

College of
Humanities and
Social Sciences



[Information for Postgraduate Research
Students: Research projects, Honours
dissertations and Masters research]

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Postgraduate Information provided by academic units:

[Institute of Education \(Handbook\)](#)

[School of English and Media Studies \(Handbook\)](#)

[School of Humanities \(Handbook\)](#)

[School of People, Environment and Planning \(via Stream Site\)](#)

[School of Psychology \(Handbook\)](#)

[Centre for Defence and Security Studies](#)

1. Introduction

Nau mai – Talofa lava

Welcome to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences - Te Kura Pūkenga Tangata

This document aims to provide guidance to both new and continuing postgraduate research students. It includes important details about College policies or procedures in relation to postgraduate study and research. It also offers advice and reference to other sources students need to be familiar with throughout their postgraduate journey.

The information provided here should be read in conjunction with:

- *The University postgraduate pages*
This important information outlines the University's procedures for postgraduate research at the sub-doctoral level, and support services available to students
- *Information provided by Schools / academic units*
This information tells you about expectations, communication channels, support networks etc which are specific to your School or academic unit

We hope that this brief guide will be of assistance to you and help you achieve a successful and positive experience as postgraduate researchers.

Roles

It is important to understand the roles of people who play key roles in postgraduate research. The roles listed below are critical to the success of the research process. As a student it is imperative that you become familiar with the individuals in the first four roles: Head of Academic Unit, the Postgraduate Co-ordinator for your Academic Unit, and your Supervisor and second Supervisor/s where appropriate. Not all programmes offer a second supervisor for sub-doctoral research.

| Title | Role |
|---------------------------|--|
| Head of Academic Unit | Responsible for the management of the academic unit. |
| Postgraduate Co-ordinator | Co-ordinates supervisors and postgraduate research activity, including examination of research projects. |
| Supervisor | Academic staff member who guides the research process |
| Second Supervisor | Academic staff member acting in a support advisory capacity. |
| Internal Examiner | A Massey academic staff member and independent of your research project. |
| External Examiner | Non-Massey academic staff member and independent of your supervisor and your research project. |

Managing Workload

Postgraduate research requires a significant time commitment. It is important to consider the expected workload carefully and how to balance it with everyday demands, especially for students

new to doing research. The weekly workload hours illustrated below represent an average, in relation to a paper's credit value. In practice, they may be unevenly distributed and come in waves of intense periods of activity or slower periods. The number of hours represents the total hours spent on all activities, whether it be researching journal articles, working with data, or writing.

| Credits | Single Semester | Double Semester |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 15 | 10 hours per week | 5 hours per week |
| 30 | 20 hours per week | 10 hours per week |
| 45 | 30 hours per week | 15 hours per week |
| 60 | 40 hours per week | 20 hours per week |

Successful postgraduate study also depends on organising your time effectively to ensure you meet required timeframes. Check out the University's [Postgraduate webpages](#) for: time management strategies (<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/postgraduate/involve/postgraduate-readiness/time-management.cfm>) and an interactive workload tool (<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/workload-planning-tool.cfm>).

Part Time or Full Time Study

The choice between part-time and full-time study is an important one and should be made carefully at the outset of your programme, depending on your family, work and study commitments. Full-time study is defined **as enrolment in 105 credits or more during a 12 month period**. Part-time study is defined as **90 credits or less during a 12 month period**

Enrolment pattern examples:

| Total Credits | Semester One | Semester Two | Calendar Year (12 Months) |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 75 | 30 credits | 45 credits | Part-time |
| 90 | 45 credits | 45 credits | Part-time |
| 105 | 45 credits | 60 credits | Full-Time |
| 120 | 60 credits | 60 credits | Full-Time |

Depending on programme, your enrolment may include Summer School.

The choice between part-time and full-time status may affect your eligibility for certain **scholarships and awards**, as some are only available to full-time students. For details, please see the Massey University awards web site at <http://awards.massey.ac.nz>

Time Limits – Years to Complete

The awarding of a postgraduate qualification with a class of honours, or with distinction/merit, is determined by the Grade Point Average (GPA) you are able to achieve and completion within the designated timeframe. The relationship between GPA and classes of honours or distinction/merit is determined by Massey University as follows¹:

- GPA 7 or higher: First Class Honours, OR Distinction
- GPA between 5.5 and 6.99: Second Class Honours, Division I, OR Merit
- GPA between 4.0 and 5.49: Second Class Honours, Division II

With Merit/Distinction/Honours

Students have the following time-limits to complete their post-graduate qualifications with merit/distinction/honours.

| Programme | Credits | Part-Time | Full-Time |
|--------------------------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Masters* | 240 | 5 Consecutive Years | 2 Consecutive Years |
| Masters** | 180 | 4 Consecutive Years | 2 Consecutive Years |
| Masters (Part 2 Direct Entry) | 120 | 3 Consecutive Years | 1 Year |
| Bachelor Degree with Honours | 120 | 3 Consecutive Years | 1 Year |
| Postgraduate Diploma | 120 | 3 Consecutive Years | 1 Year |

* Students who change their enrolment from Full-time to Part-time, or vice versa, before the commencement of their thesis/research report must complete all requirements within 4 years of first enrolling.

** Students who change their enrolment from Full-time to Part-time, or vice versa, before the commencement of their thesis/research report must complete all requirements within 3 years of first enrolling.

Without Merit/Distinction/Honours

Students have the following time-limits to complete their post-graduate qualifications without merit/distinction/honours.

| Programme | Credits | Time Period |
|--|------------|--------------------------------------|
| Masters | 240 | 6 Consecutive Years |
| Masters | 180 | 5 Consecutive Years |
| Masters (Thesis Only / Part 2 Direct Entry) | 120 | 4 Consecutive Years |
| Bachelor Degree with Honours | 120 | 3 Years Part-Time / 1 Year Full-Time |
| Postgraduate Diploma | 120 | 4 Consecutive Years |
| Postgraduate Certificate | 60 | 2 Consecutive Years |

¹ Based on the [Massey University 2015 Calendar](#).

Masters students are required to be enrolled up to the time they submit their thesis. If an extension has been granted, you will be required to re-enrol for the additional period of study and to pay the appropriate fees. The University's postgraduate pages provide further details regarding [Deadlines and extensions](#).

Resources for Postgraduate Research Students

[These minimum resources should be available to students, subject to possible service charges:](#)

| Thesis Students Only | All Postgraduate Students |
|--|--|
| Study space (most likely a shared office) | Study space (most likely a shared office) |
| Toll-barred phone | Toll-barred phone |
| Computer (email/internet/applications/printer) | Computer (email/internet/applications/printer) |
| Photocopier and fax | Photocopier and fax |
| *Research Funds | *Research Funds |
| A common room | |
| Library Inter-loans/Photocopying Support | |

*Refer all questions to your postgraduate co-ordinator or supervisor.

2. Supervision

[Research Supervision](#) provides students with potentially the greatest aid to success. It is important to develop a respectful and productive work relationship early on to avoid potential problems or conflict which may lead to a poor research experience or result.

Please note that when an academic unit accepts a student for research supervision, it does NOT mean that the student can choose any topic they wish. Rather, students will need to either (a) negotiate a topic for which supervision capacity is available or (b) choose an option from the topics offered by the Academic Unit. In order to approve your application for enrolment in a thesis or research report the Academic Unit must be satisfied you have a viable topic in an area they have the capacity to supervise.

As a research student it is important to develop a clear idea of your research topic and who you could potentially work with as a supervisor. It may be helpful to make contact with the academic unit about research topics available for supervision or to find out about academics' specific research interests. Be aware that different academic units may have different disciplinary approaches to how they work with thesis/research report students. In some cases, a second supervisor is allocated who may act in an advisory capacity or bring complementary expertise to the supervision process.

Once supervision has been confirmed it is important to engage in early and regular meetings to establish a process and develop a good foundation for a productive working relationship. Key elements in a successful supervisory experience include:

- mutual respect,
- understanding and agreeing on mutual expectations,
- shared commitment to successful completion, and
- clear lines of communication.

In addition to advice from supervisors, you may find the following tips useful, especially when starting out:

- keep meeting notes and share these with supervisors for an agreed understanding;
- agree on a work-plan with your supervisor to avoid unrealistic workloads and accommodate study, research and life demands;
- set a proposed agenda for supervision meetings and send this to the supervisor prior to a meeting;
- avoid potential problems by advising supervisors of any issues or distress;
- expect differences in personal communication styles or supervisory approaches;
- seek opportunities to develop your postgraduate networks (academic units are likely to offer a range of these).

Minimum Requirements of Your Supervisor

A successful research experience very much depends on both staff and students being aware of their respective expectations and responsibilities.

Expectations of your supervisor(s) are that they:

- have expertise in the area proposed for study and the methodology proposed;
- hold a relevant degree at least equal in rank to that for which you are completing;
- be actively engaged in research; and
- are not a member of your immediate family, not in an intimate personal relationship with you, and not your line manager.

Supervisory Contract

While not formally required by Massey University, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences expects the use of a formal [supervisory contract](#) which sets out a set of expectations for both students and Supervisors. It is important to familiarise yourself with these and ensure adherence to them throughout your research journey.

Student Expectations of Supervisors

You can expect your Supervisor to:

- To give guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, about the planning of the research programme, about literature and sources and about requisite skills and techniques
- To allow adequate time for supervision and remain fully conversant with the project
- To maintain regular contact through tutorial and supervision meetings as agreed to with the student, and to provide in these meetings quality, focused and uninterrupted attention to the student and the research
- To advise the student in applying for funding through the university and outside sources where appropriate
- To advise the student in the development of a proposal for the Ethics Committee(s) where appropriate http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/research-ethics/human-ethics/human-ethics_home.cfm
- To give advice on necessary completion dates of successive stages of the research to ensure that the project is submitted within the scheduled time
- To request written work as appropriate and to return work with constructive criticism within a reasonable time
- To ensure that the student is made aware of any inadequacy of progress or standard of work
- To provide a collaborative research environment and encourage open communication
- To ensure that if they are to be absent from the university for an extended time, suitable

arrangements are made for appointment of a new supervisor, or for interim supervision of the student

- To discuss publication of the research and to come to some agreement about the timing and the authorship of the publication
- To provide progress reports as requested (forms are usually provided by the Supervisor)
- To be sensitive to cultural, political or gender issues relating to the student or the research and to act in a professional manner at all times.

Supervisor Expectations of Students

Your supervisor should expect the following from you:

- To accept that the principal responsibility for the research and its progress lies with you
- To discuss with your supervisor the type of guidance and comment that can be expected and to assist with clarification of responsibilities
- To maintain regular contact through tutorial and supervision meetings as agreed to with your supervisor
- To take the initiative in raising problems and difficulties
- To maintain progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed to with your supervisor, including in particular the presentation of written material in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion before proceeding to the next stage
- To notify your supervisor if you are unable to meet your study commitments and maintain contact
- To discuss publication of the research and to come to some agreement about the timing and the authorship of the publication
- To complete progress reports as requested

Dealing with Grievances

As noted in the **supervisor expectations of students**, you are expected to be as forthright as possible about your academic needs and progress. Where grievances do occur around the supervisory relationship, it is suggested that in the first instance, where possible, you take any concern or complaint about supervision to your supervisor, as per the University's [student grievance procedure](#). Alternatively, you can approach the Postgraduate Coordinator and detail your concerns or suggest a potential solution. Where a grievance remains unresolved students should approach the Head of School/academic unit. In all instances, it is a common courtesy that all parties are made aware of any issues in the interest of a speedy resolution.

3. Ethics

Any research dealing with human subjects has the potential to have ethical implications for the collection of any data. The ramifications of the research must be discussed with your Supervisor(s) and evaluated with reference to the [Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct](#).

Your research proposal must be approved by an **Ethics Committee** or, for low risk research, be formally notified to the **Research Ethics Office**. All ethics notifications and applications must be read and approved by the Supervisor before being submitted. If your study does involve **human participants** and you don't have ethics committee approval, then you **are not permitted to collect any data**.

Research Proposal

One of the key reasons for developing a research proposal as early as possible is to identify any issues that may have ethical implications. Developing a research proposal helps clarify exactly what you are trying to do and its potential implications. There are many good examples of research proposal layouts such as the following example which also provides [a video lesson](#).

Ethics Submission

At this point with a research proposal you are in a position, along with your Supervisor, to make an ethics submission. Determining whether you will have to make a full Human Ethics Committee submission or whether you will be able to simply make a formal notification to the Research Ethics Committee in essence comes down to your responses to the following [screening questionnaire](#). If you answer **yes** to any of the questions, then you will be required to make a full Ethics Application. (<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/research-ethics/human-ethics/forms-and-procedures.cfm>). Please be aware that this is a substantial document and usually requires significant preparation. As it takes a longer turnaround time from the ethics committee than a low risk notification, it is important to allow for sufficient time when drafting the document. (<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/research-ethics/human-ethics/committee-meeting-dates.cfm>)

For students in Education and Psychology where there may be particular demands, your supervisors will guide you to ensure a smooth process. In some cases approval is required from external agencies who have their own ethics requirements. Students need to be prepared for potential delays in the case of complex applications.

Resources

[All application forms and procedures](#)
[Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct](#)
[Screening Questionnaire](#)
[Low Risk Guidelines](#)
[Low Risk Notification](#)
[Full Human Ethics Application Form](#)

4. Submission of theses / research reports

Writing up your research can be a demanding process and it is important not to underestimate the time it will take to produce drafts towards completion of a final copy of your report/thesis. Make sure you conform with the necessary requirements for style and presentation and that the final product has been checked for accuracy. If you have included images in your thesis it is your responsibility to ensure you have copyright approval to include them if this is necessary.

Typographical, grammatical or formatting errors may needlessly downgrade the quality of your work and may affect the final grade. It is also in your interest to ensure that the final version of your thesis is of the best possible quality because it will be available in electronic form via the Library Catalogue. Further details about the presentation of your research can be found on the University webpages under [Thesis submission and publishing](#) and in the information provided by your academic unit.

You are strongly encouraged to discuss the envisaged date for submission with your Supervisor(s). Your Supervisor will need to confirm that the research is your original work and complies with expectations for length. The table below lists the word limits recommended by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences:

Recommended Word Limits for Research Reports / Theses

| Title | Credits | Minimum | Maximum |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Research Report | 15 | 5,000 | 6,000 |
| Research Report | 30 | 8,000 | 10,000 |
| Research Report | 45 | 10,000 | 15,000 |
| Research Report | 60 | 15,000 | 20,000 |
| Thesis | 90 | 20,000 | 30,000 |
| Thesis | 120 | 30,000 | 40,000 |

*The above word limits exclude any reference or bibliography listings.

Programmes may set narrower word limits within each of these broad limits. A supervisor must communicate these to students. Some assessment may not easily fit within a word count formula, for example oral history projects or creative works; in these instances, supervisors should set guidelines to recognise this.

Students should also be familiar with the University's [Student Academic Integrity Policy](#) and Procedures. It is important that both supervisors and students focus on appropriate academic writing practice in the drafting process. Students need to be aware of what constitutes "plagiarism" and utilise/develop skills to ensure the integrity of their scholarly work.

Once your Supervisor advises that your report / thesis is ready for submission you will need to follow the relevant submission paths:

- Masters theses are submitted through a centralised University process. To submit your thesis, please go to the [Thesis submission and publishing](#) link.
- Research Reports should be submitted to the academic unit. You are normally required to provide a digital copy and up to three soft-bound copies. Check for the appropriate details and submission channel with your School/academic unit.

Guidelines for Presentation

The presentation of both Research Reports and Theses should conform with the format requirements outlined in the Massey University Library handbook [Guide to the Presentation of](#)

Theses. Please ensure that you download and read this guide, which also addresses Massey University regulations for the submission of theses. Online submission is expected for theses, unless your research contains material that cannot be submitted electronically. It cannot be emphasised enough how important a thorough understanding of the preparation and presentation of your work will be at the point of submission.

Students should also consult their Supervisor with respect to any conventions required by the programme or discipline of study.

5. Examination

Examination of Masters' Theses (90 -120 Credits)

The examination process may take as long as 2-3 months from the moment you submit the thesis. If there is to be a delay, you should expect to be notified of the extent of the delay. Please note that you are not typically required to attend any examination meeting. The process of examination involves the following steps:

- All masters' theses shall be graded by two examiners who are independent of the research work; one examiner will be external to Massey University.
- At the conclusion of the examination and once the result has been approved, you will **usually** receive an **examiners report** via your supervisor which contains the following:
 - a. an overall evaluation of the substance and quality of the thesis with **a grade**;
 - b. an indication of particular strengths or weaknesses of such features as research;
 - c. procedures, theoretical rigour, interpretation and argument, practical significance; and
 - d. comments on particular strengths or weaknesses in presentation and reporting.
- Please note that the Examiners' names and the individual grades they recommend are not made available to students.
- The thesis will be examined and the grade awarded on the basis of the work **as initially submitted**, regardless of any subsequent minor amendments. If amendments are recommended or required by Examiners, you will be advised of the time frame permitted for such changes which should not exceed four weeks after being notified.

Examination of Research Reports (30 - 60 Credits)

Research Reports are examined by one Supervisor and one internal Massey examiner. There is no requirement for an external examiner. All other processes and procedures will be followed as above.

As with theses, the final grade for the Report is determined on the basis of work as is submitted and any minor corrections will not alter the final result. Upon completion of the examination and the incorporation of any amendments required by the examiner and subject to approval of the Head of Academic Unit or nominee, a hard-copy and a digital copy should be submitted to the Academic Unit for its retention.

Where students have concerns around examinations, any grievance related to examination may only be made in relation to how the examination process was conducted (see *Remarking of Research Reports and Theses* below).

Remarking of Research Reports and Theses

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences does not accept applications for the **remarking** of the original research report or thesis. Students may appeal the grade for a research report or thesis on **procedural grounds only**, relating to supervision and/or examination processes. In such case, the

[University's grievance procedures](#) should be followed. In the first instance this means talking to your supervisor to seek any resolution.

Resubmission of Failed Research Reports and Theses

- Theses or Research Reports are normally only submitted once. In the case of a resubmission, eligibility for the award with honours or distinction/merit is lost. Please note that for a Bachelor of Honours student this would mean transferring to a Postgraduate Diploma.
- Resubmission of a failed Research Report or Thesis is at the discretion of the Chief Examiner of your School or Academic Unit.
- If you have been asked to revise and resubmit your thesis or report, further revision is required to bring the thesis up to a passing standard.
- You may still receive supervision but you must meet the **following timelines** to revise your work for re-marking by the original examiners from the point you are notified.

| Paper | Full-Time | Part-Time |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Thesis 90-120 credits | Three Months | Five Months |
| Research Reports 30-60 credits | Two Months | Three Months |

- If the thesis is not revised and presented for examination within the timelines, a failing grade will be awarded.
- Please note that there are potential implications for further tuition fees and costs due to an extended revision period beyond any enrolment period.

Graduation

- If you have completed a **thesis/research report** and wish to graduate in person at one of the graduation ceremonies, you need to allow sufficient time for your thesis to be marked. Although examiners are asked to complete thesis examinations within 6-8 weeks, not all theses are examined within this time frame.
- While you are entitled to take up to **28 February** to submit your thesis, a January or February submission of your thesis means it is unlikely to be examined in time for you to graduate in person at the **April/May** ceremonies.

- Please note that final copies of your **thesis must be lodged** before your Graduation application can be confirmed and approved. Submitting online ensures that your thesis is automatically lodged and you should apply to graduate as soon as possible. (see [apply to graduate](#)).
- Alternatively you can obtain an application form by ringing 0800 MASSEY (0800 627 739) or emailing contact@massey.ac.nz .

The information in this guide has been provided to ensure that postgraduate research students are familiar with specific policies, procedures and expectations in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Please ensure that you are also familiar with and make regular reference to the [Postgraduate/Masterate Study Information](#) on the University's postgraduate pages and any information provided by your School or Academic Unit.

This information has been approved by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Teaching and Learning Committee. The support by Dr Lance Gray in collating the information is gratefully acknowledged.

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May 2015