

The Research Room

March 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

VUWSA Postgraduate Officer By-Election now open

Kia ora postgrads! Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) is holding a By-Election for its Postgraduate Officer. This paid, part-time role, is all about advocating for postgraduate interests at the highest levels of university governance. Our next PG Officer will play a crucial role in ensuring the postgraduate voice is embedded into university systems. Your participation as a voter or a candidate will help shape the future of the postgraduate experience at Te Herenga Waka!

Visit our website to check out the job description and consider nominating yourself: <https://www.vuwsa.org.nz/postgraduates>

Nominations open on March 9th at 9:00am and close March 11th at 4:00pm. Once we receive your nominations, we'll let you know who is running on VUWSA's social media, and on the VUWSA website. Voting opens on March 16th at 9:00am and closes on March 18th at 11:30pm at <https://voting.vuwsa.org.nz/>

If you have any questions please reach out to postgradvoice@vuwsa.org.nz

Dr Elizabeth (Liz) McKibben, VUWSA

Navigating Postgrad Research? We've got your back

Postgraduate research involves complex skills that are not always taught explicitly. But you are not alone!

Created by a team of experienced librarians at The University, [Research Skills for Postgraduate Study: A Library Primer](#) supports you in building confident, independent research skills. This book guides you through key stages of the research process—from shaping a research question to searching, evaluating sources, managing references, and navigating AI tools responsibly.

Accessible and easy to dip into, this resource is here when you need it. Read it, revisit it, and share it with others on the research journey.

Philip Worthington, Subject Librarian, 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

From Pop Hit to Jail Bars: A Music Therapy Story—Annah Mac



The sun beams in through the window while I get my coffee ready. I walk down the hallway to the makeshift office and studio I've set up for online music therapy sessions. I normally work from the kitchen when I'm at home, but that hardly bodes well for clients—so here I am in this setup feeling surprisingly formal, despite my eleven-month-old son sleeping in the next room. I blow my mother a kiss as she arrives at the door, to take over baby duties for a few hours while I am “on placement”. I hold my breath until the Teams link connects, then exhale.

When I began my master's in music therapy, I had the same concern as many mature students: How quickly can I get qualified? If you had told me it would take four years, I may not have started! This concern soon became background noise when I landed the biggest work contract of my career—and discovered I was pregnant part-way through my studies.

After a swift career in pop music and a double platinum hit, (yes, that Girl In Stiletto's song), I spent the remainder of my 20s delivering holistic music programmes in prison settings. Safe to say I'd had some pretty great work experiences, but becoming a mum was by far my favourite.

Since becoming a parent, my professional and private lives—once very separate—have become more intertwined. That said, balancing the demands of early motherhood with academic research definitely comes with its fair share of challenges, but I do feel that my therapeutic practice and research are stronger because of it.

My research focuses on hybrid models of music therapy in prison settings, exploring how combining in-person and online delivery approaches might increase access to therapeutic support. There is currently little to no research in this area, so I am hoping to provide some foundational studies that others can build on in the future.

The approval process through the Department of Corrections and Victoria University was fairly robust, but I have now received permission from both to undertake an autoethnographic study based on my six-month placement in a prison unit, which is just wrapping up. Over the next few months, I'll be working with my research supervisor to write up the findings.

It took a bit of advocacy with my department to take on something so niche, but I am really grateful that they've given me the green light. I am excited to investigate a topic I am so passionate about, and I hope this work will eventually lead to more therapeutic support for people in prison.

I want to encourage any parents out there who are thinking about their next steps—or considering a career pivot—to keep research on the list. I have really enjoyed the deeper learning that comes from blending my studies with my lived experience, and I'm genuinely excited to share the findings as my work continues.

Looking back, this learning journey has reminded me that research doesn't need a perfect plan—just the willingness to grow and be flexible alongside whatever life brings your way. If you're balancing parenting, work, or big changes, I hope my story shows that meaningful study can still fit into the mix, and that moments of resilience can bring valuable insight to research.

*A H Macdonald (Annah Mac), NZSM - New Zealand School of Music,
Victoria University of Wellington*

Useful resources

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

[Design Principles for Data Visualization](#)

A resource outlining key design principles for creating clear, effective, and informative data visualisations

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
Working Voices	Business writing (Online)	3 Mar, 12:30 ET;17:30 GMT	Here
	Emotional intelligence (Online)	5 Mar, 9:30 GMT	Here
	Roleplay: Having difficult conversations (Online)	12 Mar, 14:00 ET	Here
	Critical thinking and decision making (Online)	18 Mar, 9:30 GMT	Here
Statistics Solutions	From data to defence: Quantitative analysis (Online)	6 Mar, 7:00 NZST	Here
	Qualitative analysis in the age of AI (Online)	13 Mar, 6:00 NZST	Here
	The data analysis plan: From research question to statistical test (Online)	20 Mar, 6:00 NZST	Here
Learn Skills Daily	PowerPoint beginner (Online)	4 Mar, 5:00 NZST	Here
	PowerPoint advanced (Online)	11 Mar, 4:00 NZST	Here
	PowerPoint Presentation Skills (Online)	18 Mar, 4:00 NZST	Here
Ideas on stage UK	How to help your team present with confidence and impact (Online)	12 Mar, 5:00 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
Research Office: Ethics Team	Human Ethics approval application training (<i>In person and online</i>)	4 Mar, 10:00 NZST (Rankine Brown 903 or via Zoom) 23 Mar, 10:00 NZST (Rankine Brown 903 or via Zoom)	--
Student Learning	How to summarise, paraphrase and cite (<i>In person</i>)	3 Mar, 13:10–14:30 NZST	Here
	Virtual English conversation hour (<i>Online</i>)	4 Mar, 15:00–16:00 NZST	Here
	Monday morning writes (<i>In person</i>)	9 Mar, 9:00–10:30 NZST	Here
	Critical Thinking 3-week series (<i>In person</i>)	11 Mar, 10:30–12:00 NZST	Here
	Virtual English conversation hour (<i>Online</i>)	11 Mar, 15:00–16:00 NZST	Here
	Successful time management (<i>Online</i>)	12 Mar, 15:10–16:00 NZST	Here
	Monday morning writes (<i>In person</i>)	16 Mar, 9:00–10:30 NZST	Here
	Managing reading effectively (<i>In person</i>)	17 Mar, 13:10–14:30 NZST	Here
	Critical thinking 3-week series (<i>In person</i>)	18 Mar, 10:30–12:00 NZST	Here
	Virtual English conversation hour (<i>Online</i>)	18 Mar, 15:00–16:00 NZST	Here
	Monday morning writes (<i>In person</i>)	23 Mar, 9:00–10:30 NZST	Here
	Critical thinking 3-week series (<i>In person</i>)	25 Mar, 10:30–12:00 NZST	Here
	Virtual English conversation hour (<i>Online</i>)	25 Mar, 15:00–16:00 NZST	Here
	Finding research in the library (<i>Online</i>)	26 Mar, 15:10–16:00 NZST	Here
	Monday morning writes (<i>In person</i>)	30 Mar, 09:00–10:30 NZST	Here
Creating a research timeline and staying on track (<i>Online</i>)	31 Mar, 13:10–14:30 NZST	Here	

FGR

Faculty of Graduate Research
Te Here Tāura Rangahau

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