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Welcome to postgraduate research at the University of the South Pacific (USP).

This handbook is an important document which informs you about every aspect of postgraduate research at the University. You are expected to be familiar with its content as it will affect you either as a research student or a supervisor.

The handbook will help you navigate a path through the complexities of your life at USP and is a valuable source of reference material. Written in an informal style, it is designed to be much easier to read than some of the official material provided by the University and its various Faculties and Schools. Yet you must remember that it is your responsibility to refer to any other official material where necessary.

This handbook should help you understand the University and how to make the most of your time at USP. Do not hesitate to contact the Research Office if you need help with issues that are not addressed fully in this handbook.

My best wishes for an enjoyable and productive time doing research at the University of the South Pacific.

Professor Patrick D. Nunn
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
The University of the South Pacific

Production of this Handbook was greatly facilitated by helpful contributions made by the three Faculties at the University of the South Pacific and background information from other international-comparable universities.

ACRONYMS

CV  Curriculum Vitae
FRC  Faculty Research Committee
GA  Graduate Assistant
HOS  Head of School
PDP  Personal Development Plan
PhD  Doctor of Philosophy
QAC  Quality Audit Committee
SAS  Student Academic Services
SRP  Supervised Research Project
UREC  University Research Ethics Committee
USP  The University of the South Pacific
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to inform postgraduate research students and their supervisors about the conduct of postgraduate research at the University. It provides guidance concerning the research process, skills, responsibilities and services available at the USP. It aims to enhance the quality of the postgraduate research student experience and enable the successful and timely completion of degree.

The handbook is divided into four sections.

Section 1 covers all aspects of the postgraduate research student experience from registration through the research process, to problems that may be encountered from day 1 through to your graduation. Section 2 covers the University and supervisor’s roles and responsibilities. Section 3 highlights the processes of thesis examination. Section 4 includes other relevant information and key documents pertaining to research.

This handbook should be read in conjunction with the University Calendar, Research Ethics Policy, and the Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy, which govern the core regulations and policies of the relevant degrees. These regulations form part of the Institutional Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes. These and other key documents can be accessed via the University Research Office website (www.usp.ac.fj/research).
Section 1: Postgraduate Research Students

1.1 Introduction
Research students provide the opportunity for new and innovative research in universities, in addition to the general research carried out by staff. Research requires different skills from those acquired as an undergraduate.

For example, the process of writing a research report or thesis, is very different from a postgraduate diploma or undergraduate coursework.

Section 1 provides information on the formal stages of your time at the University of the South Pacific, from finding a research topic through to graduation. Additional requirements may apply in your subject area and you should check this with your supervisor.

1.2 Becoming a Postgraduate Research Student

1.2.1 Finding a Topic and a Supervisor
Towards the end of your postgraduate diploma programme, you should decide on the general area(s) in which you are interested in and identify potential research supervisors. Deciding on your area of interest is critical, because it establishes your early career. As for supervisors, search staff research profiles and their research expertise on the faculty web pages. It is common to have a principal supervisor and an associate supervisor. The Associate Dean in the faculty can assist in finding a staff member who may be able to help supervise your research. You can also visit the Research Office at Laucala Campus (or visit their website at www.usp.ac.fj/research) for additional help.

Once you have decided on potential supervisors, you should approach each one, introduce yourself and discuss your proposed research. Note that you will need to get a staff member’s consent to supervise your research project. It is critical that you find a supervisor whose research interests cover your own.

1.2.2 Registration and Admission Procedures
Once you have chosen a supervisor, you can then register and enrol as a postgraduate research student at the beginning of your first year of research. Note that enrolments of postgraduate research students are not bound by semesters; you enrol for 12 months at a time and your work does not stop when semester ends.

To enrol, you need to first complete an ‘Application for Admission’ form which can be obtained from the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs in any of the three Faculties, or from the Student Academic Services or from the Research Office. You can also download the relevant form from www.usp.ac.fj/pgr. Complete the application form and send it to the Administrative Assistant in the relevant faculty.

For detailed and specific programmes, please refer to the “Masters and PhD Degree Programmes” in the current USP Calendar (available online at www.usp.ac.fj/pgr). Note that you cannot be issued with a student identification card until you have registered, which means that you will not be able to borrow books from the library, gain access to University premises or, if you are funded, access your studentship benefits. Also note that only students who the admission criteria to higher degrees are eligible to be admitted for the degree of Masters or PhD. Refer to Admission regulations for Masters and PhD Programmes in the current USP Calendar. In the absence of an approved research proposal accompanying your application, you will be given provisional entry into the Masters or PhD programme. If you receive provisional admission you will be required to write and have your research proposal approved by the FRC within 3 months for Masters and 6 months for PhD.

After admission, students need to develop a research proposal, and have it approved, as explained in section 1.6. Students who wish to apply for University funding for their research should attach a detailed project budget to their proposal. It is important to note that once your research proposal has been approved, progress reports must be submitted at regular intervals (see section 1.2.3) so that postgraduate research students can continue to be registered.

While you are enrolled as a research student, you may not normally be registered for a course leading to any other qualification. However, there may be shorter courses that you would benefit from attending. Your supervisor may indicate particular courses relevant to your research that you should or must attend. This could be training offered by the University’s Research Office, or faculty, or a professional body.

1.2.3 Faculty Research Committees
Each faculty has its own Research Committee, which also looks after ethics issues relating to research. These committees meet at least two times a year and consider all matters relating to research within the faculty including postgraduate student and staff research, and equipment funding. It approves all postgraduate research proposals, awards or administers associated funds and monitors progress of all research undertaken within the faculty.

Students wishing to apply for research funds from the faculty therefore need to submit their research proposals first to their supervisor who, once he/she approves it, will pass it on to the Faculty Research Committee.
to the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs, then to the Research Groups (FSTE) and finally to the Faculty Research Committee (FRC).

1.2.4 Programme regulations
Listed and discussed below are the major regulations and procedures which a research student should be familiar with. For full postgraduate regulations, please follow the Masters and PhD Degree programme regulations in the current USP Calendar (accessible online at www.usp.ac.fj/pgr).

1.2.4.1 Yearly re-enrolment
After registration, both Masters and PhD students are required to re-enrol at the start of each year. This process begins when you submit your progress report. Re-enrolment is dependent on approval of progress reports.

1.2.4.2 Candidature
Tenure of the research degree is from the dates of registration to when the programme is completed, less any time for which the student received permission to suspend studies. The minimum and maximum tenure of research degrees are shown in Table 1 below.

1.2.4.3 Progress review
Students undertaking a Masters degree by research or a PhD are required to submit a report on their progress to the Faculty Research Committee (FRC) twice each year, at the end of each semester. A template of the progress report form can be obtained from the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs or downloaded from www.usp.ac.fj/pgr. The report should comment on progress, highlighting what has been achieved or not achieved, problems faced, and solutions proposed.

1.2.4.4 Satisfactory and unsatisfactory progress
Failure to submit a progress report may result in termination of a student’s enrolment. In the case of termination, all research funds received must be repaid in full to the University. Please read the “Unsatisfactory Progress Regulations for Postgraduate Studies” in the current USP Calendar for further details. Also note that you can always appeal against decisions with which you disagree. Please refer to the Appeals section in the current USP Calendar (available at www.usp.ac.fj/pgr).

1.2.4.5 Change of supervisor
You may apply for a change of supervisor by completing the Application Form available at the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs or from this website www.usp.ac.fj/pgr.

1.2.4.6 Suspension of studies
Masters degree students may apply for up to six months suspension of studies and PhD students for one year, during the period of their candidature. Students are required to officially apply for suspension of studies. Letters of application should be addressed to the Associate Dean of the relevant faculty, giving reasons for the request and justifying period of suspension. Students will receive a response in writing from the faculty.

1.2.4.7 Resumption of studies
Students may apply for resumption of studies by completing the request form available from Student Academic Services or online from www.usp.ac.fj/student and accompany it with a short re-admission letter explaining the situation.

1.2.4.8 Withdrawing from study
After registration, a student may withdraw from any research programme within two weeks of enrolment by completing a withdrawal form available from Student Academic Services.

1.3 Nature of Research
Research can be defined as “a systematic process of investigation or experimentation aimed at furthering knowledge through the discovery and interpretation of facts or data”. It involves collecting, analysing and interpreting information or data in an attempt to resolve a research question. Research leading to higher qualifications that are discussed in this section are the Masters by research including Supervised Research Project (SRP), and PhD. This section does not discuss higher degrees that are wholly course-based, such as Postgraduate Diplomas or Masters by coursework which include MBA and other similar programmes.

There are some important differences between SRPs, Masters by research, and PhDs. These include research depth, complexities, originality, financial demands and duration of study. SRPs are envisaged as terminal research degrees. Masters by research are also commonly terminal, but may qualify a person to transfer into a PhD programme. It is therefore important that, before you embark on a higher degree by research, you make sure that you are prepared to devote the necessary time and commitment. Do not make a hasty decision.

1.3.1 Masters Degree by Research
The Masters Degree is awarded to a candidate who has:

• undertaken a piece of supervised research which has critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic

• successfully completed training in, and demonstrated understanding of, research methods appropriate to the field.

| Table 1: Minimum and maximum tenure of higher research degree qualifications |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Qualification               | *Part-time studies | **Full-time studies |
|                             | Minimum years | Maximum years | Minimum years | Maximum years |
| Masters                     | 2             | 4               | 1              | 2               |
| PhD                         | 4             | 7               | 3              | 5               |

A part-time student is one who undertakes paid employment for more than eight hours per week or one who identifies himself or herself as a part-time student on enrolment.

A full-time student is one who undertakes no more than eight hours per week of paid employment, or one who identifies himself or herself on enrolment as a full-time student.
It generally takes 1-2 years to complete a Masters degree depending on the nature of both the programme and the research. At USP, the Masters programme may entail a thesis (Masters by research), or additional appropriate postgraduate courses plus a minor thesis (Supervised Research Project or SRP).

### 1.3.1.1 Supervised Research Project (SRP)

For the award of a Masters by coursework and a Supervised Research Project (SRP), students are required to complete two postgraduate (400-level) courses – in addition to those taken for the Postgraduate Diploma – with a minor thesis (word limit of 20,000-30,000). Please refer to the website www.usp.ac.fj/pgr for admission requirements, or Programme Regulations for Postgraduate Programmes in the current USP Calendar.

### 1.3.1.2 Masters by research

The degree of Masters by research comprises a full thesis (word limit of 30,000-50,000). Please refer to www.usp.ac.fj/pgr or Programme Regulations for Postgraduate Programmes in the current USP Calendar.

### 1.3.2 PhD Degree

A PhD degree is awarded for a substantial and original contribution to existing knowledge. The original contribution to knowledge invariably entails the following:

- useful and/or philosophically significant research
- distinguishing between new/original knowledge and new/original measurements or compounds/materials/software/tools
- more in-depth and complex research
- more financial demands and longer in duration.

### 1.3.3 Transfer from Masters to PhD degree

In exceptional circumstances, a candidate enrolled for a Masters degree may switch to become registered for a PhD degree. Applications for transfer will be prepared by the proposed PhD supervisor and submitted in the first instance to the FRC, accompanied by a completed “Provisional Registration Application” form. In this instance, registration for the PhD degree is provisional and will be considered for confirmation only after one year of satisfactory progress. The following criteria need to be thoroughly investigated prior to final approval.

- The case for transfer must demonstrate that a candidate’s research potential and academic performance are equivalent to those of “A” grade candidates.
- The research topic must be confirmed by FRC as having the potential for the original contribution to knowledge expected of doctoral students.
- A candidate should have a record in the Masters degree which demonstrates consistent quality research and scholastic achievement, including completion of work by agreed times. Copies of research progress reports can be used to help validate performance.
- Evidence of research achievements and required skills relevant to the candidate’s discipline will vary. Information such as the following should be used to substantiate the case:
  - presentation of research results in a seminar(s)
  - presentation of research results at conferences or symposia
  - significant progress with literature review
  - significant progress with data collection and analysis
  - significant progress with thesis draft or other form of research presentation (e.g., performance, exhibition or film).

If the registration for PhD is confirmed by FRC, then the research conducted for the Masters degree will form part of the doctoral thesis. If a PhD is eventually awarded, no Masters degree will be awarded.

Candidates approved for transfer from Masters to PhD will normally be provisionally registered for one year and complete at least a further year as a full-time candidate. The application may include a request for up to one year back dating of registration. The transfer from Masters to PhD must not be used to circumvent the minimum time a candidate is formally registered for a PhD degree.

### 1.3.4 Paid Employment

#### 1.3.4.1 Teaching and demonstrating

Postgraduate research students maybe asked to undertake tutoring, demonstrating or marking duties. You can ask your supervisors about such opportunities. You may be required to undergo training before beginning such work. While the University considers teaching and demonstrating to be important for research students’ career development, their research must take priority. Full-time students enrolled for Masters or PhD may undertake a maximum of eight hours of such employment every week during semester. They may not undertake any such employment outside of semester times during which they should be engaged full-time (minimum 40 hours per week) on their studies. Part-time students engaged in full-time employment may not be allowed to take up teaching and demonstrating due to the limited time they already have for their studies. Please refer to the current USP Calendar for further details.

#### 1.3.4.2 Relationship between research and paid employment

If you are a full-time student, you must not undertake any paid employment, including employment outside the University which is likely to interfere with the progress of your research. You must keep your supervisors fully informed about the extent of your employment commitments, including teaching and demonstrating commitments. You should discuss any problems (e.g., difficulty in meeting research deadlines) related to your employment commitments with your supervisor at the earliest opportunity. Full-time students are expected to put in a minimum of 32 hours per week on their research during semester time, and 40 hours per week outside semester time. If you do not meet these targets, then you are unlikely to complete your degree in the allocated time.
1.3.4.3  Part-time students in employment

If you are a part-time student and in employment, it is particularly important for you to let your supervisors know about your work commitments. If it becomes too difficult to juggle these with your studies, you may wish to consider the option of temporarily suspending your research or taking leave from work.

1.4  Postgraduate Research Supervision

Regulations require that all postgraduate research students must have at least one assigned supervisor and, if that person is absent, a replacement must be appointed. It is preferable to have two supervisors – a Principal Supervisor and an Associate Supervisor. The Associate Dean of each faculty is required to ensure that postgraduate research students have appropriate supervision. Visiting and discussing your research topic with academic staff members in your chosen research area may assist in identifying who you would like as your supervisor. You can also discuss the options for external supervision with the Associate Dean of your faculty.

The selection and management of a supervisor are important steps in starting a postgraduate degree. Successful research depends on both the supervisor and student being aware of their respective expectations and responsibilities. These should be discussed and made clear to both parties at the beginning of the research project. Supervised graduate research is a crucial activity in any university and it is important that you and your supervisor establish a good working relationship.

1.4.1  What to choose first – Research Area or Supervisor?

In almost all cases, you should choose a research area before you choose a Supervisor. Why? Because what you choose to research is a narrow, specialised area. The chances are that this is an area in which you will become an expert in and one in which you will spend much of your early career.

Begin by asking yourself what YOU want to be doing in five years time. Think about your ideal position – the place, the pay (be realistic!), and the duties. Then think about what area of research you should specialise in so that you can reach this goal.

When you have chosen your research area, then it is time to choose a Supervisor who will help you decide on your precise research topic.

1.4.2  Identifying a Supervisor and a Research Topic

Choosing a supervisor may be the most important step for both the student and the staff. The selection of an appropriate supervisor depends on a number of criteria, at both professional and personal levels. At a professional level, seek a supervisor whose research interest relate to the student’s research area. Students need to make an effort to assess potential supervisors’ research activity by searching through faculty staff research profiles, paying particular attention to their recent publications. At a personal level, it is helpful to choose a supervisor whom you regard as accessible. Discussed below are potential factors that may help students identify good supervisors. (adapted from Burton and Steane, 2004)

1.4.2.1  Understanding how Supervisors choose Students

While students are trying to choose appropriate supervisors, potential supervisors also try to identify research students with whom they could work. This means that students need to appreciate which qualities supervisors are attractive to.

At the USP, senior academic staff are expected to supervise a certain number of students. When a student applies for a higher research degree without stating any support from an academic, his/her application will usually be passed onto academics working in the particular field to see whether anyone is interested in supervising the student.

1.4.2.2  How to approach a potential Supervisor

The most effective way to identify potential supervisors is to determine their research interests by searching their staff profile. Some academics are frequently approached by potential research students. Therefore students should do some initial background research. After enough information is gathered, send an email or make a phone call. If the academic is interested, they will then ask the student to prepare something in writing and/or agree to meet. The information that the student submits in writing will give the supervisor some idea about the student’s writing and analytical skills.

1.4.2.4  Should I choose an experienced or novice Supervisor?

Choosing a supervisor is not an easy task, thus it is important to find out more information about potential supervisors before making a decision. This includes previous supervising experience and a record of successful research students. There are advantages and disadvantages of choosing both a very experienced supervisor and a new supervisor. One of the disadvantages of working with very experienced supervisors is that they are often busier, and are likely to have less free time to spend new students. The advantage of new supervisors, on the other hand, is that although they may not have a record of successful supervision, they tend to be more interested in their students’ research and so may be prepared to spend more time with their students. For less established academics, successful graduating research students are important in building their career, thus they are willing to put extra effort in making sure their students graduate.

1.4.2.5  Choosing a Research Topic

You have chosen your research area from one of the USP’s research areas and disciplines. You have selected your preferred supervisor. Now you need to decide on the research topic.

You should be guided by your supervisor(s) in your choice of research topic. It may be necessary to select a topic that fits in with their longer-term research profile. As an inexperienced researcher you cannot be expected to understand the field as much as your supervisor, so you should respect their guidance in selecting a research topic.

But don’t delay. Don’t procrastinate. Decide on your research topic as soon as possible.
1.5 Postgraduate research students’ responsibilities and expectations

The main responsibility of a postgraduate research student is to fulfill their scholarly potential by engaging in meaningful research. By agreeing to work with a supervisor, students enter a partnership that will succeed only if it is built on mutual trust and respect.

1.5.1 Responsibilities of Postgraduate Research Students

Postgraduate research students have the following responsibilities:

- Develop a research plan in consultation with their supervisor(s)
- Attend regular meetings with supervisor(s) and take notes
- Submit timely progress reports according to the research plan
- Follow University Ethics Policy and Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy
- Discuss any concerns with the principal supervisor promptly
- Actively participate in divisional and University activities
- After submission of thesis, make sure that all research data and other documents are stored securely within the school
- In association with the supervisor(s), publish the research findings and present them conferences.

If postgraduate research students are affiliated with a Research Cluster, they should attend regular cluster meetings and seminars as well as being involved in mentoring.

1.5.2 Supervisor’s expectations for Postgraduate Research Students

Supervisors expect postgraduate research students to:

- Be familiar with the appropriate University rules governing the degree in which they are enrolled
- Be committed to their studies
- Accept that graduate research is about developing intellectual independence and learning, not dependence and being taught. Thus research students should be ‘active’ with their research and within the supervisory relationship, and not passively wait to be told what to do. Research and related activities should be worked out with supervisors such that both supervisors and students contribute to the overall strategy adopted
- Be in regular and pre-arranged communication with their supervisor
- Seek and accept advice. This does not mean a slavish adherence to a supervisor’s ideas, but to accept that supervisors have expertise in research and related matters and that their advice should be given the most careful consideration
- Discuss problems (such as personal problems and conflicts of interest) promptly if they arise. A supervisor should be informed of significant problems that affect the quality of a student’s research. This does not mean that a student is required to tell a supervisor the details of personal/family problems, but the student should at least inform a supervisor when such events are hindering the research programme. The supervisor(s) is then in a position to suggest possible avenues for assistance (such as through Counselling or Student Services) and to make application, if appropriate, for the suspension of a project to protect the student’s interests with regard to time limits for completion
- Discuss any academic problems immediately as they arise. Supervisors can then assist as appropriate. In some cases this may mean seeking some academic assistance/tuition from elsewhere on campus, a common example is with use of statistics
- Meet agreed deadlines during research. A research plan for completing the project should be developed with the supervisors at the beginning of the project and should be reviewed at various times
- Participate in the research culture of their Research Cluster. This means attending meetings, appropriate seminars by staff and visiting speakers, and student functions. The Cluster will keep students informed about such activities but students should also make the effort to find out what is happening, especially if they spend periods of time off the campus. Clusters should also arrange for research students to give seminars on their research at an appropriate time.

1.5.3 Other expectations for all Postgraduate Research Students

Other expectations that postgraduate research students should follow are as follows:

1.5.3.1 Establishing a relationship with your supervisors

In order to establish a good working relationship, you and your supervisors should agree at the outset how to proceed and discuss what each of you expects from the other. Your supervisor(s) will explain to you their respective responsibilities and what kind of guidance you can expect to receive and which of them to contact about different aspects of your research. You in turn must ensure that you know exactly what your supervisors expect of you and that you clearly understand the division of responsibilities between your supervisors. If you are unsure about anything, ask your supervisors.

1.5.3.2 Meeting your supervisors

You and your supervisors must meet regularly, irrespective of whether you are a full-time or part-time student. You and your supervisors should draw up a schedule of meetings in advance, and you should confirm the date of the next meeting at the end of each supervisory session. You are jointly responsible with your supervisors for ensuring that this happens. Neither you, nor your supervisor, should cancel scheduled meetings without good reason and, if a meeting is cancelled, you should re-arrange it as quickly as possible. Students should maintain a written
record of these meetings with your supervisors and their relevant outcomes.

1.5.3.3 Contacting your supervisors between meetings
You should be able to contact your supervisors for advice and assistance at other reasonable times outside your planned schedule. You should know your supervisors’ work telephone numbers and work email addresses. The onus is on you to contact your supervisors promptly if you run into difficulties. You are also responsible for ensuring that your supervisors know how to get in touch with you during normal working hours.

1.5.3.4 Maintaining contact during periods of absence from the University

If your principal supervisor plans to be away from the University
Your principal supervisor will let you know in advance about any prolonged period of absence. Your associate supervisor may be able to take over supervision completely but, if this is not possible, your faculty Associate Dean will arrange a temporary replacement supervisor.

If your principal supervisor is unexpectedly absent
Your associate supervisor may be able to take over supervision completely but, if this is not possible, the Associate Dean of your faculty will arrange a temporary replacement supervisor.

If you want to work away from the University
You must obtain your supervisor’s agreement and relevant University endorsement before you can spend time working away from the University (e.g. on fieldwork). You must try to maintain effective contact with your USP supervisors – by telephone, email, fax or visits while you are working away, even if an external supervisor is appointed for you.

If you are unexpectedly absent
You must report any unintended absence or sick leave to your supervisors as soon as possible. This is particularly important if you are in receipt of a studentship, as you must comply with your funding body’s rules about absence, including absence due to sickness. If one of your supervisors leave the University during the period of your research, the University is responsible for finding a replacement supervisor for you.

1.6 The Research Process
The major purpose of research is to contribute to the understanding of a particular phenomenon and to communicate that understanding to others. Research projects may address the needs of individuals, societies and governments; they may fall within science, humanities or the arts. Most researchers specialise in rather restricted areas of study for extended periods of time. The more research one does in a particular area, the better equipped one is to identify further research problems. Yet for an inexperienced researcher, finding a topic and a specific problem to research is often a daunting task. This section discusses strategies that are helpful for novice and expert researchers alike. Please study this section before developing any research project.

1.6.1 Research Plan
For any research project, researchers must have a detailed plan before beginning. Therefore when you start your research, you and your principal supervisor should draw up a research plan specifying targets against which your progress can be measured. Obtaining research permits and ethics approval (if necessary) is part of the plan. For research to be conducted in any Pacific Island country, a research permit is required. Information on research permits in the USP region can be accessed online at www.usp.ac.fj/pgr.

The research plan is designed to ensure that you submit your thesis on time and that it helps you and your supervisors to track your performance and achievement, which helps to recognise when things are going wrong. The plan should include a conceptualisation of the overall organisation of the project broken down into steps required for successful execution of the research. Training should also be built into the plan. You should also agree to a written schedule of supervision, including relevant meeting dates with your supervisors, and keep to it as this will help you fill your progress report. It is good practice to confirm the date of the next meeting at the end of each supervisory session.

The University places great importance on students meeting deadlines. You should note that, once the research plan has been agreed upon it is your responsibility to meet the various deadlines. If you are not sure what you have to do at any stage, you should ask your supervisors at once. You should let your supervisors know immediately if you experience difficulty in meeting particular deadlines, or have any other concerns about your progress. The earlier you take action, the more likely it is that problems can be resolved without any loss of time and that you will still be able to meet the deadlines for submission. Note that the initial progress review in which the progress report will be used takes place at the end of the first semester in which you are enrolled.

1.6.2 Research Problem/Question

After you have developed and agreed on a research plan with your supervisors, the next step is to identify your research problem or question. To do this, you will need to do a review of the relevant literature to define your starting point. You need this to show how your work will contribute to existing body of knowledge.

The general steps you should take in identifying your research problem/question are:

• Review the existing studies and theories in the relevant literature
• Formulate your research problem/question in the context of the work reviewed
• Develop a strategy that is appropriate to your research problem. Make sure you understand the strengths and weaknesses of the approach
• Select appropriate research techniques (e.g. sampling, questionnaire design, validation) for the research method
• Estimate dates of completion for major tasks such as collecting data, computerised analysis and testing, ethics committee approval, data analysis, and checking figures, tables and references.

In addition to the progress reports required by the University, you should be reporting your progress to your supervisor on a regular basis. You may also be invited to outline your research
1.6.3 Research Proposal

After the formulation of your draft research plan and the identification of your research problem/question, you are ready to begin drafting your research proposal. You should work with your supervisor to develop the research proposal in a format that is acceptable to the University, such as that which can be downloaded from the following website: www.usp.ac.fj/pgr. Research proposals should be no more than ten pages in length; ideally 5-10 pages plus reference list, appendices and figures. Note the due dates for research proposals advertised by your Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs, and agree on due dates with your supervisor for final submission of the proposal.

Generally, the following outline can be used to organise your research proposal. You should agree with your supervisor on specific headings for the sections and subsections of your proposal. Depending on the nature of your study, not all sections below may be applicable. Faculties may have their own internal processes which you must obtain from their web pages.

Title
A succinct but informative description of your research topic, including any places to which it refers. No more than 15 words.

Researcher (name), supervisor (name), affiliation
Date of research proposal submission

Purpose
What is the purpose of your research? What objectives (specify anticipated outcomes) do you expect to achieve? What research question(s) will be addressed? What are the major open questions on your topic and which ones will you deal with in your research project? In which country (or countries) will your research take place? (1/2 page)

Justification
Why is it important to do the research? Who will benefit from it and what needs will it satisfy (e.g. new evidence due to better data collection or analysis compared with previous work; an improved methodology, procedure or analysis of existing theory or its implications; a new theory to explain phenomena; a new application of existing theory; evaluation of the results of previous studies)? (1/2-1 page)

Literature review
What are the major research studies (start with the general ones and end with the specific ones) that have been done in this area and how does your work fit in with these? Summarise the key findings and relevant assumptions of previous research which are directly related to your research question(s). Explain how your work will fill the current gaps in the literature, address existing weaknesses in the current theory or practice, or reinforce current theory. Outline the benefits that will accrue from your work within the broader context of research in this field. (2-4 pages)

Methods
What research methods will you use? What are the potential problems or issues you need to address to ensure you can successfully use this approach? Summarise the theory that underlies your work along with your key research hypotheses. Identify the research methods and the research techniques/tools that will be used. Outline your research design, identify any aspects that are new, and justify the suitability of the approach and its limitations. (1-3 pages)

Information collection
What sources of information will you use? How will you collect that information? What problems in collecting the information do you foresee and how can these problems be minimised? (1/2-1 page)

Ethical and cultural Issues
The University has codes of ethics that govern any research requiring the participation of humans or use of animals. These codes of ethics are available online at www.usp.ac.fj/research/ethics. Your Faculty Research Committee will advise you on whether or not ethical approval will be required for your proposed research and, if necessary, assist you with the approval process. (<1 page)

You may need to attach to your research proposal a completed Screening Questionnaire (online at www.usp.ac.fj/research/ethics).

Expected results and contributions
What are the possible outcomes and which ones would lead to the most fruitful research? What are your key assumptions and what are the limitations of working with these assumptions?

References
References cited in your proposal must be listed in alphabetical order in an appropriate standard style. (<2 pages)

Time Frame
List the tasks to be completed, estimate start and completion dates for each task.

Budget
List any costs that will be incurred. Indicate source of funds (e.g. personal funds, specific grant monies) if already allocated. If you are applying for research funds, then a full budget may be required. (1/2-1 page)

For more information about the nature of research and getting started on your research topic, it is useful to read the article titled “Starting Research” by John Creedy of the University of Melbourne available at www.usp.ac.fj/pgr.

1.6.4 Monitoring and Review

As a research student, your progress is regularly monitored every time you meet your supervisor or submit work for comment. For example, you may need to use ‘Moodle’ (http://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=7729) as a common and easy way of communicating directly with your supervisors. Moodle is a web application used to create effective online learning and allows students and supervisors to communicate. Email is an alternative way to communicate with each other.
The University formally monitors the progress of postgraduate research students twice a year through its progress report system. Your first review will take place six months after the start of your research (at the end of the first semester). If there are concerns about your progress, you may be required to undergo reviews more frequently. A progress report form is available at your Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs and/or online at www.usp.ac.fj/pgr. It is important that you answer the questions honestly since one of the aims of the exercise is to identify problems at an early stage. If difficulties arise later on, the record of annual reports will be used to determine how the problems occurred and what steps were taken by supervisors and the student to deal with them. Once you have completed your section of the form, you should give it immediately to your principal supervisor. Your principal supervisor, in consultation with the associate supervisor, will fill in Section B, which requires your supervisors’ views on your progress and a recommendation on how to proceed.

1.6.5 Time Management

Effective time management helps to prevent many of the difficulties associated with undertaking research. It is an essential skill for whatever profession you may enter after graduation. Some general tips for effective time management are:

- Have clear objectives
- Make and stick to deadlines
- Do not confuse urgency with importance
- Devote time to planning
- Use a diary and timetable key activities/tasks
- Do not get bogged down by others
- Prioritise and multi-task
- Review an activity/task before you leave it (to check it has been done properly)
- Reward yourself (e.g. “I’ll check my email after I find this reference” or “once I finish this task, I am going to take the evening off”) … but not too often.

Remember that the key to effective time management is to prioritise and plan so that essential and important tasks get done promptly. A common problem for postgraduate research students is how to differentiate between urgent and important tasks. To determine the importance of a task, think about whether it is helping you to achieve the aims of your project – if not, should you even be doing it at all?

1.6.6 Generic Research Skills and Abilities

A postgraduate research student is expected to develop and acquire research skills related to the five groups listed below.

1.6.6.1 Research and Scholarly Thinking

Postgraduate researchers will be able to:

- identify, define and analyse problems and identify or create processes to solve them
- exercise critical judgment and critical thinking in creating new understanding
- become creative and imaginative thinkers
- exercise informed respect for the principles, methods, standards, values and boundaries of their discipline and the capacity to question these
- critically evaluate existing understanding of particular subjects and recognise the limitations of their own knowledge of them.

1.6.6.2 Information literacy

Postgraduate researchers will be able to:

- recognise the extent of information needed
- locate needed information efficiently and effectively
- evaluate information and its sources
- use information in critical thinking and problem-solving contexts to construct knowledge
- understand economic, legal, social and cultural issues in the use of information
- use contemporary media and technology to access and manage information.

1.6.6.3 Personal and Intellectual Autonomy

Postgraduate researchers will be:

- intellectually curious and able to sustain intellectual interest
- capable of rigorous and independent thinking
- open to new ideas, methods and ways of thinking
- able to respond effectively to unfamiliar problems in unfamiliar contexts
- able to identify processes and strategies to learn and meet new challenges
- independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning and are committed to continuous reflection, self-evaluation and self improvement
- able to develop personal vision and goals and work towards these in a sustainable way.

1.6.6.4 Ethical, Social and Professional Understanding

Postgraduate researchers will:

- strive for truth, honesty, integrity, open-mindedness, fairness and generosity
- acknowledge their personal responsibility for their own value judgments and behaviour
- understand and accept social, cultural, global and environmental responsibilities
- be committed to social justice and principles of sustainability
- have an appreciation of, and respect for, diversity
- hold a perspective that acknowledges local, national and international concerns
- work with, manage, and lead others in ways that value their diversity and equality and that facilitate their contribution to the organization and the wider community.
1.6.6.5 Communication
Postgraduate researchers will:
• use oral, written and visual communication to further their own learning
• make effective use of oral, written and visual means to critique, negotiate, create and communicate understanding
• use communication as a tool for interacting and relating to others.

1.6.7 Thesis Writing
The work for a higher degree will be written up in a thesis (or dissertation) that will be assessed by examiners. Examiners look for a well-structured and coherent thesis. The aim of writing is therefore to achieve clarity. You must be prepared to take your first draft and look at it critically, as though someone else had written it. It may be necessary to delete whole sections, or move paragraphs around. It requires great care and patience to read your own work and assess it critically. Refer to section 3 for details of thesis writing.

1.6.8 Publication
There is no rule at USP that publications in an academic journal are required before the higher degree is awarded, but it is encouraged. The University provides “Write-Up Scholarships” for students who have submitted their theses for examination and require support to write up their research for publication (more details at www.usp.ac.fj/research). Writing up part of the thesis for publication in refereed journals is a good practice since it develops the student’s thinking and writing skills. It helps students to develop and organise their thought processes, encourages reading of the latest literature, helps explain problems and subsequently present results in a coherent manner. Students would also have the opportunity to respond to criticism from journal reviewers in a similar manner as the examiners’ comments.

1.6.9 Dealing with difficulties
1.6.9.1 Delays in your progress
It is essential that you take action promptly if you run into difficulties which cause you to fall behind in your research. The first thing you should do is to seek help from one of your supervisors, who may be able to suggest a solution. If your supervisor cannot help, he or she should advise you what you should do next. Alternatively you can approach the Associate Dean of your faculty. You should keep a written record (dated) to show that you have spoken to your supervisor about the problem, as this will be important if you need to apply for an extension of time at a later stage, or if you need to make an appeal or complaint. You should also refer to it in your progress report.

1.6.9.2 Difficulties with your supervisor
If you and your supervisor(s) cannot establish an effective working relationship, it is important that you take action promptly. In the first instance you should, wherever possible, talk to the supervisor about the problem. If you are unable to talk to your supervisor or, if talking to your supervisor does not resolve matters, you should talk to your other supervisor. If this is not possible or does not resolve matters, you should contact the Associate Dean of your faculty, who will investigate. It is in everyone’s interests for such problems to be resolved within the School/ Faculty and as informally as possible. If this does not prove possible and you are still unhappy with your supervision, you can write to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) and ask for the matter to be investigated.

1.6.9.3 Temporary withdrawal from your research
If a short-term problem is affecting your research, it may be advisable for you to withdraw from enrolment until the problem has been resolved. This is better than struggling on, missing deadlines and eventually failing to complete on time. Once you have been given permission to withdraw the period of withdrawal will be deducted from the time allowed for completion of your thesis and you will not be liable for fees. You should discuss the situation with your principal supervisor, who, if he or she agrees that temporary withdrawal is the best option, will ask the University for permission. You must tell your supervisor if you are in receipt of an award from a funding body, as its approval will also be needed for you to suspend your study. Your supervisor may seek this approval on your behalf.

You will not be paid any allowance during the period of temporary withdrawal. Your temporary withdrawal will be for a fixed period of time. It is essential that you make contact with your supervisor near the end of this period, either to make arrangements for you to return to your studies or to seek an extension of withdrawal. While any request for a further temporary withdrawal will be considered sympathetically, you must make the request rather than assuming that your withdrawal will automatically be extended. If you are in receipt of a scholarships, it is particularly important that you keep the University, through your supervisors, informed about your intentions. A student who does not re-register at the appropriate time and who does not seek permission to withdraw temporarily shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the University. A student who is dissatisfied with such a ruling can appeal to the Associate Dean of the relevant faculty.

1.6.9.4 Research misconduct
The University expects all researchers, including postgraduate research students, to maintain good scholarly standards. Research misconduct is a disciplinary offence and will be treated very seriously. If you are found to have committed any form of research misconduct, it is likely that you will be required to withdraw from the University. If you have already submitted your thesis – you may not be awarded a degree.

Research misconduct is behaviour, intentional or otherwise, that falls short of good scholarly or ethical standards. Examples of research misconduct include plagiarism (defined as the presentation of the work of others as your own without appropriate acknowledgement), fraud, breach of confidentiality and negligence. Conventions may differ between disciplines. Your supervisors will advise you on the relevant conventions that apply in your subject and it is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with them. If you have any doubts at any time in the course of your research about how you should handle material, you should seek your supervisor’s advice.
1.7 Academic Support Services

1.7.1 Faculty Facilities
Your supervisors should tell you at the start of your research about the facilities that are available to you. Ideally these will include the following:

- A desk space in a shared room within the school
- Access to suitable computing facilities (with internet access)
- Use of a telephone for research purposes in the shared room
- Laboratory bench space (if applicable) should be allocated for you to conduct experiments and tests
- Access to appropriate equipment.

1.7.2 Library
The USP has extensive collections of print and online material – books, encyclopaedias, journals, journal article databases, microfilms and microfiches, CDs, videos, DVDs, and theses. They are all listed in the library’s catalogue, which can be accessed through the library’s web page, www.library.usp.ac.fj.

**Library access**
Postgraduate research students are automatically enrolled as internal students for the initial period of their candidacy, which is 12 months for a Masters degree and three years for a PhD degree. Check with the library if you experience any problems.

**Books**
The book collections are extensive as the library is funded to keep abreast of the publishing output in all subjects taught at the USP. As a postgraduate student you may borrow up to 20 books at a time. The loan period is 30 days.

**Journals**
The library also holds extensive journal collections which are increasingly accessible online. The University also subscribes to a number of journal databases to enable you to find journal articles on your topic. Visit the library website www.library.usp.ac.fj for further instruction, or contact the library for someone to guide you, either in person or by phone or email, on identifying and using relevant information sources. This is a free service. Ask at any University campus library. You are encouraged to make use of this service.

**Inter-library Loan**
Any material not held by the University libraries can be acquired for you. The cost of this service is around F$35 per request. Departmental Vote Codes may sometimes be used to defray this expense, but students must get permission for this in advance and obtain a code number in each case. Please consult the USP Library for further information about this.

1.7.3 Internet Access
For Masters students, the free monthly internet quota is 600MB equivalent to F$120/month. For PhD students, the free monthly internet quota is 1GB equivalent to F$200/month. Internet credit top-up cards are sold at key locations within the USP Campuses. For those at Laucala Campus, internet wireless connection is also accessible.

1.7.4 Training and Workshops
The University’s Research Office organises “Essential Research Skills” seminars and workshops for postgraduate research students throughout the year. Please contact the Research Office for further details.

1.8 Action summary
- After enrolment, ensure that you have the necessary resources to carry out your research on the topic you have chosen
- Ensure that you know and understand the University regulations and procedures governing the research degree in which you have enrolled
- In collaboration with your supervisor, construct a Research Plan showing the stages of your research process with agreed deadlines and stick to it
- Commit to your studies, meet deadlines and contact your supervisors regularly.
Section 2: University and Supervisors’ Responsibilities

2.1 Introduction
The USP expects supervisors to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. This section outlines the University and supervisor’s responsibilities and roles to higher degree research students.

2.2 University Responsibilities
The University administrators and supervisors should ensure that the following information and procedures are available to postgraduate research students:

- Clear written information about graduate entry standards and enrolment processes
- Clear written information about the rules, regulations and administrative and academic requirements for their supervised research activity
- Appropriately qualified, informed, helpful and accessible supervisor/s
- Provision of appropriate and reasonable resources for approved project
- Regular monitoring and feedback on progress
- Acceptance into a supportive academic culture within a Research Cluster (or Faculty or Institute)

In order for supervisors and students to carry out and fulfill their responsibilities, Research Clusters (or Faculties or Institutes) also have the following responsibilities:

- To encourage graduate students to participate in both the social and academic culture of the Research Cluster. As part of this process, students should have an introduction and induction to the Cluster and its facilities
- To develop a supportive research culture for research students, both as individuals and where appropriate, as members of a group. Staff-student fora and support groups for students can be very effective. Feedback from graduate students should be encouraged
- To encourage graduate seminar presentations and attendance at Cluster meetings and seminars and to participate in other activities (such as conferences and publication) where appropriate
- To provide information and training support for the supervisor(s)
- To provide cover in a supervisor’s absence such that the student is never left unsupervised
- To consider the supervisor’s overall workload and ensure that a single supervisor does not have too many research students
- To have a ‘graduate committee’ or at least a ‘graduate contact person’ to inform students about matters of interest in the faculty or unit, and to support and enhance the graduate study environment
- To develop overall monitoring procedures whereby a supervisor is required to report formally twice a year on the progress of a student. Students should be involved in this process and receive feedback

2.3 Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisors
The main role of a supervisor is to guide and inspire a student to be a skilled researcher and to be able to extend existing knowledge in their chosen research area. The supervisor should serve as a good role model of what a professional researcher does; maintain a good supervisor-student working relationship; and provide encouragement, professional support and guidance at all times.

If the student is co-supervised, which is recommended, then he/she is likely to have a principal supervisor and an associate supervisor. It is important that the roles and responsibilities of the principal supervisor and associate supervisor(s) are clearly identified. This is to ensure that supervisors work as a team and do not contradict one another. Please note that the division of responsibilities between the principal supervisor and the associate supervisor may vary depending on circumstances, but the principal supervisor always has overall responsibility and the associate supervisor a supporting role. Their combined role is essential to give you advice, help and encouragement so that you receive good training in research.

2.3.1 General responsibilities of Supervisors in a Higher Research Degree
It is the responsibility of supervisors to:

- Be the first port of call for guidance in all matters of sound research practice
- Have research interests and expertise appropriate for a student’s research and an ability to involve other relevant professionals
• Be knowledgeable about the appropriate rules and regulations for the research. This will cover such issues as word limits, formats, production matters, submission dates, number of copies required for submission, examination procedures and criteria. Supervisors should also provide clear assessment criteria and marking schedules.

• Be knowledgeable about resource requirements for the project, both technical and financial.

• Be aware of, assist and support their research students in applying for any relevant University research funding, as well as to any relevant government or external research funding agency. Further information is obtainable from the University’s Research Office.

• Be informed about any legal, professional, ethical and safety issues concerning the research. Supervisors should be aware of the University’s Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy as it applies to research students and, as relevant, the Policies on Human Ethics, Animal Ethics, and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS).

• Discuss with their students, at the beginning of a student candidature, their mutual expectations of the supervisory relationship. Some supervisors and students may decide on a fairly informal interaction.

• Have regular communication with their research students so that the supervisor and the candidate could give each other their prepared attention. Even if there may not be any matter of actual academic substance to discuss at any particular pre-arranged time, the communication itself is often very important.

• Develop with their students an overall plan/timetable for the research. This typically covers such issues as planning the project, research, analysis, preparation of draft chapters, revision, physical production and submission.

• Encourage research students to submit written notes, ideas, and draft chapters for comment at agreed times during the project. Any comment on submitted work should be prompt, constructive, and helpful.

• Monitor students’ progress and ensure that students are performing adequately. In general, supervisors should help to keep their research students on track and on time, and develop an expectation of timely completion.

• Report regularly on students’ progress in a formal way according to the procedures of their faculty or unit. Students should be involved in this process and receive feedback.

• Be aware of any significant problems, either academic or personal, that may adversely affect students’ progress. Staff should be aware of, and able to advise students about the range of support offered by Counselling, Continuing and Flexible Distance Learning and Student Services.

• Encourage research students to participate in the social and academic culture of their Research Cluster.

2.3.2 Principal Supervisor

The roles of the Principal Supervisor are to:

• Guide the students towards effective conduct of the research by discussing
  a) The nature and standard of research appropriate to the degree
  b) The choice of an appropriate research topic
  c) The time, assistance, funds and material resources available for the research and means for acquiring these
  d) The planning of an effective program for research, analysis, writing and preparation.

• Maintain communication with appropriate persons on the candidate’s work and progress

• Maintain effective, regular contact with the associate supervisor(s) to monitor the candidate’s progress and coordinate communication with the candidate.

• Keep records of the candidate’s work, accounts of progress, and problems in candidature adequate for another supervisor to take over supervision if necessary.

• Consider the availability of a panel of examiners prior to the submission of the thesis, in consultation with the candidate and the associate supervisor(s) and advise the authorised faculty or school representatives of the names and credentials of suitable examiners.

• Comment promptly and constructively on the final draft of the thesis in consultation with the associate supervisor(s) and at the time of submission, certify that the thesis is properly presented, conforms to regulations and is fit for examination.

• Advise the candidate if further work is necessary at any stage of the thesis drafts.

Other responsibilities of the principal supervisor normally include:

• Helping the student draw up a research plan, and monitoring the student’s progress in relation to this plan.

• Agreeing on a written schedule of meetings with the student and keeping to it.

• Meeting the student a minimum of six times a year (for full-time students).

• Giving the student regular feedback on progress, including constructive criticism on written work.

• Raising any concerns about progress with the student and, if necessary, the Faculty Research Committee at an early stage.

• Completing a Progress Report Form for the student at the appropriate time each year.

• Ensuring that the student understands the nature and requirements of postgraduate research and the standards expected, including those related to ethics and intellectual property and copyright issues.

• Ensuring the student knows what constitutes research misconduct, especially plagiarism, and knows how to reference properly.
• Ensuring the student is aware of institutional sources of advice, including careers guidance, health and safety legislation and equal opportunities policy

• Providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources for such support, including the University Research Office, student advisers (or equivalent), and others within the student’s academic community

• Helping the student interact with others working in the field of research, for example, encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences, supporting him/her in seeking funding for such events and, where appropriate, to submit conference papers and articles to refereed journals

• Maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise, including the appropriate skills, to perform the role satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities.

2.3.3 Associate Supervisor

The responsibilities of associate supervisors are to:

• Maintain an agreed level of communication with the candidate and the principal supervisor

• Provide support for the candidate and principal supervisor

• Attend group meetings and maintain notes and records of the candidate’s progress

• Act as the principal supervisor in the event of that person’s absence from the University for any reason (except where the co-supervisor is an Honorary Associate of the University, in which case, a replacement internal supervisor must be appointed).

2.4 Supervision from a Distance

Students writing postgraduate research reports or a thesis from a distance must be offered adequate supervisory assistance similar to that available to student candidates on campus. This means that they receive the same information, instruction and guidance as on-campus students but the following should be noted by both students and supervisors

• since off-campus supervisory meetings cannot usually be held face-to-face, supervisors and students should be in regular contact, as with on-campus students, with scheduled meetings via telephone, fax and/or email as appropriate

• students writing a thesis should make a presentation to their peers and staff at an appropriate occasion. Students need to be informed of this requirement so as to build any expected travel cost into their programme

• students are to have the same access as on-campus students to any financial support for research and production that their Research Cluster has available.

2.5 Managing the Supervisor-Student Relationship

Once a student and a supervisor have agreed to work together, it is important to try and ensure that the student obtains maximum value from the relationship. This means that students and supervisors need to know and understand their respective roles and responsibilities.

Several factors may affect a good working relationship between a student and a supervisor (Philips and Pugh, 2001; Burton and Steane, 2004). Some of these are described in the following three sections.

2.5.1 Attributes that supervisors generally seek in research students

Supervisors seek students who can:

• Identify and point out the main areas they want feedback on

• Present ideas and opinions and can justify them on the basis of critical understanding of both the literature and the research

• Organise thesis work and value the supervisor’s time.

2.5.2 Attributes in research students that concerns supervisors

Supervisors are concerned when students:

• Submit a second draft of a chapter that does not address issues that the supervisor identified in a previous draft

• Submit a long chapter two hours before a meeting and expect instant feedback on the chapter

• Submit a poorly written piece of work which has not been ’spell-or grammar-checked’ and that does not appear to have been proof-read

• Demand the answers to complex questions without appearing to have done any work themselves.

2.5.3 Nine Common Problems and their Possible Solutions

Despite many supervisor-student relationships resulting in successful thesis completions, problems may occur sometimes resulting in financial, emotional and intellectual stress. Below is a range of issues that research students may encounter with some suggested resolutions (Burton and Steane, 2004).

Supervisor and student do not agree on the topic/methodology/content of thesis/publication

It is important to note that supervisors can get frustrated with students as students do with their supervisors. Most minor problems should be worked out by discussion, which is the preferred option. Students may not always agree with their supervisors’ suggestions or criticisms. Remember that supervisors were chosen due to their expertise so consider their comments carefully. If supervisors have concerns about what the student is doing, then it is possible that the thesis examiners will also have the same concerns. Occasionally though, supervisors may be misguided with their advice or comments. In order to take on challenges raised by supervisors, students should make sure that more quality literature is gathered in the area and relevant methodologies are identified. This will allow students to defend or make a case that is supported by prior research or authoritative sources. This may convince supervisors and allow you to proceed.
One problem which some postgraduate research students have at the USP is unsupported assertion. This is when something important is asserted without any evidence or references offered in support. For example,

“In the Pacific, there is no more serious issue for the 21st century than climate change.”

This statement is debatable. You should not assume that everyone reading your thesis is going to agree with you. You need to add reference sources in brackets at the end of such sentences.

In case a dispute is serious and cannot be resolved between both parties, it is often a good idea to discuss the matter with the staff member responsible for the student programme or to gauge opinions of other academics. Remember, it is important to frame the problem as a research problem rather than as a personal one.

If the dispute still cannot be resolved, the student may then choose any of the following options:

- **Drop out** – this may not be a good idea if the student has invested so much time, energy and money, and wants to get the degree
- **Change supervisors** – this may be a more realistic option early in the thesis, compared to a thesis that is close to completion. The student may need to talk and involve the Associate Dean of the relevant faculty or Research Cluster Leader if he/she is thinking of changing supervisors, so that they can help resolve the disagreement or find another supervisor
- **Choose to submit a thesis without supervisor’s agreement** – this is a high-risk strategy, because a supervisors’ support and backing could be crucial at the examination stage. This should be considered as a last option.

**ii. Student thinks his/her thesis is not up to standard and is thinking of dropping out**

Sometimes students get depressed at their apparent lack of progress and wonder whether it is worth continuing. In almost every act of writing, including a thesis, there will be periods of review and the need to rewrite parts of work. Problems like these are depressing, but they are an integral part of good research and an invaluable learning experience. The best way to get over such depression is to keep working. Students may need to look for some motivational activities or personal incentives to ensure progress. Students should remember that although progress may be slow with perseverance the thesis will take shape. If students continue to have serious doubts about completion of their thesis, they should talk to someone whose opinion can be trusted, like an academic or student counsellor.

**iii. Supervisor does not give student prompt and adequate feedback**

Supervisors vary in their approach to help and feedback they give to their students. Some provide constant suggestions and criticisms on early versions of chapters, while others expect to read complete drafts.

Differences in ideas and expectations about the amount of feedback that is appropriate can become frustrating to students. It is therefore important that students discuss this issue with supervisors early in the relationship. Supervisors can also get frustrated at being asked to re-read chapters which are at an early stage, especially when the student does not appear to appreciate the time and effort required to give feedback.

If the student finds that supervisors give less feedback than the student would prefer, it may be a good idea to indicate the particular area where feedback is required. Most supervisors, especially busy ones, will be much more willing to give feedback if students direct their attention to the most important areas. This means that when sending drafts to supervisors, include a covering note especially if it is a revision to indicate what changes have been made:

(i) responded to supervisors’ suggestions;
(ii) are also trying to improve the thesis; and
(iii) focus supervisor’s attention on the area where help is really wanted.

**iv. Work returned from supervisors is covered with comments and sometimes include contradictory comments to those made on the previous draft**

Students who face this problem might regard themselves as lucky to be getting so much feedback. Supervisors who spend time to give feedback may help produce a higher-quality thesis which is likely to pass without problems.

It is common for supervisors to comment negatively on something they did not pick up in a previous draft. No editor will notice every error the first time. Occasionally, students can get frustrated when supervisors seem to keep changing their minds. For example, at one meeting they suggest one method and the next meeting another. If this happens repeatedly and the student cannot understand the reason for the changes, and the advice seems to be contradictory, students need to discuss this with supervisors.

**v. Student struggling financially**

If financial struggles are seriously impacting the research and thesis progress, a student should try and talk to his/her supervisors. For example, they may recommend the student for a part-time position as a research assistant or for tutoring work within the University. It may also be worth investigating sources of financial support that are available at the University from scholarships, grants, student loans or part-time work. Students could approach the University’s Research Office in this regard.

As a last resort, if the student is not making progress on his/her thesis because of financial problems, it may be worth considering suspending enrolment for a short period to allow time for earning enough money, and then re-enrol. Refer to section 1.2.4.6 for the requirements for ‘suspension’ of studies.

**vi. Student hates his/her thesis and is not working on it**

Some postgraduate students suffer from “researcher’s block” where they seem to have problems trying to work on their thesis. It is important to note that although this experience usually appears to be temporary, some students find it harder to continue with the thesis or
for children budgeting and finance issues, pregnancy and responsibility for elderly relatives. Mature students may not get the same peer and social support that younger students often give each other. In such cases, it is important that mature students work with student counselling services or talk to supervisors.

viii. Student cannot work with supervisor any more and wants to change

One of the most severe problems that confront students is the breakdown of relationship with their supervisors. The loss of a supervisor’s support and/or confidence is always stressful for the student and can seriously hinder progress of the thesis. If the problem cannot be solved, sometimes the only solution is to change supervisor.
Section 3: Submission and Examination of Thesis

3.1 Introduction

Research theses are usually submitted after the supervisors are satisfied that the work is of high quality and ready for examination. Only on rare occasions will students submit their work for examination without their supervisors’ approval.

It is important that students adhere to the regulations and deadlines for submission of their thesis. If students submit on time, the University will make every effort to ensure that the examination process is completed as soon as possible. This will depend on the availability of external examiners and the time it takes the student to satisfactorily make any corrections required to the examined thesis.

This section deals with the submission and examination process of a research thesis. It also highlights what examiners look for in a thesis.

3.2 Process flow chart for the Submission and Examination of Thesis

Submission and examination of a thesis takes time, and students should be prepared to cope with the associated challenges. Shown below is a summary of this process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Student Completes Thesis Write-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notification of submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supervisor formally notifies the Head of School (HOS) that the thesis is ready for examination. The notification letter should include the date of submission and the thesis abstract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommendation of potential examiners at least 2 months before submission of thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The HOS with the help of the supervisor recommend and nominate potential examiners at least 2 months before submission of the thesis to ensure prompt despatchment to examiners. The HOS collects details of potential examiners and to see that there is no potential conflict of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty Research Committee approves Examiners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Necessary paperwork is prepared once the nominees are approved by the Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Two examiners are appointed (1 internal and 1 external)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student submits thesis on the recommended date with Statement of Originality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students must declare and sign the thesis before submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Submit 2 ring bound copies of thesis to the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs on the date recommended above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The principal supervisor signs the supervisor’s certificate declaring that the thesis is the student’s own work.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thesis sent to examiners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Duration for marking is no more than 2 months from date of despatch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examiners’ Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Examiners submit report to relevant Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Honorarium payment to External Examiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty Research Committee’s consideration of examiners’ recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reports and recommendations from examiners are considered and forwarded to principal supervisor to liaise with the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correction of thesis by student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Corrections are addressed and a copy of the corrected thesis with the principal supervisor’s covering memo, certifying that the necessary corrections have been addressed is then sent to the internal examiner for verification. The internal examiner should sign and declare that he/she is satisfied with the final corrected version.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deposit of thesis copies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Once the thesis is approved, 2 hard bound copies and an electronic version copied onto a labelled CD are submitted to the Administrative Assistant at the relevant Faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One hard bound copy and a CD of the thesis are deposited at the USP Library and 1 hard bound copy kept by the Faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty report submitted to the Student Academic Services for consideration to graduate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AWARD OF DEGREE
3.3 Submission of Thesis
Candidates submitting research theses must comply with “Assessment and Examination Regulations” for theses as listed in the current USP Calendar which is available online at www.usp.ac.fj/pgr.

3.3.1 Deadlines for Submission
The University’s regulations set limits on the length of time students should take to complete a degree and it is important that students are aware of these restrictions. Research theses can be submitted any time within the University’s calendar year. If submission is made before the start of a semester, then re-registration and payment of fees for that semester are not necessary. The expected deadlines for completing and submitting the corrected version of the thesis as well as applying to graduate is ideally 1-2 months before graduation.

3.3.2 Deciding when to Submit for Examination
The student and supervisor(s) should agree when the thesis is ready for submission, although the final decision rests with the student. Note that agreement from supervisors that the thesis is ready to be submitted does not guarantee a successful outcome of the examination.

3.3.3 Recommendation of Potential Examiners
Two months before the thesis is likely to be submitted, the principal supervisor should submit to the appropriate Head of School a list of potential examiners, two internal and two external. The student should have no part in compiling this list. More details are given in section 3.4 below.

Once the HOS receives the supervisor’s recommendations, the curriculum vitae of external examiners should be obtained, and all the information submitted to the Faculty’s Postgraduate Committee. This should ensure that when the thesis is submitted, the names of the internal and external examiners are already agreed. This will ensure that there is no delay in sending copies of the thesis for examination.

3.3.4 Notification of Submission of Thesis
Before a student finally submits his/her thesis, the principal supervisor will provide a formal notification to the HOS that his/her student’s thesis is ready for examination and specify a date for submission.

If a student does not submit his/her thesis by the notified date, he/she must agree to a new date with the supervisors who will seek the appropriate University endorsement. If the new date is not within the permitted period of registration, the student will have to apply for an extension.

3.3.5 Submission for Examination
A student must hand in his/her thesis to the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs and make sure that it is accompanied by a ‘Statement of Originality’, signed by both the candidate and principal supervisor. The student must supply two ring-bound copies of the thesis for examination and should keep a copy for her/himself. The supervisor will inform the student in advance if more copies are needed.

There are rules governing the layout and format of a thesis, which are included in section 4 of this Handbook and also specified in the current USP Calendar. Notwithstanding this, candidates are advised to discuss with their supervisor(s) the detailed layout of their research thesis early in the candidature. Incorporation of published work conducted during the period of submission is permissible and should be done explicitly in a form agreed to by the candidate and supervisor(s).

Once a thesis has been submitted, it is possible for students who have no other form of paid employment to apply for a ‘Write-Up Scholarship’ (see www.usp.ac.fj/research/write-up). This scholarship is intended to help them prepare their research findings for publication.

3.3.6 Library Submission
After the thesis has been examined and corrected, a hard-bound copy and an electronic copy has to be deposited in the University Library before the degree can be awarded. The following documents are to be submitted to the library through the Faculty’s Office of Research and Graduate Affairs in order to be eligible to graduate:

- Two hardbound copies of thesis (1 for the library and 1 for the appropriate faculty)
- An electronic copy – labelled CD with a proper cover
- Statement signed by the student confirming that the e-copy and the one hardbound copy of thesis presented to the library are identical
- Two completed Accessibility Forms for the library
- Statement by the Dean of the appropriate faculty.

Please note that the thesis is expected to adhere to the format requirements as detailed in the “Library Checklist of Thesis Submission” for the preparation of theses (see www.usp.ac.fj/thesisprocedure for detailed information). Also note that students will be unable to graduate unless this Library Checklist is signed off as complete by the University Librarian (or nominee). Please refer to relevant section in the current USP Calendar for further details.

3.3.7 Requirement for Graduation
Once the requirements of the library have been fulfilled, submission for graduation is made by the appropriate faculty. The Associate Dean of the faculty will then make a formal submission to the Chair of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) through the Student Academic Services (SAS) Manager. The submission is accompanied by the following documents to confirm that the student has completed all requirements for the degree:

- Student’s academic transcript
- Internal examiners’ reports
- External examiners’ reports
- Letter from the principal supervisor confirming completion of all corrections
- Letter from the internal examiner confirming completion of all corrections and recommendations by the examiners; and
- Letter from the library confirming deposit of the thesis and a CD copy.
Once the Academic Standards and Quality Committee and Senate approve the submission from the faculty, the student is ready to graduate.

3.4 Appointment Process of Examiners

Students have no say in the final selection of examiners. It is the principal supervisor who recommends suitable examiners to the appropriate HOS.

The following steps are undertaken for the appointment of examiners:

- The principal supervisor for the research thesis submits a completed nomination list with contact details of potential examiners for thesis examination to the HOS for further action.
- The HOS gathers essential details including CVs of potential examiners, making sure that there is no conflict of interest. The list of potential examiners is forwarded to the Faculty Research Committee (FRC) for selection.
- The FRC formally appoints the two examiners (1 internal and 1 external) and advises the HOS accordingly.
- The appointed examiners are contacted to confirm their acceptance and appointment, and also to confirm or provide a contact address to which the thesis is to be sent.
- The thesis is sent to the examiners with copies of the following information: a cover letter from the Chair of FRC, an assessment form that contains information about the thesis title, dates of submission, examiner’s instructions, and other relevant information.

3.5 Guidelines for Examining Thesis

Examiners are expected to read the thesis and provide a critique. Although there is no single set of criteria by which the thesis should be assessed, are:

- **Clarity of purpose**
  Comment on the clarity of the thesis objectives and aims and how well these were achieved.

- **Context for research**
  Comment on the student’s knowledge and critical use of the literature in the field of study and other relevant information.

- **Appropriate methods**
  Comment on the appropriateness of methods used in the research project and the competence with which they were employed and adequately explained.

- **Analysis and reflective critique**
  Comment on the effectiveness of the outline, discussion, evaluation/analysis, and interpretation of information.

- **Successful outcomes**
  Comment on how successful the student has been in the design and execution of the project, particularly in competencies for independent work and any other strengths and weaknesses. Provide an opinion on the extent to which the work represents new knowledge or material (note that this varies considerably between Masters and PhD theses).

- **Limitations of the study and appropriate conclusions**
  Comment on the student’s ability to identify and explain the limitations of the study and how the conclusions are reached and articulated.

- **Effective presentation**
  Comment on the style, clarity and effectiveness of the thesis and its presentation.

**Evaluation**

Evaluate the quality and scope of the work presented and recommend whether the degree be awarded or not. Also outline the amount of work required of the candidate to further refine the thesis.

Note that examiners are not constrained by the guidelines listed above. They are free to make any other constructive and pertinent remarks about the research thesis which they consider would be helpful to the student.

3.6 Examination Process and Results

The return of the thesis with reports from examiners is expected within two months from the date of sending the thesis. Details of examination and processing of examiners’ reports are given below.

3.6.1 During Examination of Thesis

During the examination period, students are not allowed to have any contact with any of the examiners. In addition, the examiners should write independent (without conferring) reports and send with the thesis to the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs.

3.6.2 Corrections and Amendments of Thesis

A copy of the examiners’ reports are normally (but not always) provided to the student as part of the feedback process. Amendments to the thesis as recommended by the examiners are to be completed by the student under the oversight of his/her supervisor and submitted to the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs. Although the written endorsement of the principal supervisor that corrections have been made is usually accepted, the internal examiner may be invited by the appropriate faculty to check the amendments making sure that the comments raised by both examiners have been satisfactorily addressed. If this is found to be the case, a recommendation will be made by the appropriate faculty for the award of the qualification.

3.6.3 Disagreement between Examiners

In the event of an unresolved difference of opinion between thesis examiners, the faculty may recommend an arbitrator to be appointed. The arbitrator is given a copy of the thesis, an assessment form and an examiner’s instruction. The arbitrator’s report is expected within one month of dispatch.
3.7 What do Examiners look for in a Thesis?

Examiners might be expected to read the thesis abstract three times and the main body of the thesis twice. The first reading is mainly to get the overall flavour of the research; the second (concurrently with evaluation-writing) is in detail. It is therefore important that a student aims to impress the examiner by writing simply and clearly. Writing complex and long sentences does not impress examiners as they are forced to spend unnecessary time deconstructing complex and obtuse grammatical structures. Below are some of the key points that examiners look for in a thesis.

3.7.1 The Purpose of the Thesis

The thesis is a document that contains a student’s substantive explanation of his/her research. Based on the thesis, examiners will decide whether or not the student has fulfilled the University’s criteria for the degree. This means that students should be familiar with the University’s criteria for theses submitted for examination.

While there is considerable scope for variation in the presentation of a thesis, it is advisable that you adhere to the acceptable format for theses submitted at USP. It is therefore important that your supervisor signs a declaration that the thesis is of an acceptable format.

A proof of the Reimann Hypothesis

By
Joeli NAYACAKALOU
A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
School of Computing, Information and Mathematical Sciences
Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment
The University of the South Pacific

March 2009

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published, or substantially overlapping with material submitted for the award on any other degree at any institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text”.

Avoid unclear legal-sounding phrases, and remember that the Declaration of Originality should be signed and dated by you, as the author.

3.7.1.3 Declaration by the Supervisor
The principal supervisor should sign, declaring that the thesis or supervised research project was carried out by the student under his/her supervision. The supervisor can indicate what part he/she has played in the preparation of the thesis.

3.7.1.4 Acknowledgement
It is polite to thank your supervisor(s), governments or institutions that gave financial support and mentoring guidance. It is a good idea to be generous with your acknowledgements.

3.7.1.5 Dedication
This is optional. Some authors include, on this page or a separate page, something of personal significance.

3.7.1.6 Abstract
This should be about 300 words in length. It may also be called a ‘Summary’ or a ‘Preface’. The abstract is an important part of the thesis as it will be disseminated widely and made available electronically. An abstract is a highly concentrated version of the thesis and should explain the problem or area of research, the methods used, the results and conclusions. It must be self-contained and must give the reader a snapshot of what follows. Examiners read the abstract first to gain an impression of what follows. A well-written abstract is succinct, non-repetitive and provides a comprehensive statement of what the thesis is about.

3.7.1.7 Table of Contents
This list outlines the sections (or chapters) and subsections, with their corresponding page numbers. Do not include the introductory pages such as the ‘title page’ and ‘dedication’. However, it is advisable to include the ‘abstract’. The introductory pages are usually numbered with Roman numerals. You may also list Plates, Figures, Diagrams, Tables and/or Maps with Roman numerals.

3.7.1.8 Main Body of Text
Check with your School or Faculty on the acceptable format. The first section or chapter is usually entitled ‘Introduction’ and the last section or chapter is usually the ‘Conclusion’.

3.7.2 The Introduction and Literature Review
The Introduction to a thesis is one of the hardest parts to write, but it is very important in terms of the overall impact of the thesis. Examiners like to see the essence of the thesis captured in an initial sentence that provides focus for all that comes afterwards. Therefore the opening sentences should reflect the scope of your research and make immediately clear what the work is all about.

The Introduction should contain a succinct account of what is known about the topic. The examiner needs sufficient background information to be able to identify the objectives of the research thesis. Therefore, it is necessary that the introduction clearly identifies the deficiencies in current knowledge and the anticipated implications of your research. The examiner normally looks for a summary statement of the results and conclusion in the introduction, in order to know the path that the thesis will take. Sometimes the introduction will be the last part of your thesis to complete.

In some cases, the introduction will also include a summary literature review to paint a broad picture of the field and what is known. The following chapter should contain a more complete literature review, which is a more specialised review of particularly important published research. Please contact your Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs for the relevant requirements. The literature review should provide a background as to where the research on which your thesis is focused originated and what is already known about it. The literature review should demonstrate judgement and understanding in the selection of good quality references. Do not be tempted to provide other people’s opinions about earlier research – read the original papers and form your own views.

3.7.3 The Methods
This section will vary from thesis to thesis depending on the discipline. But in all research, it is important to explain your methods clearly to ensure that a competent researcher will be able to reproduce your research. The description of methods is also important for the examiner to know as he/she will need to confirm that the method was appropriate to the problem. Some examiners may go to an electronic database. Accordingly, web sites and other resources that were used should be clearly indicated.

3.7.4 The Results
At the beginning of this chapter, it is often helpful to include some relevant background to focus the examiner’s mind on the results that will be presented. It is important to outline the particular line of research that will be addressed and why it is important and interesting. It is also important to summarise how the topic was approached, justifying the choice of research method. This background section should be no more than 1-2 pages long and should be re-written (not copied) from material in earlier chapters.

Explain the results you obtained from your research systematically. If you use graphs, diagrams or photographs, do not let these speak for you. Explain carefully and fully what they show. Ensure that the sequence of explanation is logical, even though the process that generated the result may not have been.

3.7.5 Interpretation
Depending on the nature of your research, the Interpretation may be a separate chapter from the results or they may be combined.

If they are separate, then in your results chapter you should list your results without interpreting their meaning within the broader context of the research question. In this case, there should be a separate Interpretation chapter that goes through the results in the same order as they were presented in the preceding chapter. For each result (or group of results), you should explain what it means within the broad context of your research.
3.7.6 The Discussion and Conclusions

In a discussion chapter, it is expected that the significance of the results is discussed. If the results are contrary to those reported in the literature, their significance should be fully explored and explanations for the disparity put forward. Most research leads to more questions than answers and the examiner expects some careful thought-out suggestions as to what should be done next.

The conclusion is usually a short, separate chapter (2-4 pages). This is not the place to discuss problems with methods or results (that should be in the discussion). Instead say clearly what has been done and its importance. Some examiners prefer an up-front statement of what has been achieved, preferably in dot-point list form, at the start of the conclusion chapter. This focuses the examiner’s attention while reading the chapter, as well as your attention while writing it.

3.7.7 Bibliography

This section lists in detail the references cited in the main body of text. You may need to check with your faculty or discipline whether it has a required format for the bibliography and the citing of references in the text. Consult your supervisor for guidance in this area.

3.7.8 Appendix

An appendix is optional. It may contain information such as raw data or samples of questionnaires, and so forth.

3.7.9 Special Enclosures

These may include previous publications, large maps etc., and may be placed in a pocket on the inside of the back cover.

Remember that your thesis should not be too long. A PhD of length 200-250 pages with 1.5 spacing is more than adequate. The maximum word limits, including notes and bibliography, is 30,000 words for a Supervised Research Project, 50,000 words for a Masters and 100,000 words for a PhD thesis. These upper word limits, however, may be too generous for your discipline.

Also discuss with your supervisor the number of thesis copies you require. The USP requires you to deposit one hard copy and an electronic version of the thesis with the University Library, and another hard copy with the relevant School or Faculty. You may also wish to deposit a copy in your country’s national archives, retain a copy for yourself, and give a copy to your supervisor.

3.8 What examiners normally dislike

Examiners like a clear and easy-to-read thesis. There are many examples of things that irritate examiners; listed below are the major ones.

3.8.1 Poor expression

One of the commonest irritations is poor expression, particularly convoluted and over-long sentences that obscure the meaning. It takes unnecessary time for examiners to grasp the argument presented in such cases. Poor expression should not have got past your supervisor’s review, but remember it is not his/her role to teach English grammar. Therefore, learn to write short and simple sentences that are easily understood and comprehended. The University’s Student Learning Support (SLS) provides assistance in improving student English writing skills. Also have a look at the handy tips in Appendix 1.

3.8.2 The use of incorrect word form, typographical errors and long words

Be careful to proof-read your thesis a number of times to avoid small but irritating mistakes such as the use of incorrect word forms (e.g. occurred is wrong while occurred is right), typographical errors, the use of long words when there are short alternatives, the use of acronyms without explanation, and the use of active voice rather than the passive voice. For instance, ‘Fiji won the game’ is active voice while ‘the game was won by Fiji’ is passive voice. Avoiding such mistakes will assist the clarity of your writing.

3.8.3 Poor linkages

Be sure to use linking words that provide the link, continuity and the flow of argument right through from the research questions to the methods, which is reflected in the results. The word ‘but’ is a linking word in the following example: ‘the beer is very good but wine would be even better’.

3.8.4 Poor referencing

This involves uncritical listing of references without careful appraisal of their contribution to the larger story being told. Try to place all of the reference citations in the text at the end of a paragraph, or at least at the end of a sentence, not in the middle of it. In Your References (Bibliography), references must be given in full in a standard format.

3.8.5 Discipline-specific conventions

There are a number of discipline-specific conventions when used outside their discipline may cause annoyance to some examiners. For example, the use of footnotes in science theses is normally unacceptable, while it is an accepted practice in the humanities.

3.9 Responding to Examiners’ Comments

Examiners want students to succeed and their comments are not designed to make this impossible. When the examiners’ reports are received, they are passed to the principal supervisor who asks the student to respond to them. Once the student has completed his/her response, the modified thesis plus a cover sheet explaining how each of the comments raised by the examiners has been addressed will be submitted to the principal supervisor. The direction from the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs is responsible for resubmission. Once the thesis has been re-submitted by the student, it awaits the outcome; often it will be a pass, sometimes a demand for further revision, occasionally failure.

3.9.1 Common points raised by Examiners

In order not to miss any comments raised by an examiner; it may be a good idea to list in detail all the points raised. Some common comments raised by theses examiners include:

- Failure to make a sufficiently tight link between the literature review and the findings of the thesis
3.9.2 How to respond to each major point

The student should respond to each of the major points made by the examiner. This can be done carefully responding to the substantive points raised, treating each point on its merits and indicating exactly how you have dealt with the issue. A detailed response is evidence that the student has pondered each point carefully. Give page references so that the examiners can easily identify the response in the new version of the thesis.

3.10 Appeals Procedure

Research students can appeal against specified outcomes of an examination or against the decision of a School or Faculty. If you need to appeal, you should contact the Faculty Office of Research and Graduate Affairs as soon as possible for advice on how to proceed. You must act quickly as the deadline for submitting appeals is two weeks from the date that you were informed of the decision against which you want to appeal. A late appeal will not be considered. Note that your appeal must be in writing, and must state clearly the grounds on which you are appealing. It is in your own interests to be as full and frank as possible in your letter of appeal. Refer to the “Appeals” section of the current USP Calendar, which can be downloaded online at www.usp.ac.fj/pgr for further details.

3.11 Action summary

- Write thesis in simple but concise English that will impress the examiner
- Ensure that you know the submission and examination process of a thesis
- Maintain the word limit of the thesis of the research degree you have enrolled in
- Submit your thesis on time to graduate on time.
Section 4: Relevant Information and Key Documents

4.1 Introduction
While pursuing a Masters by research or PhD at the USP, there are several key documents that you need to complete. It is the responsibility of the student to liaise with his/her principal supervisor or the relevant faculty office for additional information.

4.2 Human and Animal Ethics clearance
It is a requirement of the University that all Masters or PhD research projects must be screened before commencement to determine whether they need either Human Ethics Approval or Animal Ethics Approval. At the time they submit their Research Proposal, researchers must also submit a Screening Questionnaire to their Faculty Research Committee. The only exception to this is when a researcher knows that their proposed research will involve animals (so they complete an Animal Ethics Application instead of the Screening Questionnaire). The process is illustrated below.

Human and Animal Ethics Policies and application forms are available online for download at www.usp.ac.fj/research/ethics. Further information on these can be obtained from the University Research Office at Laucala Campus. The authorised body for approving Human or Animal Ethics applications is the University Research Ethics Committee.

4.3 Research Permits
Undertaking Masters or PhD fieldwork in any of the USP member countries may require research permits. In some cases, nationals of a country may be exempt from such approvals for research undertaken in their home country.

4.4 Intellectual Property and Copyright
Intellectual Property refers specifically to those things that are intangible in nature but may nevertheless be extremely valuable and therefore require protection from inappropriate use, even theft.

As an institution of higher learning, the USP is mandated to both teach and conduct research. Both of these core activities generate intellectual property. Teaching involves staff preparing original course materials while research, by definition, involves new discoveries and knowledge breakthroughs.

Copyright refers to a set of exclusive rights specifically granted to authors and creators of original literary works (including computer programs), course materials, dramatic works, musical works, artistic works, films, sound recordings, television and radio broadcasts, industrial designs and published editions of works that are expressed in tangible or material form.

As a higher degree research student or a supervisor, you are required to refer to the University Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy Handbook. The Handbook is available in both print and electronically. Policy details, including relevant forms to complete, can be downloaded online at www.usp.ac.fj/research/ip.
4.5 Action summary

- Ensure you have thesis approval either from the Faculty Research Committee or the University Research Ethics Committee before proceeding with any research.
- Check with your supervisor or faculty to confirm whether you need a research permit for the country that you intend to undertake your research.
- Know your Intellectual Property rights and responsibilities by referring to the University Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy Handbook.

Further Reading


Appendix 1: Few Useful Tips for Thesis Writing Students

These are what an experienced supervisor, Professor Patrick Nunn, who has been at the University of the South Pacific for more than 24 years, hands out to his postgraduate research students who are beginning to write their thesis.

1. Try not to abbreviate.
   - Do not write “lab” instead of “laboratory”.
   - Do not use “i.e.” or “e.g.”
   - Do not write “temp” instead of “temperature”.

2. Try not to use shorthand.
   - Do not write “+” or “&” instead of “and”.
   - Do not use arrows in the text.

3. Avoid lazy words.
   - Do not use “however” or “therefore” or “moreover”
   - Never use “etc”

4. Avoid non-geographic terms.
   - Do not say “left to right” with reference to a map (say “west to east”).

5. Use gender-neutral terms.
   - Do not talk about “Man” or “Man’s influence on the environment” (instead say “humans” or “humanity” or “people”).

6. Watch out for these common spelling mistakes.
   - “Intergrate” (“disintergrate”) is wrong. “Integrate” (or “disintegrate”) is right.
   - There are no words “inorder” or “alot” – the words are “in order” and “a lot”.

   - “It’s” is short for “it is”. Avoid using it.
   - “Its” is an adjective (as in “its direction”).
   - “Occured” (“occuring”) is wrong. “Occurred” (“occuring”) is right.
   - “Referred” (“refering”) is wrong. “Referred” (“referring”) is right.

   - The “principal” is the first thing in a list (as in the “principal reason for” something). The “principle” is the way something works.

   - When “sea level” is an adjective, hyphenate it. For example, “the sea-level rise is having a major impact”. When “sea level” is a noun, do not hyphenate it. For example, “the sea level is rising”.

7. You are not a greengrocer

Avoid the greengrocers’ apostrophe. For instance, you should not use an apostrophe when you talk about the NGOs. Do not say NGO’s.

8. Referencing in text

Write

Mutaki et al. (2008)
or
(Mutaki et al., 2008)or
(Williams, 2007; Gwilliam, 2008; Kuilanisautabu, 2009)
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