

Minimum Resources Agreement (MRA) for Thesis Students

It is in the University's interests to provide thesis students with a certain minimum set of resources. Therefore, this document is the agreement between Victoria University of Wellington (the University) and the Postgraduate Students' Association Executive (PGSA). Some schools may be in a position to exceed these minimum requirements. This document does not deal with such matters.

These minimum requirements will apply to all PhD students and to students writing a Master's thesis of 90 or 120 points and will apply in appropriate measures to half-time students. Apart from those sections dealing with the allocation of research funding, this agreement also applies to students who, though not enrolled, are revising a thesis after it has been assessed. Candidates who have to resubmit a thesis must be enrolled, and thus are covered by this agreement.

Postgraduate students, like other students, have access to university services including library, career development and employment, student learning support, Victoria International, Maori 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.

1. Orientation

All candidates will be provided with a check-list to ensure that they receive an orientation to information relevant to the School and Faculty. The Postgraduate Coordinators will ensure that the candidates are introduced to people relevant for their work. The Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR) will provide University-wide orientation programmes. Students will be made aware of the MRA during orientation and can download copies from the FGR website www.victoria.ac.nz/fgr

2. Office space and furniture

Students must have a place 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 products of research. Where possible, the facilities listed below will be provided for students in a location close to relevant academic staff, or in a location where students are in a group environment, in the area of the school or faculty where their research is focussed. Twenty-four hour access to office and laboratory space will be available unless there are overriding and unavoidable security issues.

Each student is guaranteed access to

- A lockable filing cabinet, desk drawer or locker
- Book shelves
- A shared pin-board and shared whiteboard (wall space permitting)

Further, there must be work-stations to which students have access, comprising

- A desk¹ with adequate lighting
- An ergonomic chair
- A computer

The facilities provided to students may vary depending on the kind of research being done by the student, the facilities available in the School, and the status of the student's enrolment. Facilities might be common facilities made available at certain times, or that students can book; the facilities might be dedicated space² for a particular student if such a configuration is demonstrably necessary and available. Students who are not using a work-station for at least 30 hours per week (excepting periods of sickness or holidays) will not be able to command dedicated space in many schools. Students must have storage space at the University facilities where they regularly work, including laboratories.

Where there are common room facilities for staff, thesis students should have access to those facilities, unless equivalent facilities are offered specifically for thesis students.

3. Resources and support

All research students will have access to a computer, which will provide access to the following via the staff domain (or student domain if they so choose):

- all library resources
- the internet
- email

The University provided computers will also have access to standard supported software, e.g., Microsoft Office, or equivalent (see the Research Services Catalogue <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/its-student/policies/research-service-catalogue-final.pdf>). Other specialized software that is required will be arranged by the School or obtained through packages available at the library.

Students who opt to use personal laptops via the Laptop Rebate Scheme (see the FGR website www.victoria.ac.nz/fgr) will have the same access to facilities and support as University staff.

Student use of printing, photocopying, phone, postage, and fax for research purposes is free of charge, but there will be charges for excessive or private use at the discretion of the School. Use of the internet (for academic purposes) is also free of charge, however, excessive use of the internet or IT storage systems for non University-related work will be dealt with through the Code of Conduct and standard University policies. Students need to be aware that use of the internet and storage is monitored by ITS.

¹ Desk will be either:

- a rectangular computer desk with adjustable keyboard tray
- a computer trolley with adjacent table
- bench with space for computer and write up divided into carrels
- table only (if student uses laptop)

² Dedicated space means approximately 4-5m²

Where particularly heavy use of any of these facilities is foreseen for a particular project, the student should apply for a research grant.

4. Research funding and other resources

Office consumables and supplies are provided purely at the discretion of the School. Courses or training (other than coursework required for the PhD) for example, NVIVO, are paid for at the discretion of the School.

Some students will, of course, require far more than the minimum resources. For master's students, such arrangements should be made with the Head of School at the start of their tenure. Where PhD students are concerned, preliminary agreements about resourcing such students should be made between the student and the Head of School when the student first enrolls and should be reviewed and finalised at the time of the transition from Provisional to Full Registration.

Students who need additional funding should consider applying for a Faculty/School Research Grant. These relate to (a) unforeseen research-related costs and (b) funding for the enhancement of the research experience (conferences, visits to other institutions, etc.). Faculty/School Research Grants are limited, and applications under category (a) will have priority over those in category (b). Grants will normally be restricted. For a Master's programme the maximum is \$2000 for 120 point thesis, pro-rated for a 90 point thesis and for a PhD programme the maximum is \$6000 (over the entire PhD programme). Access to Faculty/School Grants is on a competitive basis and students are eligible to apply but the grant is not an entitlement.

In their full proposal, PhD students who plan to make significant use of any resource for their research must describe and fully cost the resources they plan to use. As with any aspect of the thesis proposal, the budget will also be negotiated. Masters students must discuss resourcing requirements with the school at the time of acceptance.

Applications for a) unforeseen research-related costs will require:

- the endorsement of the supervisor/s;
- an explanation of why the expenditure was not foreseen and is now necessary; and
- a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Head of School at the start of the candidature (or if updated after that point, the revised version).

Applications for b) enhancement of the research experience will be contestable, based on the merit of the application and the availability of funding.

Note: both funds will normally be administered at the faculty level, though in some faculties this may be devolved to schools.

5. Other

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).

This agreement is written on the understanding that the University will require time to become compliant with some requirements, but that it will work in good faith with the

PGSA to identify priorities and to maximise the allocation of resources to achieve full compliance.

To ensure that postgraduate thesis students and schools are aware of the MRA and schools are moving towards MRA compliance, the PGSA and the Faculty of Graduate Research will undertake an annual review of compliance.

6. Protocol for addressing concerns

1. Postgraduate thesis students with concerns that the University is not meeting the Minimum Resources Agreement need to advise a member of the PGSA Executive or a VUWSA Education Coordinator.
2. The PGSA Executive member will forward the complaint in writing to Jacquie Harper, Postgraduate Research Coordinator, Faculty of Graduate Research who will address it.
3. If the issues raised cannot be resolved by the Faculty of Graduate Research, the complaint will be forwarded to the DVC (Research), Professor Neil Quigley for resolution.

This document will be reviewed by October 2012.

Summary of the Minimum Resources Agreement for Thesis Students

This summary should be read in conjunction with the pages 1-4 of the agreement

Heading	2009 Proposed Agreement
Orientation	MRA will be discussed with links to the FGR website so students can download a copy or view it online. Schools and Faculties will provide a check-list at beginning of candidature to cover relevant information
University Services	Full access to all university support services
Personal Storage	Guaranteed access to: a lockable filing cabinet, desk drawer or locker, book shelves, a shared pin-board and shared whiteboard (wall space permitting)
Office Space, Computer, Desk & Chair	<p>Work-stations to which students have access, comprising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a desk with adequate lighting • an ergonomic chair • a computer <p>Facilities may be common, or dedicated where demonstrably valuable for the student's work. Students who are not using a work-station for at least 30 hours per week (excepting periods of sickness or holidays) will not be able to command dedicated space in many schools</p>
Personal Computers	Students with personal laptops via the Laptop Rebate Scheme www.victoria.ac.nz/fgr will have the same access to facilities and support as university staff
24 Hr Access to Office/Lab	Yes (unless overriding and unavoidable security issues)
Electronic Facilities	Access to the following via the staff domain: all library resources, the internet, email
Software	Standard supported software (see the Research Services Catalogue http://www.victoria.ac.nz/its-student/policies/research-service-catalogue-final.pdf). Access to specialised software arranged by the School or available through the library
Email & Internet	Access via the staff domain (or student domain). Excessive or private use of the internet or IT storage systems for non University-related work will be dealt with through the Code of Conduct and standard university policies
Fax, Post, Printer, & Photocopier	Free, however charges at discretion of the School for excessive/ private use
Toll-Barred Phone	Yes, any use of the phone for toll calls must be arranged at school level.
Common Rooms	Access to staff common rooms, unless equivalent PG facilities are available
Office Supplies & Consumables	Provided at the discretion of the School
Specialized Courses & Training	Provided at the discretion of the School. Or students may apply for a Faculty/School Research Grant
Research Funds	<p>Faculty Grants (or school equivalent) are available for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) unforeseen research-related costs and b) enhancement of the research experience (conferences, visiting institutions etc). <p>Up to \$2000 for a 120 point Master's thesis (pro-rated for a 90 point thesis) with a max of \$6000 for the entire duration of a PhD. Applications under a) have priority over b). Access to Faculty/School Grants is on a competitive basis and students are eligible to apply but the grant is not an entitlement.</p>
Addressing Concerns	See item 6 above