

# The Research Room

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February 2025

## *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*

### **Copyright Checklist: Don't let permissions delay your submission!**

If your thesis or publication includes copyrighted material—like images, diagrams, or maps—you must obtain permission before submission. While NZ Copyright Law allows use for examination, you need explicit permission to include them in the online repository.

- Start early! Permission requests take time. Finding the copyright holder, emailing back and forth, and clarifying terms can be a slow process.
- Be prepared for challenges. They might say no, request a licensing fee, or require modifications.
- Avoid unexpected costs. Copyright owners can track usage and send invoices if you haven't sought permission.
- Keep proof of permission. Your student email won't last forever—store approvals securely!

Don't let copyright issues delay your submission. Plan ahead and stay on the right side of copyright law! For help, contact Carmel Maclachlan (Copyright Advisor) at [copyright@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:copyright@vuw.ac.nz), Library Research Services at [library-research@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:library-research@vuw.ac.nz), or your [Subject librarians](#). You can also email [library@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:library@vuw.ac.nz), and your query will be forwarded to the right team.

Useful links:

- [Copyright in research and publishing](#)
- [Deposit your thesis](#)
- [Copyright resources at the University](#)
- [Copyright Act 1994](#)

*Dr William Eulath Vidal – 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*

### **From Brazil to New Zealand: A journey of unexpected turns and transformative growth— Larissa Rocha**

I always envisioned following a straight path toward academia, but life, as it often does, had other plans. An unexpected opportunity broadened my perspective and transformed my career and personal life in ways I never could have imagined.

I was born in the north of Brazil and completed my bachelor's degree and diploma in Psychology at the Federal University of Pará, in the state where I was born. During my six years of study, I had the opportunity to intern at the Laboratory of Psychobiology, where I contributed to a project exploring various aspects of psychobiology, including the impact of Amazonian plants on anxiety-like symptoms. In my final year, I further expanded my experience by working in the university's Psychology Clinic and in the HR departments of two private companies.

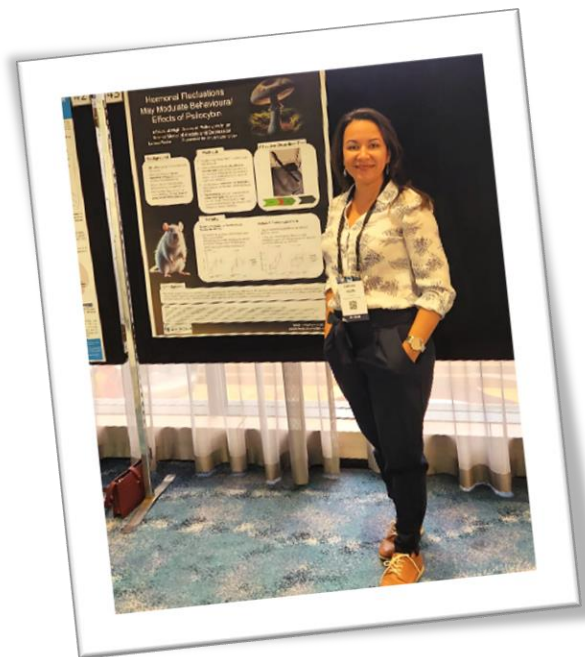
When I graduated, my plan was to enrol in a master's program, followed by a PhD, all within the same lab where I had previously worked. However, on the day of my graduation party, I unexpectedly received a job offer to work as an HR consultant for a large company in the south of my state. After successfully navigating the recruitment process, I embarked on a six-month journey in a completely different environment. I believed this experience would help prepare me for the postgraduate studies I had intended to pursue the following year.

The experience was challenging but important to my professional life. It provided valuable lessons, helped me mature, and left me better prepared for future challenges. However, due to personal circumstances, I decided to relocate to another state instead of returning to postgraduate studies. Unfortunately, this new location didn't offer the research opportunities I was seeking, so I continued my career in HR.

Several years later, I decided to make one of my dreams come true and moved to New Zealand. It was here that I discovered several neuroscience research groups, including one focused on anxiety research in Wellington. Feeling that I had nothing

to lose, I reached out to them. My conversation with Professor Bart, the lab leader, was inspiring, and he agreed to supervise a project. I will never forget the moment I received the university's acceptance letter to begin the program—It felt like a second dream coming true: embarking on an International PhD.

My project explored the effects of psilocybin—the substance found in magic mushrooms—on anxiety- and depression-like symptoms in female rats. This is a highly relevant and exciting area of research in neuroscience. I was, and still am, deeply enthusiastic about the project, particularly because of the innovative approach we took. We focused on female rats and examined how the modulation of female hormones influences the drug's effects.



*Me presenting at the Australasian Neuroscience Society meeting, Australia*

However, returning to academia as a mature international student after years away from the lab was not easy. There was so much to learn: navigating the unstructured nature of a PhD program, mastering new lab techniques, and overcoming language barriers. At times, these challenges felt overwhelming, and I often found myself questioning whether I could persevere.

They pushed me to confront my weaknesses and insecurities head-on. Over time, I came to realize that these struggles were an integral part of the journey and facing them was the only way to move forward.

I must take a moment to highlight how fortunate I was to be part of such an incredible and inspiring team. Our lab, under the leadership of Professor Bart, fostered an environment that allowed us to truly grow by enhancing our skills through paper discussions, seminars, and workshops on various techniques and statistical models. Beyond that, it was a safe and supportive space where people felt comfortable sharing their work and seeking suggestions, even when our projects were unrelated.

Mental health is a critical topic for postgraduate students. The (self-imposed) pressure to write a thesis can make the journey feel isolating and emotionally draining. The path is often individual and, at times, solitary. Fortunately, I had support from my family, supervisor, friends, and lab mates. Their practical advice, guidance, inspiration, and even casual conversations often provided the boost I needed. I was not someone who naturally sought help—it's a work in progress—but I cannot count the number of times a simple conversation has turned out to be a game-changer. Sharing problems with others helped me realize I wasn't alone, and small pieces of advice often unlocked solutions to seemingly insolvable problems. When I was tired and things went wrong, kind words made all the difference.

The university also provided various forms of support, from practical assistance to mental and physical health resources, which were invaluable during tough times.

After 38 months of hard work, I submitted my thesis, and just four months later, I had my viva. Receiving the reports was an incredible moment—one that surpassed my expectations, even though they came with a list of questions and suggestions to address.

Now, as I embark on my next adventure, I not only carry a new degree but also a more mature, better-prepared version of myself—both personally and professionally—and, yes, a few grey hairs. The challenges of this journey have shaped me, revealing strengths I never knew I had and forging a more resilient version of myself.



*Feeling accomplished after successfully defending my PhD*

My main goal throughout this journey was to approach it in a way that felt both enjoyable and fulfilling. A PhD is not a trivial undertaking, and I am fairly certain I won't take on another one (though, I'm not 100% sure). It is challenging, solitary, and stressful. But, for the most part, I found ways to enjoy the process. Alongside learning about neuroscience, I discovered a great deal about myself and my working style. I also learned to be kinder to myself when things didn't go as planned. Progress can be measured in many ways. On a difficult day, progress can be a walk in Mount Victoria trails. I also came to understand that writing isn't about perfection on the first try; it's about getting ideas down and refining them later. I learned that comparisons are almost always unhelpful and that celebrating every achievement—big or small—is crucial for maintaining motivation. Most importantly, I've learned that there is no single "right" path. The path that works for me is the right path for me.

If I could give one piece of advice to anyone pursuing a PhD, it would be this: talk to people—often and as much as you can. Whether it's for advice, mentorship, friendship, or simply to unwind, connecting with others can truly make a difference. We are wired to connect, and meaningful conversations can provide clarity, encouragement, fresh perspectives, and sometimes even the emotional support you need on those challenging writing days. Never underestimate the power of talking to someone when you're stuck, stressed, or celebrating—it's a vital part of the journey. And, hey, you now have the perfect excuse to explore NZ's cafes and bars. You are welcome!

Looking back on my journey, I can see just how much I've grown—not only as a researcher but also as a person. Moving to a new country,

adapting to a different academic culture, and balancing the demands of a PhD constantly pushed me outside my comfort zone. Yes, it was precisely in those moments of discomfort that I discovered resilience, creativity, and a deeper appreciation for the collaborative spirit of science.

If there is one lasting lesson I've learned, it's that every challenge, every setback, and every triumph is part of the process of becoming not only a scholar but a stronger, more confident individual.

Larissa Rocha, School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington

## Useful resources

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

Have you heard of [Canvas Student ePortfolio](#) (Folio)? It's a free, easy-to-use tool that lets you showcase your education, projects, and experience in a professional portfolio. Upload your best work, connect with industry professionals, follow companies, and even explore job opportunities—all in one place!

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This [article](#) is a good example of why publishing in a small, niche journal can sometimes have a greater impact than publishing in a so-called "high-impact" journal.

## 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
Human Ethics Team, Victoria University of Wellington	Human Ethics: Training session ( <i>dual delivery</i> )	05 Feb, 11:00–12:00 NZST	<a href="#">Here</a>
	Human Ethics: Training session ( <i>dual delivery</i> )	26 Feb, 10:00–11:00 NZST	<a href="#">Here</a>
University of Otago	Doing research co-productively symposium ( <i>In person</i> )	13, 14 Feb, 09:00–17:00 NZST	<a href="#">Here</a>
Oxford Brookes University	How can you give yourself permission to be the best version of you? ( <i>Online</i> )	06 Feb, 01:30 NZST	<a href="#">Here</a>
OECD	Who sparks the engine for research to fly? The role of knowledge intermediaries in education ( <i>Online</i> )	14 Feb, 01:00 NZST	<a href="#">Here</a>
Taylor & Francis	Introduction to open research ( <i>Online</i> )	27 Feb, 00:00 NZST	<a href="#">Here</a>
Statistics Solutions	Quantitative analysis ( <i>Online</i> )	07 Feb, 07:00 NZST	<a href="#">Here</a>
	Qualitative analysis ( <i>Online</i> )	14 Feb, 07:00 NZST	<a href="#">Here</a>
Niche Academy	Tools for Overcoming Rejection and Social Exclusion at Work ( <i>Online</i> )	12 Feb, 14:00 US Eastern	<a href="#">Here</a>

Organizer	Event	Date and Time	Register
Office of Academic Innovation	Academic Integrity and AI (Online)	20 Feb, 09:00–10:30 NZST	<a href="#">Here</a>

*\*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](mailto: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](mailto:FGR-Exams@vuw.ac.nz)

- Submission or examination of theses.

Doctoral Admissions and Scholarships: [pg-research@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:pg-research@vuw.ac.nz):

- Doctoral applications or the doctoral application process
- Scholarships

Learning and Development: [william.eulatthvidal@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:william.eulatthvidal@vuw.ac.nz)