



Writing about Negative Results

GRS Writing Group – FRI 13 APR 2018

While publishing favours positive results, there is increasing recognition of the value of publishing negative results. Reporting negative results can ensure others do not follow the same unproductive path, can open up avenues that require further exploration, and can confirm hypotheses proposed in prior research. For clinical trials, publication of the trial results, even if they are negative, may be an obligation.



Goodchild van Hilten. 2015. Why it's time to publish research 'failures': Publishing bias favors positive results; now there's a movement to change that

<https://www.elsevier.com/connect/scientists-we-want-your-negative-results-too>

For your thesis, your results do not necessarily need to be positive to meet the requirements of your degree course. If you are anxious about your thesis, review the UWA examination criteria and consider what examiners are looking for:



UWA Examiner's Recommendation Form

http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/23333/PhD-ERF.pdf



Golding et al. 2014. What examiners do: what thesis students should know. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. 39(5):563

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02602938.2013.859230>



Mullins and Kiley. 2002. 'It's a PhD, not a Nobel Prize': How experienced examiners assess research theses. *Studies in Higher Education* 27(4)

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228816715_'It's_a_PhD_not_a_Nobel_Prize'_How_experienced_examiners_assess_research_theses

You may also find it useful to model your writing on papers reporting negative results. For example:



Hoare et al. 2014. Gameplay as a source of intrinsic motivation in a randomized controlled trial of auditory training for tinnitus. PLoS One. 2014 Sep 12;9(9):e107430.



Hoehn et al, 2010. Acute or chronic upregulation of mitochondrial fatty acid oxidation has no net effect on whole-body energy expenditure or adiposity. Cell Metab. 2010 Jan;11(1):70-6.



Yactayo-Chang et al, 2016. Failure to over-express expansin in multiple heterologous systems. New Negatives in Plant Scienc (3–4).

Next session: MAY 4 Note-taking

Find further details of the UWA GRS Writing Group, including advice sheets to download, see:
www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup