Setting and achieving your PhD writing goals

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In pairs, discuss …

• What does setting and achieving your goals involve?

• What are some of the goals you have set for yourself (or want to set for yourself)?
SMART writing goals

- **S = Specific** (who, what, when, where, which, why)
- **M = Measurable** (how you measure your progress)
- **A = Achievable** (what you do to make your goals attainable)
- **R = Relevant** (how a goal fits into the bigger picture)
- **T = Time bound** (realistic deadlines for short and long term goals)

• Are you already setting SMART writing goals?
Setting goals is easy!

But achieving them requires more

12 tips to help you achieve your goals
Tip #1: Write down all your goals

- Writing them down means that you don’t have to use up so much energy & brain power trying to remember to do them!
a. Set a deadline

Submit my completed (high quality & polished) dissertation by July 2022.
b. Set a yearly goal

One Year: 12 months / 365 days / 7,760 hours

If you write 1 hour a day for 300 days

2 paragraphs (350) per hour

= 105,000 words per year

In total, this equates to just 3.42% of your time in one year.
C. Using Gantt Charts to see the big picture
## d. Set monthly goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2019</td>
<td>Complete first draft of Lit. Review chapter</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2019</td>
<td>Start writing Methodology chapter, and begin stage 1 of data gathering</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-May 2019</td>
<td>Conduct analysis of data and create a corresponding set of codes for organising findings/results</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>May-June 2019</td>
<td>Review Methodology chapter and begin writing up draft Results chapter</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>
### Tip #2: Use Lists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Target word count</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
<td>Lit Review discussion: Compare and contrast of prominent theorist’s work</td>
<td>500 - 1500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>4 – 7pm</td>
<td>Review chapter feedback from supervisors and revise writing</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>ALL DAY</td>
<td>Family day ☺</td>
<td>Zero!</td>
<td>☺☺☺☺</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>10am-2pm</td>
<td>Continue writing Lit. Review</td>
<td>500 - 1500</td>
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If word counts don’t work for you, try number of paragraphs
Start the day with a realistic goal for what you want to achieve
a. Plan your days: ‘To Do’ lists

• Have a ‘To do’ list

• Have a ‘Do not do’ list
b. Lists for each day, the week, the month, or just whenever

### Things to do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sat &amp; Sun</th>
<th>This month</th>
<th>Eventually</th>
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Tip #3: Make it a habit to review

• Your daily goals (every morning)
  • At the start of the day review your ‘to do’ list
  • New day = new ideas. Make changes accordingly

• Your monthly goals
  • Are they still achievable and realistic?

• Your progress line towards completion (reflect)
  • Are you making progress? Is it consistent?
  • If not, is there anything you can do to improve your rate of progression?

Always have your goals somewhere you can see them everyday
How do you rate your own time management?

1 2 3 4 5

Abysmal
Fantastic
Activity:
Time Management Quiz

In pairs, ask each other the time management questions and calculate your scores
Results…

- What are your main strengths?

- What do you need to work on?
Tip #4: Set triggers

- Before I ……….., I’ll write …… paragraphs on .....

- After I ………….., I’ll write …… paragraphs on .....

Triggers can also be rewards = Good for combating procrastination
Tip #5: Block out writing hours

- Necessary for immersing yourself in ‘deep work’ = 3 key features:

  - Preparedness
  - Environment
  - Mind
a. Preparedness: Reading & notetaking

- What if you’re still reading and not ready to write?

![Using a Literature Review Matrix](image)

Also see: “Using a matrix to organise your notes”. Link via the Thesis Whisperer: [https://sites.google.com/site/twblacklinemasters/using-a-matrix-to-organise-your-notes-for-faster-writing](https://sites.google.com/site/twblacklinemasters/using-a-matrix-to-organise-your-notes-for-faster-writing)

Online tutorial: “Reading, note-taking and how to use a literature matrix” [https://rise.articulate.com/share/GgWdJViNOVWt-3Th6LRMDHVJhwo1XVKc](https://rise.articulate.com/share/GgWdJViNOVWt-3Th6LRMDHVJhwo1XVKc)

- Download literature matrix templates
### Tracking multiple sources & relevant information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Topics</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online gaming culture</strong></td>
<td>Yee 2009, 2014; Bertozzi and Lee 2007; Kolhatkar 2014; Wakeford 1997; Turton-Turner 2013; Featherstone and Burrows 1995; Schott and Thomas 2008; Shaw and Warf 2009, 2011;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly relevant</td>
<td>Ash 2013; Pile 2010; Pain 1991; Juul 2012; Lee and Hoadley 2006; Janz and Martis 2007; Dill and Thill 2007; Brenick et al. 2007;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related (but less relevant)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly relevant</td>
<td>Eklund 2011; Huh and William 2010; Bell et al. 2001; Holloway and Valentine 2001; Del Casino and Brooks 2014; Pulos 2013; Hubbard 2009; Fortim and de Moura Grande 2013;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related (but less relevant)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly relevant</td>
<td>Kwan 2002; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Meadows 2007;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related (but less relevant)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online research methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autoethnography</td>
<td>Butz 2010; Brown 2012b; Ali 2014; Besio 2005; Cook 2005a &amp; b; Ellis 2011; Jones and Watt 2010;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online tutorial: “How to keep track of your literature searches”
[https://rise.articulate.com/share/v7id-KCygc3WoSEBO5rnu5iplFVCQBR](https://rise.articulate.com/share/v7id-KCygc3WoSEBO5rnu5iplFVCQBR)
Tip #6: Things to avoid while involved in deep work

- **Random distractions**
  - Multimedia, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.
  - Silence your phone / Turn off email notifications

- **Perfectionism** *(especially when writing your first draft)*
  - Look at the expectations you have of yourself and make allowances for imperfection in your writing.

- **Multi-tasking**
  - There is a time and a place for it BUT that doesn’t include deep work

- **Unfocused writing tasks**
  - Always have a plan for your writing time (e.g. which chapter? How many paragraphs/words?)
Tip #7: Create a writing ritual

- **Repetition**
  - Is ‘key’ to creating a writing habit, and...
  - The more you do it, the more you gain in confidence in your ability as a writer. This then creates...

- **Momentum**
  - Means achieving steady progress.
  - Leads to the development of making a new writing ritual, and...

- **Seeing yourself as a writer**
  - Your own self-image can affect the quality of your work.
  - Ask yourself, “do I see myself as a writer?”
In pairs or groups…

• Where do you usually write? (describe)
  • How do you find it for writing

• What time of the day suits you best for writing?

• How do you minimise disruptions during your writing time?
Tip #8: Be patient

Cultivating a new habit takes time!

Reward yourself for your progress!
Tip #9: Don’t wait

Do NOT wait for:

• Motivation to kick in
• The ‘right mood’
• The ‘right time’

Motivation follows work, not the other way around.

Take the first step and motivation will kick in…
Tip #10: Writing groups & bootcamps

- Help to motivate you to write
- Keep you accountable
- Can be great for producing large amounts of written work
- Great for meeting other PhDs and postgraduates
- Receiving feedback on your writing

Tip #11: Take planned breaks

To reduce mental fatigue, take planned breaks:

- During your block writing time (e.g. pomodoro technique)
- Weekly (R & R)
- Monthly (R & R)
Tip #12: Use apps to help you to write

**Focus Me** – mac/windows (paid), free on android:  
https://focusme.com/

**StayFocusd** – free Google Chrome extension:  
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/stayfocusd/laankejkbhbdhmipfmgcngdelahlfoji?hl=en

**LeechBlock** – free Firefox & Chrome extension:  
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/leechblock-ng/blaaajhemilngeeffpbfdjioefldkok

**SelfControl** – free Mac application:  
https://selfcontrolapp.com/
Goal setting ‘rules of thumb’:

• Separate your academic goals from your personal goals

• Depending on your context, try:
  • Have fewer goals in life, or
  • Set goals that challenge you that take you out of your comfort zone

• Create goals that you are truly passionate about
Next workshop:
“Writing the confirmation report”

Covers:
- Brief review of PhD confirmation process
- Writing the confirmation report: Looking at the structure and style

When:
Wednesday 15 April 2020, 12.30 – 2pm

Locations:
VLT rooms – PN (GLB1.14), Albany (AT4 – Atrium Building), Wellington (5C17)

Live streaming access:
Contact Cherie (c.todd@massey.ac.nz) to request the URL.
Useful links

Massey’s Doctoral Research Student webpage – (where you can find all of the resources from these and other sessions from 2017 & 2018):
http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/researcher-development/postgraduate-research-student.cfm

What does academic work look like?

Writing groups: Shut up and write!
https://thesiswhisperer.com/shut-up-and-write/