Research Skills Workshops for Graduate Research Students
Science/Applied Science Stream

1. Kickstart your research

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Presenter:

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http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au
Kickstart your Research

Objectives:

- to develop an understanding of the research process

- to provide skills and strategies to facilitate more effective progress through your candidacy
## Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.00 – 9.10</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.10 – 9.30</td>
<td>The nature of the beast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30 – 10.00</td>
<td>Building an effective supervisor-student relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00 – 10.30</td>
<td>Planning for success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The nature of the beast.

So what’s it like to be a research student?

You need to:

1) learn to come to terms with uncertainty
   “You are moving from doing exercises that you know have a solution to questions that no one knows the answer to.”
   “If the results of research were predictable, there would be no point in doing the research”.

2) develop skills for effective self management
   “Of course there will be people around helping you...but the responsibility for determining what is required, as well as for carrying it out, remains firmly with you....You will be expected to initiate discussions, ask for the help that you need, argue about what you should be learning, and so on.”

3) Develop patience, perseverance and resilience.
   “One would imagine that undertaking a higher degree is a purely rational intellectual task unencumbered by emotion. Research indicates that this is far from the reality.”
   Learning Support for Higher Degree Research Students - Learning and Emotion http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/hdr/setup/1.3.3.html

BUT

“Because you direct your own search, you will gain knowledge that is important to you, that can even change your life – as, in varying degrees, all learning does.”

“Searching, exploring, discovering – we associate these words with excitement and pleasure, and for good reasons. We like the idea of uncovering what has been hidden, of turning the unknown into the known...Then after we have made our discoveries, we like to tell others about them.”

   http://jcs.biologists.org/cgi/reprint/121/11/1771
The Project:

Graduate Research School’s Examiners’ Recommendation Forms  
http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/forms

The PhD thesis shall be a substantial and original contribution to scholarship, for example through the discovery of new knowledge, the formulation of theories or the innovative re-interpretation of known data and established ideas.

The Masters degree must be a substantial work generally based on independent research which shows a sound knowledge of the subject of the research, evidence of the exercise of some independence of thought and the ability of expression in clear and concise language.

What are you entitled to?:

- 4 years (PhD) or 2 years (Masters) of financial support to your School from the Federal Government (Research Training Scheme) for Australian citizens and PRs and NZ citizens.  
NB All other students MUST pay fees (or have their fees paid for them by someone else)

- Suspension of candidature for up to 12 months  
http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/home/current/terms/suspension

- Maternity/parental leave (up to 12 months)  
http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/home/current/terms/maternity_leave

- Access to the wide range of resources available within the University as a whole (see also lists on pp. 12 & 27)
What is expected of you?

- To spend **at least** 30 hours a week (if full time) working on your research.
- To know dates for milestones, to meet those milestones or to obtain an extension. You can view your milestones on Student Connect.
- To comply with visa requirements if relevant
- To act in accordance with the policies and standards of ethical behaviour expected at UWA ([http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/policies](http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/policies))
- To acquire the generic attributes of UWA research candidates (see p. 7)
Generic Skills of Research Graduates at UWA
Research students at UWA are expected to acquire certain attributes during their candidature...assess themselves and be assessed during their candidature in terms of their development of these generic skills.

I. Doing – Undertaking research “The cutting edge”
1. think creatively, logically and critically
2. investigate, analyse and synthesise ideas
3. design, manage and complete projects
4. question accepted wisdom by identifying assumptions, assessing their implications, testing them, and deciding on their appropriateness
5. develop original ideas and concepts
6. recognise excellence and how it is achieved
7. recognise limitations at the personal, practical and conceptual level
8. work collaboratively
9. work independently
10. solve problems, make decisions and work effectively under pressure
11. manage time effectively
12. identify and disseminate the impact and benefit of research within the scholarly discipline and the broader community
13. communicate verbally, graphically and textually with specialist and general audiences
14. publish research findings in high quality journals/books or appropriate formats
15. comply with regulatory and statutory requirements (e.g. Ethics, Health and Safety, IP and Commercialisation)
16. prepare an application for research funding

II. Being – Professional attributes “The leading edge”
1. knowledgeable, informed and thorough
2. positive, receptive and resilient
3. self-motivated and able to motivate others
4. considerate, helpful and respectful
5. adaptable and innovative
6. sensitive to ethical, social and cultural issues
7. aware of the big picture and day to day issues
8. proactive in career development
Managing your candidature:

Stage 1: Research Proposal

Stage 2: Confirmation
(check the specific guidelines for confirmation in your school)

Stage 2: Mid thesis (doldrums?)
- finish data collection, begin data analysis
- ongoing drafting of thesis
- drafting = producing new material (contrast with revising and editing = refining material already written)
- maintain regular contact with supervisors
- developing professional networks
- conferences? publication?

Stage 3: Developing a full draft
- develop a routine for written feedback from supervisors
- ongoing drafting, revising and editing of thesis
- think about examiners

Stage 4: Submission and completion
- develop a completion plan and work towards completion by a set date!
- discuss completion with your supervisor/s “what do I HAVE to do to finish this thesis by….?”
- know the requirements for completion and submission

(i.e. Information relevant to completion of a thesis at UWA
http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/thesis

Get an overview of the standard required by looking the Abstract and Table of Contents for a range of passed Masters and PhD theses from Universities in Australia and New Zealand
(http://trove.nla.gov.au , search for Australian content and available online)
Thriving during your candidature: a progressive reduction of uncertainty
(adapted from Phillips, E. and Pugh, D. How to get a PhD. Open University Press, Milton Keynes, p.74)

"A thesis is a proposition laid down or stated as a theme to be discussed and proved, or maintained against attack"
Thriving during your candidature: Maintaining Motivation

While there are 3 extremes of goal orientation discussed in the literature (eg. http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/yeu02281.htm) most people exhibit some features of each.

Mastery goal orientation
- gain intrinsic satisfaction from attaining competence
- show persistence and resilience in the face of difficulties

Performance goal orientation
- tendency to compare with others
- require extrinsic rewards such as praise, gain in status etc
- self esteem may be threatened when performance falls short of expectations

Social goal orientation
- interaction with people crucial to psychological wellbeing

"Waiting for the Motivation Fairy" by Hugh Kearns and Maria Gardiner, Nature Vol 472, April 2011, p. 127
Describe your typical working day. What actions can you take to make it more productive? (5 minutes free writing)
Some useful web-links

PSA membership
http://www.psa.guild.uwa.edu.au/

Guidelines for Graduate Research Supervisors
http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/policies/supervisor_guidelines

Statement of expectations on supervision and thesis writing

Role of the Graduate Research Coordinator
http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/contacts/coordinators

Professional development resources

Travel Awards

Information on training and seminars
http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/events

Policy on allocation of resources for research students

Links to policies relevant to many aspects of studying and working at UWA
http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/policies

Publication prizes
http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/prizes
**Building an effective Student-Supervisor Relationship**

**Exercise:** Complete the following expectations of supervision

Read each pair of statements below and then estimate your position on each. For example with statement 1 if you believe very strongly that it is the supervisor’s responsibility to select a good topic you would put a ring round ‘1’ and if you think it is definitely the student’s responsibility to select a topic, put a ring round ‘4’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Your Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to select a research topic</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student is responsible for selecting her/his own topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is the supervisor who decides which theoretical framework or methodology is most appropriate</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students should decide which theoretical framework or methodology they wish to use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The supervisor should develop an appropriate program and timetable of research and study for the student</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The supervisor should leave the development of the program of study to the student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the student is introduced to the appropriate services and facilities of the department and University</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that she/he has located and accessed all relevant services and facilities for research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Supervisors should only accept students when they have specific knowledge of the student’s chosen topic</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors should feel free to accept students, even if they do not have specific knowledge of the student’s topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A warm, supportive relationship between supervisor and student is important for successful candidature</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A personal, supportive relationship is inadvisable because it may obstruct objectivity for both student and supervisor during candidature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The supervisor should insist on regular meetings with the student</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student should decide when she/he wants to meet with the supervisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The supervisor should check regularly that the student is working consistently and on task</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student should work independently and not have to account for how and where time is spent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The supervisor is responsible for providing emotional support &amp; encouragement to the student</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal counselling and support are not the responsibility of the supervisor - students should look elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The supervisor should insist on seeing all drafts of work to ensure that the student is on the right track</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students should submit drafts of work only when they want constructive criticism from the supervisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The supervisor should assist in the writing of the thesis if necessary</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writing of the thesis should only ever be the student's own work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The supervisor is responsible for decisions regarding the standard of the thesis</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student is responsible for decisions concerning the standard of the thesis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This scale was adapted from a version developed by Margaret Kiley and Kate Cadman, from an original scale developed by Ingrid Moses, Centre for Learning and Teaching, University of Sydney.
Some things to get clear at the start:

- expectations of supervisors
- expectations of self
- set up regular meeting schedule
- discuss progress and reassess needs
- set and review goals

UWA Resource: Students Perceptions Of Research Supervision
www.catl.uwa.edu.au/etu/spors

Some models of supervision:

- Psychological
  (supervisor a caring, expert professional whose role is to act as a mentor and to guide the student’s professional development)

- Traditional-academic
  (the supervisor’s key contribution is intellectual and little attention is given to pastoral care. The relationship may be quite formal and include an element of intellectual “sparring”. The student is seen as being responsible for working through difficulties.)

- Technosupervision
  (predictable and orderly process of research skills training. Supervisor observes, judges and instructs and the student listens, tries and reports)

- Com-supervisor/Com-student
  (providers and consumers of a service, students expect value for money)

B) Michael Azariadis model:
Good supervision includes all of the following elements:

- Contractual – supervisor/s and students discuss and agree on things, and keep to their agreements
- Pastoral – the student’s personal welfare is taken into account
- Developmental – the supervisor/s act as a mentor for the professional development of the student
- Intellectual – an appropriate balance is found between criticism and encouragement

N.B. It is important to look after your supervisor:
The more responsibility you take for the day-to-day progress of your research and for keeping your supervisor informed of your progress in achieving your research goals, the better the supervision will be.
Read the following account of one student’s approach to keeping his supervisor informed of his progress.

Working with your supervisor by Darren Lomman

Introduction.
A lack of communication between a previous supervisor and myself, resulted in me finding out how strongly the student-supervisor interaction can affect an outcome of a project.

After this experience, I developed a model which I now use to successfully communicate with my supervisors. Hopefully by sharing it with you, you may have some ideas with which to strengthen your student-supervisor relationship.

Develop your own interaction method
Find a method that suits your individual needs
  o Every project is different (eg student dominated or supervisor dominated)
  o Every supervisor/student has a unique personality. Some people will respond well to one method, others won’t.

Organise regular meetings
The most common method is a one-on-one meeting
  o Depends on your situation. You may have to rely on correspondence via email or telephone depending on your relative locations.
  o I prefer to make my meeting fairly formal. You may prefer a more casual meeting.

Whatever method you choose, effective communication during these meetings is a major key to successful interaction with your supervisor.

Set up a regular meeting time
Find a regular timeslot which is convenient to both yourself and your supervisor
  o Reserve this time solely for your meetings
  o Make sure you and your supervisor mark this as a permanent addition to your diaries

Start a 'supervisor file'
Keep a record from all the meetings
  o Document as much as possible in writing
  o Be sure to date everything

Keep a minimum of 2 sets of notes, one for yourself and one for your supervisor.

Before the meeting
1. Prepare a progress report
   o This should cover the work you have completed
   o Also should cover any new developments, ideas and problems

2. Write an agenda to cover the issues/topics you want to discuss with your supervisor

3. Send the agenda to your supervisor before the meeting
   o It allows them to prepare their thoughts before the meeting
   o It also gives them a chance to add anything they want to the agenda
   o Don’t send it at the very last minute, leave sufficient time for some consideration

During the meeting
1. Use the agenda as a guide
   o This helps your meeting to stay on track
   o Also ensure that no topic is overlooked
2. Write brief comments about any discussions/suggestions etc that arise
   o Doing this during the meeting ensures nothing is left out

After the meeting
1. Convert your notes into ‘official’ meeting minutes
   o Add any additional thoughts and comments

2. Send the minutes to your supervisor

3. Follow up on these minutes
   o This is the most important step
   o Simply filing your minutes away into a folder will not be of any advantage
   o Valuable information and ideas can come from your supervisor (there really is a reason we have them after all!!)
   o Add your documents to your 'supervisor file'.

Good supervision is about establishing a good working relationship.
It is in the student’s best interests to make this relationship as effective as possible. This means making it as easy on your supervisor as possible by:

   o Submitting work on time and in the format arranged, i.e. point-form, draft conference paper, chapter, etc.

   o Agreeing on time frames for feedback

   o Being proactive in your research and related activities

The importance of good communication
Take responsibility for maintaining communication. This means:

   o Arranging a regular schedule of meetings, i.e. fortnightly/ every 3 weeks

   o Being on time for meetings

   o Make the meetings work for you, i.e. preparing points for discussion/ clarification etc.

   o Advising your supervisor of any problems as or when they arise.

Following up
After meetings you might like to:

   o email your supervisor with your understanding of what was agreed at the meeting, and

   o check whether she/he has the same understanding.
**Deciding on co-authorship**

This ready reckoner from ANU may be used as a tool to help discuss and decide on who should be included as co-authors on a publication, depending on their contribution to the various activities that went into it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Supervisor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning research</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>minor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executing research</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>minor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>minor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>minor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>minor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Maximum score for any person = 100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum score for co-authorship = 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback on writing is an important vehicle for communication between supervisors and students about the quality and progress of work. You may find that using a coversheet like the following may help with the feedback process.
(Lee, Aitchison and Knowles: Focus on feedback workshop, A workshop presentation for UWA supervisors, Nov 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback coversheet for comments on drafts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author's name:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact details:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date submitted:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Return date:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form (eg article, thesis chapter or section, conference paper etc)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target audience:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage of draft:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-early draft (eg ideas evolving, outline)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle stages draft (structure emerging)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near final draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback sought</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(eg comment on structure, clarity of ideas, development of argument, paragraph structure, close editing for spelling and grammar etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall thesis in this work</strong> (ie outline your central argument in one sentence. “in this article/ chapter, I am arguing/suggesting/proposing…”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall comments and main suggestions:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Exercise:**
What can I do to make sure I am communicating effectively with my supervisors? What can I do to help us work effectively as a team?
Planning for success

a. Starting the dissertation early:

- Make writing a regular part of your routine and make good use of informal as well as formal writing

- **Wednesday 9-11am Room 2202 Social Sciences South Building: Facilitated Writing Group** – get into the habit of writing regularly away from distractions of email, internet etc.

- Use the following “top tip” from Evans and Gruba (2002) *How to write a better thesis*. Melbourne: MUP

  > Buy an attractive folder and a set of dividers that will become your dissertation draft folder.
  > Put your plan in your folder, along with any other material relating to your dissertation.
  > Start writing your dissertation NOW. Put something into your thesis document each week (or more frequently). Make each piece of writing you do count towards the final document.
  > Take your folder to meetings with your supervisor.
  > One day you will realise you have a complete draft thesis in your folder!

- Know what you’re aiming for. Check out some theses in your field to gauge the standard expected ([http://trove.nla.gov.au](http://trove.nla.gov.au))

> ‘Writing a thesis should be an enjoyable, creative activity – and it often is.’


b. Managing your time effectively

**Creating a routine:**
Think of your thesis as a marathon, not a sprint.

- set fixed hours (time to work and time to play)
- set up a proper workspace
- set deadlines and targets
- think carefully before taking up new opportunities
- make time for family and friends
- keep healthy

**Exercise:**

**Personal productivity checklist:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a proper workplace in which to do my research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use an orderly system to sort and plan my work before starting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use management tools such as a daily planner to keep myself on track</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always work from a list of tasks that have been written in order of priority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have an organised filing system that enable me to retrieve information quickly when I need it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do most important work during my “prime time”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek help when needed and draw on resources available to ensure I work efficiently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others who know me would describe me as efficient, effective and organised</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to effectively manage my email messages and my use of the internet so that these things do not take control of my workday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**One action I will take to increase my productivity:**

**Exactly when will I implement this action?**

**Reward?**
Time Management & Research-Life Balance

by Toolbox Columnist: Dr Dave Filipović-Carter

If we're going to look at time management in terms of a research-life balance, then there are two things to get out of the way first:

1. Let's begin by referring to a 'Life-Research' balance...
2. And, we need to acknowledge that there is a separation between the two (Jorge Cham's world-view notwithstanding).

Naturally, a part of this equation has to involve how your time is managed during 'research time', but I'll leave that for another column. My focus here is how you keep research-time to a manageable level, to leave time for other things. And just to clarify, 'other things' doesn't mean catching-up up on reading the latest journals at home! So, what is a manageable level - 35 hours-a-week? 40? You decide. But if it is getting above 40-45 for a normal week, then you might want to ask yourself why...

How you do keep a balance is likely to be very personal - we all have our own needs and ways of working, but here are a few things I've come across researchers doing that seem to have worked for them:

- **Daily Audit**: End the working day by making a summary of what has been done (note: 'done', rather than 'achieved'). It allows you to close the day with a sense of having earned a break, and acts as a full-stop to the work itself.

- **Something for tomorrow**: A similar end-of-day full-stop is to set a task for the next day. This could be: something to read (print-out left on desk, on top of keyboard, to discourage email-check before reading); something to write (title, and opening line or/& sketch notes already written/typed); an experiment to run (as much set-up already done); or, a conversation to have (if by phone, then phone number and key points listed on a single sheet, etc).

- **Office hours**: Having a fixed working day, with regular hours you can stick to. This need not be 9-5, or whatever the standard is in your working environment. But probably should total roughly the same amount. And should almost certainly include a decent lunch-break as well (which doesn't mean the walk to the shop to buy a sandwich that you'll then eat at your desk).

- **Work location**: Where do you work? Same place for all tasks - reading, writing, experimenting, discussing..? Wherever you do work, trying to make a physical (and therefore potentially a psychological) divide with where you relax can be crucial. This is true even if you work from home. At the most basic level, have your laptop on a desk to work, and on your lap/dining table to check Facebook, write social emails, etc.

Anything here you could use? If not, then what sort of similar structures could you try to achieve the same ends? Because that is all they are - just structures to help you keep a balance in what is an inherently unstructured profession (not a life) - research.

http://www.postgraduatetoolbox.net/site/index

From: Postgraduate Toolbox [info@postgraduatetoolbox.net]
Sent: Friday, 9 July 2010 5:50 PM
### The Time Management Matrix

**Important and Urgent:**
- e.g. deadline-driven projects
- crises
- pressing problems

*(If most of your time spent on these tasks you will be stressed)*

**Important but not urgent**
- e.g. planning,
- prevention
- relationship building
- communication
- recognising new opportunities
- personal development
- recreation

*(maintain balance, vision, perspective, control – leads to few crises)*

**Urgent but not important**
- e.g. interruptions,
- some emails and phone calls,
- some reports
- some meetings
- some personal matters

*(spending much of your time on these sorts of tasks:
leads to short term focus, 
undermines your ability for control, 
undermines ability to achieve goals, 
undermines ability for developing a satisfying life)*

**Not urgent, not important**
- e.g. busy work,
- some photocopying,
- some emails,
- some phone calls,
- some personal matters

*(associated with too much dependence on others, irresponsibility)*

### Danger!

1. **Procrastination:**
   “I can’t do anything worthwhile unless I have lots of free time.”
   “I can only work to deadlines.”

2. **Perfectionism:**
   “I don’t know enough yet to write anything.”
   “It’s so important that I’ve got to have everything just right before I can go on.”

3. **Believing “I’m the only one struggling here, everyone else is doing fine.”**
   Persistence is a significant factor for successful completion of a research degree!
   Emotional peaks and troughs are a normal part of the experience, so believe you can do it, build your emotional resilience and learn from setbacks and criticisms.
Some words of wisdom from Karen Hall
Five Things I Never Expected To Learn As A Postgrad

Some things you are told to expect in brochure, at induction, or somewhere in the mountains of paperwork. Some things you pick up from popular culture, or from stories about someone's cousin's friend who did this PhD thing. So coming into postgrad life, you expect to learn a whole lot of things - this is, after all, a 'learning experience.'

This is a list of five things that I didn't expect to learn as a postgrad:

1. That being pragmatic about what you need to know is more important than knowing everything.

When I began my PhD, I had visions of spending a lot of time in a coffee shop, spending hours on end reading - and finally understanding - Lacan and Butler and Deleuze, etc, etc. Maybe Paris was involved somehow. I had my one month of Sir Walter Scott obsession, I found out more than I really needed to know about pre-Federation South Australian politics. Now, I try to identify what I need to know, flick through and index or skim-read till I find it, chuck it into the chapter and Endnote and move on. I still don't fully get Lacan but I think I get what I need to know, and that kind of ruthless pragmatism might get me to the end of this thing.

2. That supervisors aren't psychic - and this is both a Good and Bad thing.

Hands up all those people who have quaked in terror at the idea of passing their supervisor in the corridor, convinced that from a 'hi' and a head nod they will instantly be able to discern how much work you have (or haven't) done. It doesn't actually work like that (though turning around and running away may be slightly suggestive). As a supervisee, you have to say what is going on, have to say when you are having problems and what those problems are. The fact that your supervisor can't tell this by looking at you is good (because you can occasionally get away with having a take-it-easy week) and bad (because you have to take responsibility for communicating in verbal or written form rather than just sending out vibes).

3. That warnings about taking breaks from staring at the computer screen and stretching do actually apply to you.

It isn't just other people who get stuffed up necks and eye strain and headaches. So step away from the computer once an hour, stretch, refocus, remind yourself that there is this thing called outside and daylight. You are not the one special person these warnings don't apply to. Trust me on this. Trust my physio on this.

4. That procrastination can take you to very strange places.

So far, I've become an instant expert on the Tour de France, watched all of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, compiled way too many iTunes playlists, started two vegetable gardens and much more. I'd like to call this becoming a more rounded person, but it's just procrastination. However, if you can find something you want to do even less than your thesis, doing the thesis becomes procrastination - so procrastination is really work. Really.

5. That finishing is as scary as not finishing.

Not finishing - that's obviously scary. Failure and having to face the 'real' world and all that badness. But finishing means putting three or four years of work up for judgement. It means that bit you meant to get absolutely perfect might have to be left at okay. It means job searches in a limited market. It means facing life after the thesis, and when you have reached the point where that is one of the major ways you define yourself, that is scary.
## Additional resources:

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<td><strong>Australian &amp; NZ students:</strong> Ph.D. and Masters by Research:**</td>
<td>Dr Louise Wedlock, Candidature Manager, Graduate Research and Scholarships Office, Hackett Hall Ph: 6488 2807 (reception) <a href="mailto:pghelp@postgraduate.uwa.edu.au">pghelp@postgraduate.uwa.edu.au</a> <a href="mailto:pgexam-grso@uwa.edu.au">pgexam-grso@uwa.edu.au</a></td>
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<td>New applications, Annual Reports, Terms of Candidature, Research Proposals, Thesis Examination, Scholarships, Travel Awards, Leave requests, extension requests, resolving general difficulties</td>
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<td><strong>International students Ph.D. and all Masters degrees:</strong></td>
<td>International Students’ Officer (Postgraduate) Hackett Hall Ph: 6488 7226</td>
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<td>New applications, questions about fees, visas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>International students</strong> Ph.D. and Masters by Research:**</td>
<td>Dr Louise Wedlock, Candidature Manager, Graduate Research and Scholarships Office, Hackett Hall Ph: 6488 2807 (reception) <a href="mailto:pghelp@postgraduate.uwa.edu.au">pghelp@postgraduate.uwa.edu.au</a> <a href="mailto:pgexam-grso@uwa.edu.au">pgexam-grso@uwa.edu.au</a></td>
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<td><strong>Ph.D. and Masters by Research:</strong></td>
<td>W/ Prof. Alan Dench, Dean of Graduate Research and Postdoctoral Training Hackett Hall Secretary: 6488 7134</td>
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<td>Academic advice about supervision, sensitive or confidential matters, assistance with resolution of conflict, appeals.</td>
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<td><strong>Statistical advice, or short courses:</strong></td>
<td>Statistical Consulting Group, School of Mathematics and Statistics, Ph. 6488 1838</td>
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<tr>
<td>All aspects of Masters degrees that have any coursework component</td>
<td>The Administrative Officer in your faculty</td>
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<td>Advice about research skills and supports available: e.g. preparing a proposal, writing a thesis, managing the research</td>
<td>Graduate Education Officers, Ph: 6488 2807 (Graduate Research School Reception)</td>
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<td><strong>Campus cards, enrolment forms</strong></td>
<td>Student Administration, Hackett Hall Ph: 6488 3235</td>
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<td><strong>Postgraduate Students’ Association</strong></td>
<td>Guild Office, Guild Village.</td>
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<td><strong>Changing enrolment from a Masters to a Ph.D. or from a Ph.D. to a Masters</strong></td>
<td>Graduate Research and Scholarships Office, Hackett Hall Ph: 6488 2807 (reception)</td>
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