

The Research Room

October 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

Get ahead by planning your research data management early

One of the smartest moves you can make early in your research journey is to develop a solid plan for managing your research data. It's not just about organizing your files—it's about documenting, storing, securing, and preserving your data to keep things running smoothly throughout your project. A good data management plan ensures that your research is easy to access, cite, and even share with collaborators. Plus, it sets you up for success when it comes time to publish your findings. So, take a little time upfront to get organized—future you will thank you!

You can download the Victoria University of Wellington [Research Data Management Plan \(DMP\) Checklist](#) to help you structure your plan. The great thing is you can update this as a living document throughout your research journey.

If you need any support or guidance, the library staff are more than happy to help! You can arrange an individual consultation through [Library Research Services](#). Don't hesitate to reach out—it's a great resource to take advantage of!

Dr William Eulatth 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

Embracing the journey, not just the destination – Will

A few years have passed since I graduated, but I still carry the pride of being a PhD graduate—yes, a Doctor! Reflecting on my journey fills me with a mix of pride and nostalgia. It took me longer than I initially expected to graduate, and my path was riddled with ups and downs that tested my resolve. But through it all, I learned that even the toughest moments eventually pass, and resilience is key to navigating the storm.

I have so many stories from my journey that I could fill a book, but in these few lines, I want to share some

experiences that I believe could really help you on your own path. So, grab a cup of your favourite drink, settle in, and let's dive into some lessons learned along the way!

My journey was not without its challenges. I faced illness and the uncertainty of a global pandemic, which left me with a lingering fear every time I called home, worried about what bad news might greet me. It was during those moments of fear and vulnerability that I realized the importance of leaning on my support system, whether through friends, family, or fellow

students who understood the struggles we faced together.

Alongside personal challenges, I faced the need to change supervisors midway through my program, which initially added extra stress to an already demanding situation. However, this change ultimately proved to be a blessing, as my new supervisors were exactly what I needed at that moment. One of the most valuable pieces of advice my supervisors offered was to adopt a new methodology and approach that I had never worked with before. While this felt daunting at first, it ultimately became a pivotal moment in my research. It opened my eyes to new perspectives and ways of thinking, transforming my research into a spicy and interesting endeavour. Ultimately, I believe that pursuing a PhD is about stepping outside your comfort zone, taking on challenges, and learning new things that help shape you into a more versatile researcher and individual.

Throughout my PhD, I dedicated myself not only to my research but also to a variety of roles within and beyond the university. From teaching and research assistance to serving as a peer advisor and mentor, I balanced my studies with these rewarding experiences. I seized every opportunity that came my way, and each role not only honed my skills and enriched my CV but also expanded my network in unexpected ways. These connections opened doors to exciting collaborations and provided a robust support system during challenging times.

But it wasn't all about work and study for me. I never lost sight of my passion for travel, so I made sure to carve out time for backpacking and exploring new places. I also made time for friendships and even took a fun job at an Italian restaurant in the evenings just for the joy of it. These experiences reminded me that a fulfilling life involves creating a holistic experience that nurtures both the mind and the spirit. While your research is important, don't underestimate the power of stepping away. Moments of rest and joy outside research can lead to breakthroughs and renewed focus when you return to it.

I never allowed myself to follow someone else's path; instead, I chose to create my own adventure. While I remained focused and driven by a clear purpose, I navigated my journey in a way that felt authentic to me. For example, I still remember some of my friends, also pursuing their PhDs, urging me to publish as many papers as possible and adhere to a rigid timeline of "must-dos." While I appreciated their well-meaning

advice, I ultimately decided to publish when it felt right for me. Sure, it happened after I graduated, but I ended up with book chapters and articles that truly reflected my passion and interests. What I'm trying to say is that you have the power to shape your journey. Of course, it's important to listen to guidance, but at the end of the day, it's your unique experiences and choices that define your path.

Something that worked for me was making the most of my supervisory meetings by coming prepared with a well-defined agenda and thoughtful points to discuss. I always made an effort to justify my choices with solid reasoning and evidence. I valued honesty in expressing my disagreements, but I made it a priority to communicate my views with respect, fostering constructive dialogue. Seeking insights from others outside my supervisory team also helped clarify my doubts and even sparked new ideas that I later brought to my supervisors. These discussions contributed significantly to my research journey, reminding me that collaboration and open dialogue are key to growth.

PhD supervisors' feedback is crucial in the PhD journey, so I employed a strategic approach to manage this process effectively:

1. To ensure timely feedback, I was proactive and organized, establishing a timeline and including an overview of key areas needing input when submitting drafts. I also followed up with a courteous reminder a week before the deadline.
2. I provided manageable chunks of work instead of multiple chapters at once. This approach allowed for focused feedback and kept the revision process manageable for both parties.
3. As soon as I received feedback, I would promptly send them another piece of work.
4. I always began by carefully reading all feedback to grasp the big picture and understand the suggestions. When revising, I prioritized critical issues first, used track changes, kept all draft versions to monitor my progress, and sought clarification on any unclear feedback.

My data collection stage was a fascinating challenge. At first, I struggled to find participants, which forced me to rethink my strategies—more than twice. Each adjustment taught me the importance of flexibility in research. As for writing, I adopted a simple philosophy: start writing as soon as possible and do it consistently—there's always something to write about, whether it's a

small section or just notes on ideas. I learned that rather than waiting for inspiration, it was more effective to take action first; motivation often follows effort. I set small milestones and broke my writing into short, manageable periods, rewarding myself for reaching each goal. People often ask which chapter I found the easiest, but the truth is none of them were. Every chapter demanded careful thought, planning, and revision. I poured the same level of effort into each one, recognizing that each section was vital to the overall narrative of my research.

The day of my oral defence arrived, and while many expected me to be anxious and panicking, I felt calm and confident. After all, I was the one who had conducted the research and written the thesis, so I knew everything about it inside and out. Of course, some nervousness is normal—it's what makes us human—but being well-prepared made all the difference. It wasn't just about feeling capable; it was about being ready! I rehearsed several times in front of others, refining my delivery and anticipating questions. I crafted a simple yet engaging PowerPoint presentation, and carefully read the examiners' reports to anticipate some of the questions that might arise from them.

That morning, my defence was scheduled for 11:00 am, but I even found time to go to the gym beforehand—another sign of how prepared and grounded I felt. While my PhD journey had been incredibly rewarding, the day of my defence truly felt like the culmination of it all—the cherry on top of a long and fulfilling journey. It was my chance to showcase not only my deep knowledge of my topic but also my ability to engage critically with its broader implications. It was a moment of pride and validation, and the preparation I had put in made it a truly fulfilling experience.

I could keep writing, but I think I've shared enough for now. What I want to emphasize is that I've learned this journey is not just about the destination; it's about the experiences, connections, and discoveries you make along the way. So, stay focused on your purpose and dedicate yourself to your PhD studies, striving to give it your best effort. However, while hard work and reaching your milestones are essential, taking the time to enjoy the process is equally important.

Dr William Eulatth Vidal, FGR, Victoria University of Wellington

Useful resources

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

[Nick Hopwood Blog](#)

Nick's widely read blog serves as an invaluable resource for research students and early career academics, providing a comprehensive suite of tools and insights to navigate the often complex landscape of academia!

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>)	09 Oct, 11:00 – 12:00 NZST	Here
School of Engineering and Computer Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington	Using large language models (LLMs) for academic writing and research (<i>dual delivery</i>)	15 Oct, 11:00 – 12:30 NZST	Here
ISANA NZ	International education research seminar (<i>Online</i>)	08 Oct, 12:00 NZST	Here

Organizer	Event	Date and Time	Register
Taylor & Francis	Open access books publishing 101: Getting started <i>(Online)</i>	16 Oct, 16:00 – 17:30 NZST	Here
	Ethics focus: Authorship & conflicts of interest <i>(Online)</i>	17 Oct, 00:00 – 1:30 NZST	Here
	Excellence in peer review: How to be an effective peer reviewer <i>(Online)</i>	16 Oct, 21:30 – 23:00 NZST	Here
	How to take your academic social media to the next level <i>(Online)</i>	23 Oct, 20:00 – 21:30 NZST	Here
	Editor insights: Exploring publishing ethics in academia <i>(Online)</i>	30 Oct, 18:00 – 19:30 NZST	Here
International Institute for Learning	Understanding and improving processes overview <i>(Online)</i>	08 Oct, 05:00 NZST	Here
	Grateful leadership in the age of AI: A journey of reflection and innovation <i>(Online)</i>	17 Oct, 04:00 NZDT	Here
Complete Dissertation by Statistics Solutions	Quantitative analysis workshop <i>(Online)</i>	04 Oct, 06:00 NZST	Here
	Qualitative analysis workshop <i>(Online)</i>	04 Oct, 06:00 NZST	Here
Lumivero	Best practices in healthcare qualitative research <i>(Online)</i>	08 Oct, 11:00 EDT	Here
	Thematic analysis with NVivo 15 + Lumivero AI Assistant <i>(Online)</i>	15 Oct, 12:00 EDT	Here
	Probability assessment and cognitive bias: What could go wrong? <i>(Online)</i>	30 Oct, 11:00 EDT	Here
Niche Academy	Perfect Is the enemy of good: Thinking critically about information in an imperfect world <i>(Online)</i>	02 Oct, 14:00 US Eastern	Here
Ajays Coaching Corner	Presentation skills <i>(Online)</i>	31 Oct, 22:30 – 23:00 NZST	Here
ASU Learning Experience Design	Empower your presentations with AI-generated slide decks <i>(Online)</i>	16 Oct, 06:00 – 06:45 NZST	Here
CodeBase	How to develop a compelling presentation: A webinar with Ideas on stage <i>(Online)</i>	10 Oct, 03:00 – 04:00 NZST	Here
New Results	Effective communication: Solving the people puzzle in minutes <i>(Online)</i>	10 Oct, 01:00 – 02:00 NZST	Here
Views Professional Development	Professional resume and cover letter writing <i>(Online)</i>	02 Oct, 16:30 – 17:00 NZST	Here
	Dream career masterclass: Find a job you'll love, in 5 easy steps <i>(Online)</i>	16 Oct, 16:30 – 17:00 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