert-driven AI can unlock assessment data for better policymaking (Online)	8 Jul, 18:00 NZST	Here
Science Media Center	Working with the media, communicating your research, and using social media to promote your research (Online)	20 Jul, 10:00 NZST	Here

*By listing these events we are not endorsing any organisations but rather compiling and sharing a list of resources that may be helpful.

Happening here: Events at our university

Organizer	Event	Date and time	Register
Student Learning	Monday morning writes (Dual)	6 Jul, 9:00–10:30 NZST	Here
	Academic Writing at a PG level (Online)	7 Jul, 13:10–14:00 NZST	Here
	Academic Writing at a PG level (In person)	7 Jul, 13:10–14:00 NZST	Here
	Monday morning writes (Dual)	13 Jul, 9:00–10:30 NZST	Here
	How to summarise, paraphrase and cite in Postgrad writing (Online)	13 Jul, 15:10–16:00 NZST	Here
	Academic integrity and referencing (In person)	16 Jul, 11:00–11:50 NZST	Here

Organizer	Event	Date and time	Register
Student Learning	Monday morning writes (<i>Dual</i>)	20 Jul, 9:00–10:30 NZST	Here
	Academic integrity and referencing (<i>In person</i>)	20 Jul, 12:40–15:30 NZST	Here
	Successful time management for Postgraduates: Balancing life, work and study (<i>In person</i>)	21 Jul, 13:10–14:30 NZST	Here
	Monday morning writes (<i>Dual</i>)	27 Jul, 13:10–14:30 NZST	Here
	Life management for night owls (<i>Online</i>)	27 Jul, 15:10–16:00 NZST	Here
	Academic integrity and referencing (<i>In person</i>)	28 Jul, 12:40–13:30 NZST	Here
	Managing reading effectively at PG and tools to help you (<i>Online</i>)	30 Jul, 15:10–16:00 NZST	Here

FGR works to ensure that your experience as a thesis student is a positive one. For more information, visit our [website](#)

Contact

Postgraduate Research Student Advisers: FGR-postgrads@vuw.ac.nz

- Enrolling in your doctoral or master's programme.
- Candidature management changes. Online forms for thesis candidature changes can be found [here](#).

Thesis Examinations: FGR-Exams@vuw.ac.nz

- Submission or examination of theses.

Doctoral Admissions and Scholarships: pg-research@vuw.ac.nz:

- Doctoral applications or the doctoral application process
- Scholarships

Learning and Development: william.eulatthvidal@vuw.ac.nz

FGR

Faculty of Graduate Research
Te Here Tāura Rangahau