

The Research Room

July 2024

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

My top tips for editing and proofreading your thesis

- Ensure you leave ample time to thoroughly proofread your thesis. I set aside more than two weeks just to meticulously proofread my final draft. This dedicated time allowed me to catch any sneaky errors and fine-tune every detail for maximum impact.
- Print your thesis in different sections. Breaking your work into manageable chunks not only lets you edit on the fly but also offers the flexibility to tackle revisions wherever inspiration strikes. Plus, giving your eyes a break from the screen can work wonders, helping you spot errors and polish your writing with a fresh perspective.
- Run a thorough spellcheck and double-check your language settings. Spellcheck tools are lifesavers for catching those pesky typos that can sneak into your writing. Make sure your spellcheck is set to the right language—whether it's American or British English—as the spelling can vary between the two.
- Look out for common mistakes such as confusing "it's" with "its," mixing up "weather" with "whether," and "there are" with "they are."
- Try editing backwards. Start from the conclusion and work your way back to the introduction. This lets you dive deep into each section on its own terms, allowing you to focus on the clarity and coherence of individual parts without being influenced by the overall flow of the narrative. This is perfect for catching sneaky inconsistencies, logical gaps, or weak arguments that you might overlook when editing sequentially. Plus, editing backwards can help prevent fatigue, as it breaks the usual editing routine and keeps your mind alert.
- Reading your thesis aloud can be a game-changer in your editing process. When you read aloud, you engage different senses—seeing, hearing, and speaking—which can uncover issues that might slip by during silent reading. For example, awkward phrasing becomes more apparent, run-on sentences are easier to spot, and other sneaky problems become glaringly obvious.
- Have someone else review your work. A fresh set of eyes can catch errors you may have overlooked and provide valuable feedback.
- Evaluate paragraph and sentence length. A well-constructed paragraph typically contains around 250 to 300 words, providing enough detail without overwhelming the reader. Additionally, if a sentence exceeds 2.5 lines, consider breaking it into shorter, more manageable sentences. This approach not only enhances readability but also helps maintain the reader's focus. Shorter paragraphs and sentences are easier to digest and can effectively convey complex ideas in a more straightforward manner.

- Bulk editing. Use the 'Find and Replace' (Ctrl+F) function to quickly locate specific words, phrases, or formatting elements across your entire document and replace them with updated information or corrections. This saves time compared to manually editing each instance individually.
- Ensure your formatting is consistent throughout your thesis. Consistent use of headings, font styles, spacing, and margins creates a visually pleasing layout. Similarly, maintaining uniformity in citation style (e.g., APA, MLA) and referencing formats across all chapters and sections demonstrates attention to detail and scholarly rigor. Consistency also extends to the presentation of figures, tables, and appendices, ensuring they adhere to specified guidelines and are easily navigable for your readers.
- Double-check all factual information, references, numbers, percentages, and abbreviations to ensure accuracy and proper citation. For instance, ensuring that statistical analyses are accurately presented can prevent misleading conclusions. Confirm dates, events, and quotations from primary sources in historical or literature reviews to strengthen scholarly integrity. Inaccuracies can make your work look sloppy and unprofessional.
- Check your thesis as many times as you can. Multiple reviews help catch errors that might have been missed in previous rounds.
- Ensure that each chapter seamlessly connects to create a coherent and logical flow throughout your work. To achieve this, you can provide a brief summary at the end of each chapter that recaps the key points discussed and prepare the reader for the next chapter. At the beginning of each new chapter, include an introduction outlining what will be covered, setting the stage for the new content. Use transitional phrases to bridge gaps between chapters (e.g., 'Having established the current state of research on higher education, we now turn to...'). When relevant, refer back to previous sections to remind readers of important points and demonstrate how different parts of your thesis are interconnected (e.g., 'As discussed in Chapter 1, ...').
- Prioritize ensuring that your readers can easily follow your perspectives. Use transitions, signposts, and clear topic sentences to guide your readers through each section and chapter. Avoid abrupt shifts or leaps in logic that could confuse your readers.
- Identify instances where information is repeated unnecessarily. Look for redundant phrases, concepts, or examples that can be consolidated or omitted without impacting the clarity or depth of your argument.
- Communicate your ideas clearly and precisely. Replace verbose sentences with concise alternatives that convey the same meaning without unnecessary complexity. Avoid technical jargon or convoluted language that may obscure rather than clarify your argument.
- Ensure that key terms and concepts are defined clearly and used consistently across all chapters. Avoid introducing new terms or synonyms for the same concept unless necessary for clarity or to address different aspects of your research.
- Seek out other theses in your field as reference points. Reviewing these works can provide valuable insights into the structure, style, and presentation expectations within your field. Pay attention to how successful theses are organized, how arguments are developed, and how evidence is presented and analysed.
- Take advantage of resources like the [Academic Phrasebank](#) to enhance the academic rigor and clarity of your writing. Additionally, familiarize yourself with our [Proof-Reading and Editorial Advice Policy](#)

Dr William Eulath Vidal – Faculty of Graduate Research, 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

My journey: What I've learned and achieved – Nat

I recently completed my PhD this past February. Although I couldn't attend the graduation ceremony in Wellington due to time constraints, I'm now serving as the Head Lecturer of the Public Law Department at Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, Thailand's northernmost province. This role allows me to further explore my academic interests while supporting and guiding the next generation of scholars.

This isn't the first time I've shared a piece of my story with you! Previously, I wrote about the incredible support I received from the staff at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, who helped me navigate through some really challenging times during my studies. It was heartening to reflect on how their guidance and encouragement made all the difference. This time, I want to shift gears and delve into the academic side of my journey.

I'd say that, beyond the emotional challenge of being away from loved ones during my studies, my PhD journey was remarkably stress-free. One big reason for this, I believe, was the opportunity to delve deeply into a subject I'm truly passionate about. My research centred exclusively on Thailand's constitutional experience, a topic that has always fascinated me. With the unwavering support and guidance of my supervisors, Prof. Joel Colon-Rios and Dr. Eddie Clark from the Faculty of Law, I felt empowered to explore this niche area extensively and with confidence. Their mentorship played a pivotal role in making my academic pursuit both fulfilling and enriching.

But that's not all. The University really came through for me. Despite facing initial setbacks with my research proposal, the university believed in me and gave me the opportunity to flourish as the academic scholar I always aspired to be.

My PhD journey has been a profound transformation in my research skills. For example, before starting my PhD, I didn't fully grasp the intricacies of a comprehensive literature review. I used to see literature reviews as mere summaries of what I had read. However, I now relish engaging in discussions and creating relationships between the materials I review. This shift has not only refined my academic approach

but has also opened up new vistas of understanding and creativity in my scholarly pursuits.

If I had to single out the most precious gift that the University has given me, it would undoubtedly be the opportunity to grow into the person I've always aspired to be, embracing the world from a myriad of diverse viewpoints. This transformative experience has been a priceless treasure, enriching my life in ways I could never have imagined. From the supportive community to the challenging yet nurturing academic environment, every moment at the university has helped me broaden my horizons, deepen my understanding, and ignite a passion for learning that continues to drive me forward. It's this gift of growth and perspective that I cherish the most, shaping not just my career, but the very essence of who I am today.

My time at ***the University has not only shaped me professionally but has also enriched me personally,*** and I cherish every moment of it. Looking forward, I can't wait to bring all this newfound knowledge and skill to my role at Mae Fah Luang University. My goal is to inspire my students to pursue their passions with the same enthusiasm that has driven my own academic journey.

One valuable lesson I've learned is that embarking on ***a PhD journey isn't just about crafting a thesis;*** it's a comprehensive voyage of skill development that often goes unnoticed. From mastering time management to nurturing resilience, fostering teamwork, and honing interpersonal finesse, every facet of doctoral studies cultivates essential competencies crucial for future career success. It's easy to overlook these growth opportunities amidst the academic rigors, but each task contributes uniquely to your professional arsenal, shaping you into a well-rounded and capable individual ready to tackle any challenge.

My advice? ***Keep a record of these experiences and reflect on the skills they nurture.*** This not only enhances self-awareness but also equips you to articulate your strengths confidently when pursuing career opportunities. Whether you're refining your academic writing through workshops, sharpening your interpersonal skills through meetings, or honing your event coordination skills through planning, every

undertaking shapes a multifaceted skill set that will prove invaluable in your future endeavours. By keeping a record of this, you'll find that one day you can use all this information to wow potential employers during interviews.

Imagine sitting in an interview and being able to illustrate how your time management skills evolved from juggling research deadlines with teaching commitments, or how your resilience was built by

overcoming the inevitable setbacks in your research. Picture yourself explaining how coordinating a conference or a seminar honed your event planning and teamwork abilities. These are the kinds of stories and skills that set you apart, showing that you are not just an academic scholar but a dynamic, adaptable professional ready for any challenge.

Dr Natdanai Nachan, Faculty of law, Victoria University of Wellington

Useful resources

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

[The PhD Life Raft Podcast](#)

Podcast page tailored to PhD researchers, featuring episodes addressing common challenges such as imposter syndrome, perfectionism, and relationships with supervisors. These podcasts offer practical advice and inspiration to help you maintain motivation, find fulfilment, and enjoy your PhD journey.

Events happening soon

Looking for other events happening inside and outside VUW? We go over some interesting events happening worldwide

Organizer	Event	Date and Time	Register
Research Services Team, Victoria University of Wellington	Researcher profile workshop: Increasing reach, visibility, and engagement (<i>Online</i>)	02 July, 11:00 – 12:00 NZST	Here
Lumivero	Exclusive sneak peek: The NVivo (<i>Online</i>)	16 July, 18:00 CEST	Here
Sage Research Methods Community	How to get more involved with a journal and develop your career (<i>Online</i>)	11 July, 03:00 NZST	Here
Taylor & Francis	Excellence in peer review: How to be an effective peer reviewer (<i>Online</i>)	17 July, 20:30 NZST	Here
OECD	Innovations in measuring social and emotional skills and what AI will bring next (<i>Online</i>)	06 July, 12:00	Here
Maximum Performance	Presentation skills (<i>Online</i>)	05 July, 10:00 – 10:45 UK Time	Here
	Perfect PowerPoint presentations (<i>Online</i>)	12 July, 10:00 – 10:45 UK Time	Here
Complete Dissertation by Statistics Solutions	Quantitative analysis workshop (<i>Online</i>)	03 July, 05:00 – 06:00 NZST	Here
	Qualitative analysis workshop (<i>Online</i>)	12 July, 05:00 NZST	Here
4eu+ European University Alliance	Open Science and evaluation: How to reward open practices? (<i>Online</i>)	16 July, 14:00 – 15:30 Europe	Here
Dissertation by Design	Your research problem: Aligning elements to expedite the proposal process (<i>Online</i>)	10 July, 12:00 – 13:00 EDT	Here

Organizer	Event	Date and Time	Register
Australian Association for Research in Education	Building and maintaining a research profile post-PhD (<i>Online</i>)	10 July, 16:30 – 17:30 AEST	Here
	Decentring the human in Qualitative Research Methodologies (<i>Online</i>)	18 July, 19:00 – 20:00 AEST	Here
	Writing grant applications (<i>Online</i>)	24 July, 17:00 – 18:00 AEST	Here
Science Media Centre	Tips on communicating your research & Social media and online safety (<i>Online</i>)	24 July, 10:00 NZST	Here
WIRe	The changing workplace: What you need to know (<i>Online</i>)	25 July, 10:00 PT	Here
Gerald Parsons	The seven secrets to highly effective communication (<i>Online</i>)	24 July, 05:00 – 06:00 NZST	Here
IEEE Xplore Digital Library	Tips and best practices to get published from IEEE editors (<i>Online</i>)	25 July, 11:00 ACT	Here
IIL	Power up your perception (<i>Online</i>)	12 July, 03:00 – 04:00 NZST	Here
	Generative AI for problem solving (<i>Online</i>)	19 July, 03:00 – 04:00 NZST	Here

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

FGR

The Faculty of Graduate Research (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-Masters-Exams@vuw.ac.nz or PhD-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