Susan Carter
Cally Guerin
Claire Aitchison

Doctoral Writing

Practices, Processes and Pleasures

Springer

Doctoral Writing

Susan Carter · Cally Guerin ·
Claire Aitchison

Doctoral Writing

Practices, Processes and Pleasures

Springer

Susan Carter
The University of Auckland
Auckland, New Zealand

Cally Guerin
University of Adelaide
Adelaide, SA, Australia

Claire Aitchison
University of South Australia
Adelaide, SA, Australia

Acknowledgements

Contents

About the Authors

Associate Professor Susan Carter spent 8 years developing a generic doctoral programme (Carter & Laurs, 2014) that included a suite of different workshops on writing. Now she turns the accumulated knowledge from immersion in the doctoral experience and the complexities of doctoral writing into seminars for academics on supervision and research writing (Carter & Laurs, 2018). Her own supervision keeps her at the keyboard face pondering on how to support doctoral writing. Contact author email s.carter@auckland.ac.nz.

Dr. Cally Guerin is currently a Learning Advisor in Research Skills and Training at The Australian National University. She has worked in researcher education since 2008. Her research interests include research writing, academic identities, the academic workforce, and doctoral education. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy/Advance HE.

Dr. Claire Aitchison is a Senior Lecturer in the Teaching Innovation Unit at the University of South Australia. Although much of her work now concerns supporting faculty in online teaching and curriculum development, for over two decades she has played a leading role in doctoral education, specifically doctoral writing. She continues to work with supervisors, academics and doctoral students supporting writing development and training.

Chapter 1
Introduction

This book about doctoral writing aims to help Ph.D. students and their supervisors master the gamut of writing challenges that can blight—or delight—candidature. The book presents lively and authentic reflections on practice and pedagogy rendered through a series of bite-sized vignettes, stories and actionable 'teachable' accounts. From its origin as an academic blog, this book reconfigures six years of posts into an accessible compilation of reflections from three well-known researchers in doctoral education: Susan Carter, Cally Guerin and Claire Aitchison.

Each of us has a history of academic work centred on doctoral writing support. Together we draw on over 60 years' combined experience as academic developers, writing teachers and learning advisors in research support, and as supervisors of doctoral students. Our research emerges from an interest in pedagogy and practice. As an early practitioner and researcher in the field, Claire Aitchison takes a salient place in research about doctoral writing (Aitchison, 2014; Aitchison, Catterall, Ross, & Burgin, 2012; Aitchison & Guerin, 2014; Aitchison, Kamler, & Lee, 2010; Aitchison & Lee, 2006; Aitchison & Paré, 2012; Lee & Aitchison, 2009). Claire has pioneered a variety of pedagogical approaches and demonstrates here the way that her research, teaching and writing intersect to produce insightful reflections that speak to praxis. Cally Guerin's practice shows similar interconnectivity: Cally has applied curiosity and theoretical leverage to issues of writing and identity (Aitchison & Guerin, 2014; Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016; Guerin, 2013, 2016; Guerin & Green, 2014; Guerin & Picard, 2012). Susan Carter spent eight years to 2012 establishing, designing and delivering a doctoral programme at the University of Auckland, and being available for individual consultation by doctoral students from across disciplines. She has spent more than 1,000 hours hearing doctoral students elaborating on a range of problems that returned often to writing-related riffs: how to structure and revise for clarity; how to demonstrate critical analysis in writing; how to understand what supervisors mean by squiggles in the margin; how to conform to the demands of the discipline and the doctorate per se while following a particular 'desire line' of interest (Ahmed, 2006, pp. 19–20). Our backstories are the foundation of this book. We bring our different voices together and share our separate experiences.

In 2012, the editors of this book came together to find a way of sharing and disseminating their knowledge and experiences of doctoral writing. Inger Mewburn (of 'Thesis Whisperer' fame) encouraged us to blog, and so 'DoctoralWriting' was born. Blogging is vibrant and often temporal—and we became aware that these beguiling characteristics were also impediments as the volume and breadth of topics became overwhelming. For example, by mid-2019, we had posted some 310 discrete blog posts, the vast majority written by us, and the blog had over 14,000 followers from all corners of the world. To reinvigorate the wealth of work that was at risk of disappearing in the vaults of time, we settled on a new venture to curate a reimagined presentation of our work into this book.

Why the Interest in Doctoral Writing?

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed an extraordinary growth in doctoral student numbers and a resultant growth in research and scholarship on doctoral education globally. It is not necessary to rehearse these changes here—the literature is replete with how significant doctoral writing is (Carter & Kumar, 2016; Paré, Starke-Meyerring, & McAlpine, 2009; Scevak, 2006), how much it matters to institutions (Golde, Jones, Conklin Bueschel, & Walker, 2006; McAlpine & Norton, 2006; Nilsen, 2006), supervisors (Carter, Laurs, Chant, & Wolgramm-Foliaki, 2017; Denholm & Evans, 2007; Grant, 2010; Paré 2011) and, of course, students themselves (Can & Walker, 2011; Carter & Laurs, 2014; Jazvac-Martek, Shuhua, & McAlpine, 2011; McAlpine, Jazvac-Martek, & Hopwood, 2009). This literature also demonstrates how much trouble its production causes.

As practitioners, we have each played a part in this change: teaching, researching and disseminating knowledge into the field and through our work, all the while blogging about our daily challenges, ruminations and practices (Aitchison, Carter, & Guerin, 2018; Guerin, Carter, & Aitchison, 2015, 2016). Scholarly work has documented the big changes—while we have bounced between these and the everyday rituals of supervision and writing. Work with doctoral writing is the bread and butter of our interface with other practitioners, the people—doctoral students, their support staff and supervisors—those with their hands dirty in amongst the words and the sweat on the page.

Our focus here, and over the years, has been this labouring over writing. We recognise that doctoral writers and those supporting them face multiple challenges, many of which come to the surface in the iterative and social acts of writing. The need to stay calm and ordered, to expect and preempt challenges from the start, seems endemic to doctoral writing.

As well as demonstrating high-level writing expertise, the thesis or dissertation must comply with discipline conventions and expectations, please examiners, and fulfil the requirements for a Ph.D. It must show critical analysis and maintain a high standard of formal literacy. Precision as well as perseverance are required. How-to

advice is helpful (and we provide some of this), but we also talk about the grubby bits, the fun and pain, the stories of failure and success.

Doctoral writing tests emotional resilience, instigates a change of identity and realigns candidates into new social and scholarly communities. For these reasons, writing a thesis is an intense experience requiring academic, personal and emotional support. This book acknowledges that doctoral students and supervisors have complex and varied needs, and that they are often time-poor. Thus, we offer a blend of contemplative, provocative and practical resources delivered with insight and humour that extends beyond simple skills acquisition.

Because we focus on *writing*, our target audience is broader than many books about doctoral study. This book is about text and the human labour of producing it. It speaks to those who support doctoral writers, for example by describing practices such as workshops and taught activities; it also speaks to students who identify with the positive, solution-focused anecdotes.

Shaping the Book

The book reimagines our popular blog posts as a compelling set of themes arranged into chapters. It was clear from the outset that this rendition would not include guest posts, although these are certainly a central and important part of the community of practice associated with the blog; these posts are available on the blogsite at https://doctoralwriting.wordpress.com. This book presents only our own writing and pedagogical insights, reimagined as a restructured and repackaged entity.

We mention what has been left out of this collection because so much valuable work has been produced by our guest writers (which, of course, remains searchable on the site). The blog also delivered two successful special series receiving some 20 contributions on doctoral writing and technology, and on social writing practices. Over 100 guests have contributed to the blog, bringing local and international perspectives from supervisors, language advisors, librarians, and doctoral students. Also absent from this book are the comments and other social media exchanges provoked by individual posts. Missing, too, in this rendition, are the accounts we have written on relevant conferences and community events, foremost of which is the Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference with which we remain associated. For many readers and guest writers, the blog encouraged spin-off activities, connections and sharing of practice, for example, via Twitter or personal email communication. We'd like to recognise those spin-off communities—the most recent of which is the active 'DoctoralWritingSIG', steered by Drs Susan Mowbray and Juliet Lum, who host regular, synchronous, online community forums in association with the blog.

The original blogs, written individually by each of us, were serendipitous; reflections mostly arising from a particular event or prompted by our practices and pedagogical understanding as supervisors, our work as writing teachers, in supervisor training or doctoral research. Compiling a book of these diverse, unrelated and often idiosyncratic musings required difficult decisions about what to keep and what to

leave out, how to balance popular posts against other considerations such as breadth and depth around a common theme.

Each chapter curates the relevant blog posts into a compatible dialogue around discrete aspects of doctoral writing practice. Reviewing work that has been produced over many years allowed us to identify enduring concerns and themes, and to present them afresh with a sharpened focus and in fruitful juxtaposition. The result is an eclectic set of perspectives on persistent themes in doctoral writing—a bit like a set of short stories or Pecha Kucha presentations. Enduringly, our stories and small ideas fit together here.

Navigating the Book

The chapters have been structured around popular themes relating to practice hotspots. *Being and developing writers* brings together posts that celebrate the human dimensions of writing. This chapter explores joy, desire and struggle—writerly experiences that signify change and transformation for both students and those supervising them. Through the lens of writing, three areas are explored: supervision and writing support, writing and feedback, and how identity and emotion play out in writing and supervision.

Because productivity dominates many concerns about doctoral writing, ***Managing productivity*** comes next. This chapter looks at writing groups and social writing activities, retreats, boot camps, binges and the joy of shared experience. Processes, habits, and time management, schedules and writing spaces underpin what is essentially an interrogation of attitudes and how to swing them into more productive routines. Humour creeps into the consideration of doctoral writing, and the chapter finishes with an emphasis on the privilege and pleasure of this work we all pour time into.

The next chapter, ***Crafting writing***, discusses what Sword calls 'artisanal habits' (Sword, 2017). Doctoral writing must gain acceptance within a discourse community represented initially by examiners. Arguably, the craft of writing relies on expertise in amongst the mechanics of language. Doctoral writing is strongest when clear, which is often achieved by hammering complexity into clean, simple prose. Word choice, grammar, syntax and punctuation play their role in establishing voice and demonstrating critical analysis. This chapter testifies that the three of us are intrigued by how the craft of writing can be taught and learned.

Writing the thesis is a hefty chapter because it is the thesis that preoccupies doctoral writers and those of us who support them over several years. This chapter begins with general advice about impact, early choices, ethics, and narrative. From there, we discuss structure and thesis design. We point out the importance of clarity around the argument and original contribution, then attend to writing about theory, critical thinking and data analysis. With those essential framing issues addressed, we run through posts on specific parts of the thesis. The term 'thesis' doesn't signal that we are interested in only the traditional monograph. When publications or practice

shape the thesis, there remains the task of writing, and learning how to do that in accordance with discipline expectations. 'Thesis' is used here to refer broadly to the doctoral writing that takes the research through to submission.

We are aware that ***Disseminating findings*** occurs throughout the doctorate in different ways, and yet we chose to leave this activity for our final chapter, given that becoming a research writer, managing productivity, acquiring writing craft skills usually come ahead of dissemination, while the pressing demands of thesis writing continue throughout. In this final chapter, we think ahead to the foundations of a research career, considering publication processes, co-authorship, and profile building.

Every book takes time to produce and this one is no exception, drawing as it does from years of writing and musings on writing. We hope it gives you as much pleasure as it delivered to its authors.

References

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects and others*. London: Duke University Press.

Aitchison, C. (2014). Learning from multiple voices: Feedback and authority in doctoral writing groups. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory* (pp. 51–64). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Aitchison, C., & Guerin, C. (2014). *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory*. London, UK: Routledge. Retrieved from http://www.tandf.net/books/details/9780415834742/.

Aitchison, C., & Lee, A. (2006). Research writing: Problems and pedagogies. *Teaching in Higher Education, 11*(3), 265–278.

Aitchison, C., & Paré, A. (2012). Writing as craft and practice in the doctoral curriculum. In A. Lee & R. Danby (Eds.), *Reshaping doctoral education: International approaches and pedagogies* (pp. 12–25). London, UK: Routledge.

Aitchison, C., Kamler, B., & Lee, A. (Eds.). (2010). *Publishing pedagogies for the doctorate and beyond*. London, UK: Routledge.

Aitchison, C., Catterall, J., Ross, P. I., & Burgin, S. (2012). 'Tough love and tears': Learning doctoral writing in the sciences. *Higher Education Research & Development, 31*(4), 435–447.

Aitchison, C., Carter, S., & Guerin, C. (2018). Blogging: Connecting research communities online. In R. Erwee, M. A. Harmes, M. K. Harmes, & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *Postgraduate education in higher education* (pp. 153–164). Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Badenhorst, C., & Guerin, C. (2016). *Research literacies and writing pedagogies for masters and doctoral writers*. Leiden, Netherlands: Studies in Writing Series, Brill.

Can, G., & Walker, A. (2011). A model for doctoral students' perceptions and attitudes toward written feedback for academic writing. *Research in Higher Education, 52*(5), 508–536.

Carter, S., & Kumar, V. (2016). 'Ignoring me is part of learning': Supervisory feedback on doctoral writing. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 54*(1), 68–75.

Carter, S., & Laurs, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Developing generic support for doctoral students: Practice and pedagogy*. London, UK: Routledge.

Carter, S., Laurs, D., Chant, L., & Wolgramm-Foliaki, E. (2017). Indigenous knowledge and supervision: Changing the lens [on-line ahead of publication]. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*.

Denholm, C. J., & Evans, T. D. (2007). *Supervising doctorates downunder: Keys to effective supervision in Australia and New Zealand*. Camberwell, VIC.: ACER Press.

Golde, C., Jones, L., Conklin Bueschel, A., & Walker, G. E. (2006). The challenges of doctoral program assessment: Lessons from the Carnegie initiative on the doctorate. In P. L. Maki & N. A. Borkowski (Eds.), *The assessment of doctoral education: Emerging criteria and new models for improving outcomes* (pp. 53–82). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Grant, B. (2010). Negotiating layered relations of supervision. In M. Walker & P. Thomson (Eds.), *The Routledge doctoral supervisor's companion: Supporting effective research in education and the social sciences* (pp. 88–105). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Guerin, C. (2013). Rhizomatic research cultures, writing groups and academic researcher identities. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 8,* 137–150.

Guerin, C. (2016). Connecting the dots: Writing a doctoral thesis by publication. In C. Badenhorst (Ed.), *Research literacies and writing pedagogies for masters and doctoral writers* (pp. 31–50). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Guerin, C., & Green, I. (2014). Cultural diversity and the imagined community of the global academy. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03288791.2014.922048.

Guerin, C., & Picard, M. (2012). Try it on: Voice, concordancing and text-matching in doctoral writing. *International Journal of Educational Integrity, 8*(2), 34–45.

Guerin, C., Carter, S., & Aitcheson, C. (2015). Blogging as learning community: Lessons for academic development? *International Journal of Academic Development*. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1360144X.2015.1042480.

Guerin, C., Carter, S., & Aitchison, C. (2016). Networks, nodes and knowledge: Blogging to support doctoral candidates and supervisors. In M. Fourie-Malherbe, R. Albertyn, C. Aitchison, & E. Bitzer (Eds.), *Postgraduate supervision: Future foci for the knowledge society*. SUN MeDia: Stellenbosch, SA.

Jazvac-Martek, M., Shuhua, C., & McAlpine, L. (2011). Tracking the doctoral student experience over time: Cultivating agency in diverse spaces. In L. McAlpine & C. Amundsen (Eds.), *Doctoral education: Research-based strategies for doctoral students, supervisors and administrators* (pp. 17–36). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Lee, A., & Aitchison, C. (2009). Writing for the doctorate and beyond. In D. Boud & A. Lee (Eds.), *Changing practices of doctoral education* (pp. 87–99). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

McAlpine, L., & Norton, J. (2006). Reframing our approach to doctoral programmes: An integrative framework for action and research. *Higher Education Research and Development, 25*(1), 3–17.

McAlpine, L., Jazvac-Martek, M., & Hopwood, N. (2009). Doctoral student experience in Education: Activities and difficulties influencing identity development. *International Journal for Researcher Development, 1*(1), 97–109.

Nilsen, R. (2006). *Innovative developments in doctoral programmes for Europe*. Paper presented at the New dimensions in doctoral programmes in Europe: Training, employability and the European knowledge agenda. The UK Council for Graduate Education Summer Conference, Florence, Italy.

Paré, A. (2011). Speaking of writing: Supervisory feedback and the dissertation. In L. McAlpine & C. Amundsen (Eds.), *Doctoral education: Research-based strategies for doctoral students, supervisors and administrators* (pp. 59–74). New York, NY: Springer.

Paré, A., Starke-Meyerring, D., & McAlpine, L. (2009). The dissertation as multi-genre: Many readers, many readings. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, & D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a changing world* (pp. 179–193). Fort Collins, CO: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlour Press.

Scevak, J. (2006). Text features and aids in doctoral writing. In C. Denholm & T. Evans (Eds.), *Doctorates downunder: Keys to successful doctoral study* (pp. 159–164). Camberwell, UK: Acer Press.

Sword, H. (2017). *Air and light and time and space: How successful academics write*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Chapter 2
Being and Developing Writers

Becoming a writer and providing supervisory support in that journey is complex and multifaceted. It is a relational process involving novice writers, their supervisor(s), and the tricky relationships between these key individuals. Often, others also enter this space—institutional and external sources of support, families and social and learning networks inform and transform the relational influences impacting the writing experience. Clearly, learning to write as a credentialised doctoral research scholar is so much more than simply the acquisition of skills. We see writing as a process of identity formation involving struggles with authority, self-representation and the personal—most especially we recognise the powerful emotional forces at play as doctoral students test out the possibilities for new, authentic writerly selves (Ivaniĉ, 1998) that honour personal, disciplinary and supervisory expectations and norms.

This chapter explores this rich contextual palette of people, relationships and practices in three sections. Firstly, through the lens of writing, the supervisory relationship (and writing support more generally) is examined, thereafter re-examined with a particular focus on feedback. Finally, we showcase posts that explore how identity and emotion play out in doctoral writing and supervision.

In this eclectic collection, reflections on supervision, and writing development more broadly, rehearse some of the causes and responses to tensions, and how to avoid trouble in the supervisory relationships by establishing good practices early on. As we show, sometimes supervisor or student behaviours can be problematic and, at other times, external factors can be at issue. We hope these stories will resonate—as well as provide concrete support and advice on making your supervisory relationship strong and rewarding.

The next segment contains writing from a themed sequence on 'Feedback'. Here we cover issues such as frequency of feedback, feedback practices and panel supervision, critical self-scrutiny, management of emotions, and strategies for thriving from feedback.

After that, we explore the complex relationships and changing identities that writers have with their texts, supervisors and others and the dynamic interplay between writing and research, desire and reality. This section highlights the very human aspects of doctoral study and supervision, alerting readers to the joys, frustrations and heartache that befall those embarking on this wonderful, maddening and ultimately rewarding journey. It reminds us that even the best advice, skills and expertise is shaped by powerful psychosocial dimensions—and life's little interruptions.

Supervision and Developing Student Writing

Managing Supervisors and Doctoral Writing: Some Advice for Candidates

Susan Carter

Recently I attended a panel of two doctoral candidates and one supervisor giving advice on how to manage your supervisor. Some foundational advice came from the supervisor, who noted that human beings were all different. She had found that what worked well with one student did not work well with another, and that open and clear communication enables a good relationship. The doctoral candidates had some anecdotes of their own experience, and, by recounting them, showed that both they and their supervisors were indeed different in terms of work-protocol preference. One said that he hadn't thought about managing his supervisor nor considered whether the relationship was okay until he heard his doctoral colleagues telling their tales and realised that he had a superb supervisor.

I know how important a good relationship is: it affects personal wellbeing over four years or so. And doctoral students have a part to play in figuring out the protocols for working together happily. Here's some advice that could be given to them before they begin supervision, or for when supervisors are not forthcoming with explanation about managing doctoral writing.

> Expect to be in awe of your supervisors, because they will have a great deal more experience and thus expertise, and then do useful things with that awe. Don't let it act as a barrier to good communication. In western institutions, it is not the habit to offer gifts to express respect, but do always show your respect by saying thanks for supervisory time and input, and by replying to their emails promptly. Even if you don't have an answer, do acknowledge receipt. That basic etiquette goes some distance towards encouraging busy academics to want to be involved in your project. Also, ask them, because they are experts and you are the novice, how the relationship will work around writing.

Some questions that are best tackled early on in the doctorate:

1. Could you tell me how much writing is expected in the first year, and suggest where I should begin?
2. Is there support with academic writing at this university besides from you?

3. How much revision do you expect before I submit the writing to you? Are you willing to skim through a rough draft just to see my ideas and direction?
4. How long should I expect to wait for your feedback?
5. What do I do if I do not understand your feedback? Can I let you know if that happens?

At undergraduate level, it is typical to hide weakness because you want good grades and you want lecturers to think that you know perhaps more than you do really. Disconcertingly, this changes at doctoral level. You and your supervisor are a team, and if you are worried, it helps if you say so early on. For example, saying 'I'm worried about doing complicated statistical analysis' or 'showing critical analysis in English language academic writing' or 'writing about theory that I have trouble understanding' means that, as a team, together you can find the right support. Do not hide your weaknesses.

The best way you help people is to mention what you think works well. If you say, 'I found that so helpful when you connect with my thought and bring me back on track', you are teaching your supervisor who you are and what you value.

Trying not to moan about small shortfalls is sensible. Supervisors are only human. On the other hand, be aware of institutional guidelines if you think that something really is a problem. There will be policy, yet it is ideal if you can find ways to sort out problems between the two of you. If supervisory neglect is the problem, try to get peer support or support from generic student learning advisors.

There are many ways that relationships around writing and feedback come under pressure: one premise with academic writing is that it improves with being hammered by critique, and this can be uncomfortable—for supervisors as well as doctoral authors.

Sharing Our Practice: Writing and Higher Degree Research Supervision

Claire Aitchison

Very often academics work in isolation, rarely having the opportunity to share their teaching practice—despite a literature that extols the virtues of peer observation (Shortland, 2010) and the desire of academics and supervisors for learning from colleagues (Hamilton, Carson & Ellison, 2013).

Given the history of Ph.D. scholarship and the increasingly busy lives of academics, it is not surprising that the student–supervisory locus remains the most private of all teaching spaces. For students and supervisors alike, what goes on there is rarely scrutinised or discussed publicly (Goode, 2010). Perhaps that is why this activity received so many exclamations of recognition and generated such lively discussion. Done with care, I think we all enjoy sharing and comparing our experiences. Well-constructed scenarios that 'ring true' can encourage us to consider events from

different perspectives, trigger self-reflection and hopefully enrich our supervisory practices.

In this blog I share some teaching materials from a series on supervision and researcher writing. I created small, de-identified vignettes from real events, and groups were encouraged to discuss the scenarios in response to two prompts: What is going on here? And, what strategies might be useful to address the issues? Generally, this activity results in lively thoughtful conversations about problems and solutions.

Scenario 1

For over a year now I have been giving my research student careful, detailed feedback on her writing. At the end of the Chap. 1 try to summarise her main problems and identify relevant spelling or grammar rules. I have even given them links to grammar websites that have clear explanations and practice activities. However, I have seen the same errors repeated over and over. I am at my wit's end. What else can I do?

Scenario 2

A recent incident has negatively impacted my relationship with my doctoral scholar, leaving me perplexed and surprised.

Luke wrote a fabulous Master's dissertation that was insightful, quirky and inventive. I was happy to take him on as a doctoral scholar. Because I am already familiar with Luke's capabilities, I guess I have not been as attentive to this student as I am with others; nevertheless, I have been happy with the progress of the doctorate. He has been highly self-motivated, achieved all the milestones and handled some difficult surprises in his research. He is now in the last six months of candidature and I am working more intensely with him.

In my experience, candidates' writing capabilities often show significant improvement in the final stages of intense 'writing up'. As is not uncommon, some of Luke's writing had long been under par—lacking the sophistication and depth required of a highly theoretical thesis. When I tried to explain that his writing was not 'academic enough' and that he still wrote like a Master's student rather than 'at Ph.D. level', he reacted badly. He cut short our conversation and left the meeting. Since then our interactions have been rather steely.

Scenario 3

My doctoral student has been a high school classroom teacher for over 35 years. His research is on second language acquisition—an issue about which he has very strong opinions. He is a great writer, teacher and communicator, and despite emigrating from Italy, his command of English language is exceptional. His thesis writing, however, is convoluted and dense. His sentences are long and complex. He writes passionately, at times infusing his work with hyperbole and flourish. He is determined that his views, born of extensive experience, find a place in the thesis. I am not sure how to proceed; so far he has failed to pick up on my feedback about the importance of being objective.

Scenario 4

One of my very capable students is at risk of not completing on time. She is demonstrably clever and contributes well to lab activities and discussions. She is popular amongst her peers, often helping others with their work. She has developed an active social media profile with a website and research blog where she posts stories and pictures from the field and communicates with a global network of researchers.

However, she regularly fails to deliver substantial pieces of writing—rather, she turns up to supervision meetings with pages of dot points and descriptions of what she is going to do. She often presents with yet another new idea. She doesn't stick to agreements about handing in work a week before our scheduled meeting, nor producing text in accordance with our discussions. She always has excuses—and grand plans for catching up. She has probably attended nearly every workshop available to HDR candidates.

Discussion of such scenarios helps supervisors to realize that they are not alone with the complexities of writing feedback.

Doctoral Writing and Decision-Making in the First Few Months

Susan Carter

I'm working with a promising new doctoral student and conversations are mainly around scoping her project. I'll call her Angel, although she uses her Chinese name. Our talk circles round the decisions that need to be made in the first year, and preferably in the first few months. It's a process of thinking, choosing and writing. First, decisions are approached at different levels.

We begin with identifying the problem that is driving the research. I want her to write that clearly. This leads to how her doctoral project might produce better understanding of the problem with a goal to mitigating it. One set of considerations regards methods and methodology. Will her project be mixed methods, and which? Will the triangulation of these methods be likely to show something really useful? How much data will be needed? How will it be gathered? How will she delimit what is in the study and what is not?

At the same time, we both want to find the shortest route to completion—Angel's left a toddler at home with her diligent parents and her husband and wants to finish quickly and to be reunited with them. She's coping well with the emotions associated with this and her supportive family believe that they will all benefit from her doctorate. Yet the separation is still sometimes overwhelming; the unfamiliar Christmas celebration with its joyful tableau of mother and son, and its focus on family, brought an unexpected rush of tears. Desire for the fastest, smoothest route is not just about institutional desire for timely submissions: it relates to quality of life.

So we are considering the scope of Angel's work and thesis carefully: how much will be enough to be a Ph.D.? Questions about scoping take us back to the literature, and to other theses in the field. I'm also keen that Angel designs a research approach that she will enjoy rather than simply applying other people's approaches. The methods she gains expertise in during her doctorate may well be ones she uses again after completion.

At another level, we are thinking about the best possible doctorate to give Angel the future that she most wants. She intends to return to her homeland to develop her career there, so is looking at the kinds of jobs her Ph.D. might prepare her for. She's considering at what level she would prefer to work: in a university department, in a university management role, in a government role with leadership in Educational policy making…. She also needs to think about where she and her family might like to live, given that her husband and the grandparents would be involved.

I'm encouraging Angel to write as we go through these conversations. We run through the pros and cons of different options in our meetings, and she writes this reasoning down in the week before the next meeting. This enables her to capture the small details of decisions likely to slide out of mind when it comes to defending her methods in writing later. Some of what she produces will fit neatly into her introduction; some will go to the more detailed methodology section.

Where possible, she is building literature that informs her choice into her Endnote library and into this early writing. This is partly for safekeeping from the limitations of memory, and it also establishes the habit of linking her project to literature and capturing that linkage in writing.

Another benefit is that we have begun working together on writing, a pleasurable part of supervision from my perspective. We are establishing expectations for meeting deadlines with writing and feedback, and trust with that. I'm figuring how to scaffold her development to where she is a confident fluent writer in English; we are both learning who the other one is, and how to best develop together as a team. For a start, Angel is learning to listen to my curious kiwi accent….

Bad Supervision? Or Bad Communication? Avoiding Complaints in Supervision—The Importance of Good Communication

Claire Aitchison

No one wants trouble in doctoral candidature, but unfortunately, sometimes things can go bad.
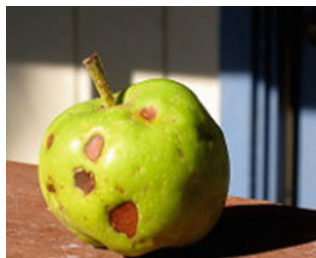
Photo by Alan Levine Flickr
Creative Commons

In 2017/2018 the New South Wales Ombudsman released a discussion paper *Complaints about the Supervision of Post-Graduate Students*. That Paper, later superseded by a Report, described the cases as 'exceptionally difficult to deal with', highly complex and emotional, and requiring 'very considerable resources' (p. 2). While supervision-related complaints may not be disproportional compared to other student complaints, the human costs can be considerable, threatening student, supervisor and institutional wellbeing and reputations.

The Paper describes complaints received, processes for handling complaints, institutional policies and procedures, contributing factors, and suggestions for ways forward. The Office surveyed all NSW institutions, reviewed institutional policies, and conducted follow-up interviews with selected staff and students, and student representative bodies.

Of course, most complaints about postgraduate supervision are handled within the institutions themselves; it's relatively rare that cases are taken to the Ombudsman. Nevertheless, the initial Paper and subsequent Report leave no doubt about the significance of the matters and of the importance for institutions—let alone the parties directly involved—for finding better ways of heading off and then, if necessary, for handling disputes. The severity of such matters is indicated by their list of examples:

1. Allegations that supervisors have plagiarised students' work
2. Allegations that supervisors deliberately destroyed students' research material or otherwise acted to sabotage students' research
3. Illegal tape recordings made by students of interviews with their supervisors
4. Threats of suicide
5. Complaints about a university responding inappropriately to threats of suicide
6. Allegations of criminal conduct and/or sexual harassment and/or racist conduct by supervisors
7. Conduct on the part of students towards their supervisors that could be potentially regarded as criminal, threatening or stalking to the extent that either universities or academics personally have had to seek restraining orders.

By identifying factors that contribute to the incidence and gravity of grievances, the Paper indicates where we can make improvements.

The Report points to the following:

1. Inadequate or poorly timed information for students and supervisors about processes and practices

2. Limited 'training' of supervisors for handling difficult situations and for max-
   imising productive communication. For example, there were instances where
   students genuinely didn't realise a supervisor was giving them bad news
3. Diverse, obscure and sometimes inadequate institutional policies vis-à-vis stu-
   dent and supervisor responsibilities that could help avoid problems (e.g., expecta-
   tions for record keeping, feedback and meeting arrangements), and for identifying
   and handling grievances and resolving conflicts
4. Often inadequate internal processes for 'tracking' and responding to repeated
   complaints against a supervisor
5. Inadequate, poorly timed and unclear processes for resolving conflicts and no
   clearly identifiable, trusted 'go to' people and systems.

Communication Within the Supervisory Team
The Report infers that the traditional, intimate model of supervision that involves
numerous private, unrecorded meetings and agreements between individual students
and supervisors can be problematic. Without record-keeping processes that are mutu-
ally accepted and valued, misunderstandings and unmatched memories of events can
go unchecked—and potentially escalate what would otherwise be minor matters.

We know that when the supervisory space is opened out to 'community' or 'mixed'
models (McCallin & Nayar, 2012) involving supervisory teams, writing support
groups and experts, peers in coursework arrangements, and so on, opportunities for
openness and transparency increase. The safety net is widened.

Honest and Productive Communication Is Hard
Communication is a key issue for causing—and resolving—problems.

The Report noted that more frequent and better-recorded meetings and agreements
can make a huge difference for dispute avoidance and settling. When the discussion
is taken into a written form, it needs to adequately and respectfully document the
issues raised in an agreed fashion. It's important that students are actively and openly
involved in this process; for example, they may take on the job of recording and
circulating supervision meeting 'minutes'.

It is also recommended that all parties make good use of existing institutional
reporting mechanisms. Mostly these reporting processes are under-utilised for noting
and addressing concerns—and not everyone has faith in the system, often for good
reason (see Mewburn, Tokareva, Cuthbert, Sinclair, & Barnacle, 2013).

There may be some lag between having a concern and recording it. For example,
supervisors may have concerns about a student's progress, writing or ability for
some time before raising it with the student—after all, many things get resolved in
the course of the candidature. Raising concerns and handling the discussion is the
first step—but can be hugely difficult and requires keen judgment, careful timing
and sensitivity. A supervisor may be sensitive to other problems in the student's life
and decide to delay delivering what may be construed as additional bad news. Many
supervisors will feel uncomfortable sharing their reservations, and even when they
do raise them with students, they may hesitate to document their concerns for fear it
could escalate matters, negatively impact the relationship, or undermine a student's
confidence.

It is understandable that a student will hesitate to record anything that may be construed as negative or potentially critical of their supervisor or institution. This is an unequal power relationship—even without taking into account personal, cultural or gendered issues. It is really tricky territory—but is even more difficult when the individuals involved are isolated and lack confidence in their capacity to communicate in a way that is cognizant of the local sensitivities and contextual interrelationships. The 'complaint genre' is not one many of us are experienced in.

We all know how hard it can be to commit other-than-positive statements to paper. For both students and supervisors, getting advice and feedback from a trusted and knowledgeable third party can be crucial for clarifying one's thinking and for the tricky process of constructing the written documentation of concerns. Institutions have a responsibility here.

In the Ombudsman's Discussion Paper, international students are singled out as a special case—not because they represent statistically greater numbers of reported problems but because complex visa, sponsorship and financial concerns add additional levels of difficulty for these students. In addition, some students have different perceptions of respect and face-saving that could influence their propensity to complain. Equally, some international students may harbour deep distrust of bureaucratic processes and thus resist recording concerns, no matter how valid.

As this Report reminds us, it is difficult to overstate the importance of regular, transparent, and mutually respectful communication, for successful and rewarding supervisory experiences.

Can You Care Too Much? Supervisors, Students and Writing in the Academy

Claire Aitchison

I have been reflecting on this idea of caring—and especially on the possibility, and consequences, of 'caring too much'.

Recently I spent time with a friend and colleague who was contemplating leaving the academy. Despite caring very deeply about her discipline, institution and faculty—and having devoted decades of her life to these things—an accumulation of issues was causing her severe discomfort. What struck me was her comment: 'It's reached a stage where I just don't care anymore.' I wish this had been the first time I'd heard a respected colleague say this. Unfortunately, in my work as a consultant across a wide variety of institutions, I hear this sentiment all too often: both from research students and academics. And more than once I've heard the corollary advice: 'You care too much; that's your problem!'

What brings people to a point when they no longer care? What does it mean to care too much or not enough, and what's the effect on doctoral writing?

Scenario 1: Passionate Beliefs

In one of my doctoral writing groups, a participant offered feedback to her peer saying her writing was 'too emotional'. Others agreed. Someone said something along the lines of 'I have a background in activism myself, so I see where you're coming from, but my supervisor has taught me to remove the passion.'

We all felt uneasy for the author because she felt so deeply about her topic—but we also thought there was some truth in the feedback she received from the group. Olga expressed surprise at how clear her feelings were, saying 'And, I thought I'd toned it down!'

Personally, I respond negatively to an over-emotional account because I find it unconvincing—I enjoy being challenged by a well-argued position, rather than by a passionately held one.

These are some of the tell-tale signs of an overly emotional piece of writing:

1. Exaggerated (and unsubstantiated) claims, such as 'the general public is ignorant of these facts' rather than 'the research showed that this is rarely taught in schools nor raised in the media'.
2. The use of value-laden words, e.g., 'the community's unjustified prejudices' rather than 'the community's response grew out of an historical event …'.
3. Bias or stereotyping of groups, e.g., 'their typical over-reaction'.
4. When an author works in binaries. Black and white thinking disallows a nuanced attention to complexity and signals an author's selective reading of the literature.
5. Failure to acknowledge, in any serious way, alternative perspectives, evidence and viewpoints. This is often evidenced in the text by scant use of hedging or modalities or the absence of certain literature.
6. Overuse of adjectives or adverbs, e.g., 'outrageous and hideous slaughter'.

When writing is characterised by these elements, it loses credibility—the author has positioned themselves as a passionate believer in a cause rather than an objective scholar. Passion is good, but care needs to be taken as to how that translates in the writing.

Scenario 2: Letting Go

> 'I'll write it like he wants: I just don't care anymore.'
> 'I'm over it: let's just get this finished!'

I suspect those who work as writing support staff outside the supervisory relationship will have heard similar confessions—from both students and supervisors.

The doctoral journey is an exhausting one and it is understandable that students and supervisors can reach a point where the need to move on overrides the desire to make perfect text. Everyone can feel worn down in the very final stages of the Ph.D. What may have seemed important early on, may become less so in retrospect and especially in comparison with the desire to complete. I've seen once dearly held visions, for example, for a certain kind of writerly voice, or beautifully presented

doctoral thesis, abandoned in the last six months. In other cases a supervisor may feel their student's work isn't as good as it could be, but that it's good enough to get across the line and so theses and scholarly journal papers are submitted prematurely (Paré, 2010).

There are points in this journey, too, when even the most capable authors can get stuck from caring too much about their writing. Writing fast and without care is a powerful antidote for the kind of writers' block that comes from striving for perfection (Elbow, 1981).

Scenario 3: 'S/he Just Doesn't Care'

Each person in the supervisory relationship will bring different levels of care to the task. Some supervisors 'care' more than others. One may argue that students will care more about their project than those on the panel, and that a supervisor's care will be closely tied up with a care for their reputation—perhaps even eclipsing their care for a student.

But can a supervisor care too much? I've recently pondered a situation where this may be the case: a very capable student was cautioned against what was perceived to be a high-risk project. The supervisor was not well experienced in the alternative methodology favoured by the student and wanted to avoid trouble. I know the supervisor was motivated by a care to protect the student from harm—to minimise the risk of delayed completion, or worse, a poor examination outcome. In the end the student took the 'safe' option: a project that was eminently doable, but unlikely to stretch the student or challenge the field. Sadly too, it was a project that the student didn't really care for.

I am also aware of the human cost to both students and supervisors whose care drives them perhaps beyond reasonable limits, making a work–life balance impossible. There are very real dangers for those who 'care too much' in an accelerated academy where expectations for written productivity are ever increasing. Some supervisors put extraordinary hours of care into their students, and not all institutions adequately acknowledge and reward this.

Passion is good: after all a student will need to be passionate about their topic to last the (doctoral) distance. Some topics will always engender strong responses: for example, where there are victims and perpetrators and deep political, cultural and social divides, as with genocide, the treatment of refugees or rape. But I have been prompted to think that it's not bad sometimes to care less passionately—that is, I'm advocating the value of standing back to get some emotional distance to be able to bring more objectivity to one's thinking and writing.

When it comes to it, perhaps the most valuable thing about caring is that it provides the moral foundation and energy for sustaining one's motivation.

Controlling the Emotion of Doctoral Writing and Supervision

Susan Carter

As an academic of some years standing, I don't get emotional about writing. I know I need to do it; it's part of my job. I like doing it more than much of the work I do each week, but even when writing is not a pleasure, it is still a job that I am responsible for completing. And I expect to be hammered by reviewers, including kindly peers. I see writing feedback as a gift (Guerin, 2014) even though, like others, I mutter abuse when reviewers seem to want to colonise my articles with their own voice or their own approach.

The gift of rigorous feedback takes some getting used to. Gifts like chocolates cause pleasure, but are not that good for you, nor, as a gift, do they show real engagement with who you uniquely are. When the gift of feedback includes a real pounding, it is like deep tissue massage and acupuncture: it hurts, but usually it helps and feels so much better later. So I am aware of harbouring unkind thoughts when doctoral students appear to be drama queens about how impossible it is to write. Although I am outwardly patient, I know inside that all I want to do is find a means of getting them writing again. I want them to learn to handle emotion, control it and move to where they see it as just part of the weird career choice they have made: to become proficient in academic literacy.

Supervisors are usually more aware than their doctoral students of the need to take a practical, workerly stance to writing. We forget that the construction of identity through voice can be deeply troublesome. As a friendly colleague, I am able to simply back out of an emotionally charged conversation—as a supervisor, I cannot. As a supervisor, I express empathy so as not to seem monstrous, but I'm always looking for the opening to move the student back into productivity as soon as possible, with 'why don't you try….?' Probably there is always an emotional disconnect between how the student and the supervisor feel whenever student writing stalls.

What Level of English Competence Is Enough for Doctoral Students?

Cally Guerin

I am regularly involved in assessing the English language skills of international students, which has made me think yet again about this vexed issue and just how complex it is to accurately assess language levels, especially under high-stakes exam conditions.

In Australia, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is commonly used to determine English language competency. All four language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) are tested in four separate parts of the

exam unlike the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which is conducted online and integrates writing, reading and listening tasks.

At my university, international students are required to have an entry level IELTS score of 6.5 or higher. This is equivalent to the 79–93 range in TOEFL. But what do these numbers mean? IELTS explains:

IELTS Band 7: Good User
Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

IELTS Band 6: Competent User
Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

These competency levels sound adequate; however, some supervisors may question their value when they are faced with poor student writing. Maybe sentences have small errors such as absent or misused articles (a, the), uncountable nouns used as plurals (researches or evidences), lack of agreement between subject and verb (participants has reported), or wrong word forms (have observe).

On the whole, I'm not too fussed about such 'surface errors'. So long as the sentence structure is more or less in place, and the reader can understand what the student is getting at, I am more than willing to work with that. But I am aware that, as a former English language teacher, I bring particular skills to this task that others may not necessarily have.

Working as an editor for academics whose first language was not English also taught me useful lessons about writing and English competence. In that position, my employing company policy stated that editors were not to intervene with 'corrections' unless there was actually a mistake. There is an important distinction between actual errors and personal preferences that is relevant to doctoral students too. When we urge doctoral writers to 'find your own voice', they may choose to include some stylistic quirks that are not strictly conventional in academic writing, yet communicate valuable aspects of their own perspective on the topic. Again, it's necessary to consider whether or not it is 'wrong', or whether it might be quite acceptable to many academic readers.

I think it's also important to recognise what an author is achieving in their writing, rather than focusing on what is not grammatically accurate. For example, doctoral writers should be commended for ensuring that all the relevant information is present and properly referenced; that the overall argument is structured into a logical sequence; and that the headings and paragraphing clearly communicate the central ideas. That is, supervisors can encourage students by taking time to acknowledge what is right and build student confidence through positive feedback and encouragement.

Writing Support from Generic Learning Advisors Compared to Supervisors

Doctoral Writing: The Value of Learning Advisors

Susan Carter

I was talking to a doctoral student who is nearing the final stages of her thesis. She wished her supervisors would make clear, practical suggestions about writing—as I had just done from a generic advisor position, causing her evident relief and a mini-breakthrough. (In New Zealand 'learning advisors' play a similar role to academic support roles known elsewhere as writing teachers or language and literacy advisors.)

She also suggested that mature students were maybe more interested in just getting the job done rather than beating metaphoric bushes—for example, the thickets of theory that might harbour other possible writing directions. Yet she suspected that supervisors saw it as good teaching to beat those bushes and send students chasing after the ideas that might emerge.

Our discussion made me think about the differences between supervisory feedback on writing and feedback from others outside the supervision team.

Are there clear delineations between the levels (content, clarity, grammar, punctuation, style, structure, etc.) on which supervisors give writing feedback compared to that from learning advisors? Or is it just luck as to how much time and interest supervisors and learning advisors have?

Supervisors vary in their availability, and some very diligent supervisors simply lack the skills to talk clearly and constructively about writing (Paré, 2011). Learning advisors, on the other hand, are experts in writing at almost all levels, and talk that talk really well, but they may lack the discipline expertise that would let them work efficiently (Strauss, 2013), although ignorance can be a great advantage too, in prompting students to explain things more clearly (Laurs, 2014).

Learning advisor support may be available but ignored by students who avoid what they see as the negative associations of the deficit model of generic support. That is a pity, because it has much to offer that supplements supervisory support. Different learning cultures will mean different expectations (Wu, 2013), sometimes troublingly so (Fovotation, 2013). Clusters of doctoral students who find structure or style problematic, or who happen to be grappling with the literature review, will benefit from working with others at the same point in the writing process. For that reason, support outside of supervision becomes an important scaffolding to student learning.

Sometimes learning support might provide encouragement and advice to doctoral students whose first language is not English, before they send writing to their supervisor (Carter, 2009). But sometimes it will be the supervisor who despairingly sends the student to a learning advisor after considerable frustrations. Supervisor frustration can lead to comments that demoralise students and cause them to lose confidence.

So often the borderlands between supervisory and learning advisor feedback on writing are traversed by people who are having difficult times with writing. Yet some institutions don't allow learning advisors to work closely with research students, and their limited availability bodes ill for those students who need more than a supervisor's advice. In other instances, learning advisor engagement with doctoral writing means that they influence the thesis significantly, usually with resulting improvement in clarity.

Doctoral Writing: Who's Who in (and Outside) Your Zoo?

Claire Aitchison

In this post I want to explore whose responsibility doctoral writing is.

Of course, **doctoral students** have some responsibility for developing their writing and moving it beyond that which was considered acceptable for undergraduate study. But not all commencing doctoral students have the same writing competencies for advanced academic work. Increasingly, doctoral researchers enter research degree programs from diverse pathways—perhaps having been away from university for years, coming from industry, being 'end of career' candidates, or coming from quite different cultural, linguistic or educational backgrounds. To mix metaphors: it isn't a level playing field at the start line.

In Australia, **supervisors** are responsible for making the initial judgement that a thesis is ready to be submitted. But this does not necessarily mean the supervisor has responsibility for *developing* the writing to that point. Studies have identified a reluctance by supervisors to carry the responsibility for developing their students' writing (see Paré, 2011; Catterall, Ross, Aitchison & Burgin, 2011). Some supervisors report a lack of skills, confidence or interest in writing—rather they see their job as building research skills or as disciplinary experts. And with shorter completion times and additional bureaucratic and auditing burdens on supervisors, some find they simply do not have time to oversee their students' writing.

When we look beyond the student–supervisor dyad, the picture gets even more muddled.

Institutions themselves are not always clear about whose job 'writing' is. Murray and Cunningham (2011) argue that institutions are responsible for developing writing where those institutions benefit from research publications.

In the North American tradition, freshman rhetoric and composition courses inform undergraduate writing, but it seems only belatedly is there a recognition that doctoral students should be able to access similar support.

In Australia and New Zealand, doctoral writing is frequently attended to by **centralised units** such as Graduate Schools, Learning Centres, Academic Development Units, or Schools of Education. Support may include face-to-face or online workshops, programmes, intensives, writing retreats and so on, mostly not-for-credit and

not compulsory. Typically, these courses focus on writing skills, processes, or genres, covering things like writing literature reviews or conference abstracts, writing for scholarly journals, structure, editing, and so on. Course provision may involve in-house writing specialists, linguists or literacy lecturers, as well as visiting experts, or disciplinary experts in writing and publishing. Individual disciplinary groups or Research Centres may also offer various writing support directly to their students.

There is also another, less-well acknowledged source of doctoral writing 'help'. I am talking about what appears to be a rapidly growing, sometimes hidden, market of **non-institutional writing support** mostly accessed via the Internet. In my own work with doctoral students over the last two decades, I have been aware of the increasing uptake of such services by students. I am aware, too, of a growing industry of retired or under-employed academics who offer services as writing consultants, mentors, editors and coaches. As far as I know, this burgeoning industry is little documented and much of it unregulated. I believe too, that many institutions and/or supervisors are unaware of the extent, or nature, of uptake of these services by their doctoral students.

It seems to me that as long as institutions don't recognise the centrality of writing to the doctoral project, and as long as we fail to provide systematic and integrated writing support into/within degree programmes, then students will seek help with their writing wherever they can find it. And as a consequence, their experiences will be uneven, and even unhelpful or inappropriate.

Who Is Helping Your Doctoral Student Write Their Thesis?

Claire Aitchison

At the Quality in Postgraduate Research (QPR) conference 2014, my colleague, Susan Mowbray, and I spoke about our research into doctoral writing service providers external to the conferring university. The motivation for the project arose from a dilemma in my work at the time—I needed to find individual long-term, intensive writing support for a doctoral student, and my university didn't have the resources to help.

Our research aimed to investigate the scope and nature of writing service providers available to doctoral scholars and to get a better sense of who such providers are.

Our enquiries led us to realise that there was a considerable demand for this kind of support—and that there was an extraordinary variety of people and organisations promoting their services. Our study identified over 158 sites simply from entering six doctoral-writing-related internet search terms. Our analysis showed the diversity of service provision—from the fully legitimate, transparent and regulated to the highly questionable.

In a world where so much of our life is lived online and serviced by markets, it is not surprising that there should be a burgeoning of online commercial doctoral

writing support. However, although we only scratched the surface, what surprised us was the global reach and diversity of such provision and, paradoxically, how little is really known about this clandestine world.

As we attempted to interpret what was going on, we constructed a continuum of services in relation to the market and to notions of teaching and learning. At one end of the continuum were market-based providers and at the other end the free or 'gift' economy. The majority of fee-for-service providers at the market end of the continuum sell text-based services such as editing, proofing and formatting, and, it would appear, even contractual writing. This group includes highly professional enterprises allied to professional associations with transparent company and service details. There was also, however, a large number of providers whose advertising raised more questions than answers in regard to their business professionalism, capabilities and authenticity—let alone their capacity to deliver quality.

Moving along the continuum we identified others who were offering more developmental services such as extended personal support, mentoring, coaching, and short courses for writing and research development, blogs and online conferences/training. Some of these providers were delivering to institutions as well as to individual doctoral students. In our interview phase, in general, we were impressed with the professionalism and expertise of these providers and of their genuine engagement with supporting scholars' writing development.

At the 'gift economy' end of the spectrum we identified a small number of socially networked, collaborative writing support opportunities in the form of blogs and online communities that showcased and shared research and writing interests. Our readers are no doubt already familiar with these online communities.

While the research project was only small and far from conclusive, it raises some big questions for those of us who care about doctoral scholarship and writing. In interviews, providers claimed that their clients included 'all sorts': working academics, native and non-native speakers of English and many whose experiences with supervision were unsatisfactory.

So why is there such a big market offering doctoral writing and research support? Does this healthy demand for external help signal a failure on the part of institutions to provide adequate support to their enrolled scholars? And how do/should institutions interface with these providers? Is it acceptable, equitable or desirable for students to independently pay for such help? Or should we see it as a natural outcome—indeed a logical response—to a system that advocates autonomous doctoral scholarship?

Our investigations also raised serious questions about the quality and legitimacy of some services. The 'industry' isn't regulated. As we explored the more questionable online sites, we became acutely concerned about the potential for fraud; for the flow-on negative effects for legitimate service providers; and for the potential undermining of the reputation and integrity of doctoral scholarship more broadly.

Feedback on Doctoral Writing

Feedback in Doctoral Writing: Why Is It so Different?

Claire Aitchison

In workshops on feedback I often ask participants to share memorable experiences as givers or receivers of feedback—and boy, have I heard some beauties! Rarely is anyone stuck for something to say, and groups often recoil in shock and laughter as individuals tell their tales. One of my favourite stories comes from a very senior academic professor who recounted how her doctoral supervisor scrawled all over her near-to-final thesis, 'Total rubbish!' 'Crap!' 'Nowhere near ready for submission'—and so on. After she had recovered from the shock, she consulted with her co-supervisor, decided to ignore the feedback, and submitted. She was rewarded with brilliant Ph.D. examiner reports. Stories of bad experiences proliferate; however, there are also wonderful examples of timely, rewarding, satisfying feedback.

No doubt you can tell your own good story.

In an undergraduate context, the tasks, learning goals and assessment criteria are clear and student and teacher roles more stable, better defined. Feedback occurs when teachers mark student writing, grading it with commentary. For most undergraduates, their primary relationship is with other students; they may have little or no relationship with their teacher marker.

By contrast, in doctoral study the relationship between student and teacher (supervisor) is all-important and often mediated, perhaps even defined, through the processes of giving and receiving feedback on submitted writing. In some cases, doctoral candidates and their supervisors only ever meet in order to discuss the candidate's progress as monitored and measured through the student's writing.

Doctoral feedback is unique because it is nested within a set of intimate relationships where relational connections and responsibilities may be ill-defined, and will alter over time. Furthermore, this dynamic situation is overlaid by institutional and disciplinary norms, practices and expectations. Oh, and of course, there's the personal dimension. Individual styles and personality differences infuse and at times can override everything else, and yet, this interrelationship must be sustained—for years. Now, that certainly makes for a high-stakes environment!

One of the outcomes of this complex social arrangement is that the whole process of giving and receiving feedback on student writing can carry with it the heavy and additional burden of this interplay of power, responsibility and personality. It goes without saying that soliciting, giving and receiving feedback is difficult anyway, but when this involves changing responsibilities and expectations, additional strains are placed on what is already an emotional space.

Add panel supervision to the mix and there's potential for a myriad of additional tricky situations requiring high levels of sensitivity and good will, and sophisticated negotiating skills. There's rarely a single, simple fix to the kinds of issues that arise,

but sometimes it helps to think through the possibilities. For example, what's your response to these situations?

What if a student prioritises the feedback of one supervisor over the other—especially if the principal supervisor's feedback is ignored? How should supervisors act when they hold different views about a student's work? Should supervisors make allowances when their student feels more humiliated in panel feedback sessions than in private one-on-one meetings? Should supervisors make their disagreements known in front of the student? What if it is one of the supervisors who is the wayward party—guilty of returning work late, cancelling supervision meetings, or giving poor feedback? What if the student regularly fails to submit work, or to act on the feedback? Should co-supervisors be expected to be familiar with the feedback given by other panel members?

Why Do Supervisors Contradict Themselves? Development of Feedback

Cally Guerin

One of the ongoing challenges for doctoral writers is the confusion (and frustration) that arises when supervisors seem to change their opinions. It can look like supervisors contradict themselves if they offer feedback on writing, and then later advise something different. I think there are several reasons why this can happen.

Firstly, in research, things change over time. Furthermore, doctoral writing is a recursive process (Paré, 2011)—it is not a simple report on facts. Rather, writing at this level is run through with abstraction and theorisation. Slowly the author works through versions of the writing to find meaning. Sometimes, what seems appropriate and viable as an interpretation is no longer quite so convincing later when sitting alongside other elements of the research. New emphases appear along the way, and the project can subtly shift direction, rendering previous feedback redundant. Just as we think of the writing developing, perhaps supervisors should think of their feedback as also developing in response to increasing detail and complexity.

Secondly, the writer's identity as a disciplinary researcher also emerges over time as the project proceeds (Castello, Inesta, & Corcelles, 2013). While still in the process of getting to know a new student and developing a working relationship, many supervisors will avoid being overly critical. Feedback is presented using the 'sandwich' technique, bracketing suggestions for improvement with praise for what has already been achieved in the writing. But as the supervisor builds a better sense of the student's capacity, and their ability to respond to criticism, they may push this writer into more complex thinking. If the student displays the potential to take on more risk and creativity, the writing that might have been regarded as adequate in the early stages now receives more stringent feedback.

Furthermore, supervisors generally try not to overwhelm the student with too much feedback. I'd encourage supervisors to focus on just one or two elements at any given time. For example, early drafts may benefit from feedback that engages with the big picture such as content and overall structure of the argument; later on, as the draft firms up, it might be more useful to drill down to the argument and sentence structure. (After all, it seems a waste of effort to spend time on detailed editing of a section that is not going to be included in the final version of the thesis—unless the purpose is to help train the student's skills in being able to edit their own work.)

And finally, as a supervisor has more time to reflect on the project and nuances, original impressions of the writing may be reconsidered. The supervisor may come up with new or better ideas, for example, about the structure. Supervisors will need to see how various options play out before being able to determine which is the best.

Supervisors might find it useful to talk directly with students about this process as part of the feedback. And it is worth reminding students sometimes that supervisors are not superhuman! Frustrating as it can be from a student's perspective, supervisors are learning about the research project in parallel with the student. The feedback is developing while the writing is developing.

I Just Don't Get It! Why Don't You like My Writing?

Cally Guerin

This post considers how, despite the best will in the world, sometimes students simply don't seem to understand what supervisors are trying to tell them. Recently I've observed a supervisor working closely with a student and providing detailed feedback on various levels—sentence structure, overall document structure, and the big ideas aspects of the thesis—and yet the student didn't appear to understand what was being asked of her. The feedback is provided in both written and oral forms, everyone is trying really hard to do the right thing, and yet no progress is being made. This has pushed me to consider what else is needed to get the message across about why the writing is just not working.

Students may not recognise what is valued in academic writing. For example, what students might regard as weak because it is only 'subjective opinion', we might regard as the necessary expression of critical judgement.

Doctoral writing doesn't necessarily respond well to the kind of marking rubrics common in undergraduate writing where very specific criteria can be provided. Nevertheless, is certainly possible to establish some criteria to help us assess doctoral writing, and I've found Boote and Beile's (2005) work very helpful in this regard. However, a checklist is a blunt instrument when it comes to the subtle nuances and elements of voice and genre required at doctoral level—and without those elements, the writing simply doesn't pass muster.

Sometimes it is not enough simply to tell a novice writer what to do, nor even to demonstrate the process and ask them to explain the reasons for the revisions,

particularly if the issues are broader than expression. Rather than direct instruction, it would seem that some students need to establish for themselves the difference between the current writing and the desired product. I wonder if part of what is going on here relates to a basic principle of adult learning (Lieb, 1991)—being autonomous and self-directed. There are some things that we need to work out for ourselves, that we need to discover rather than be instructed about. I'm not suggesting that we should abandon students who are struggling to understand; rather, it seems that some elements of writing are better learnt through guided self-critique instead of being told 'the answer'.

One standard practice is for academics to provide models of the kind of desired writing. However, the next step needs to be a comparison between the model and the student's own writing. And it seems necessary for the student to do this for themselves—it just doesn't seem to have the same impact if the supervisor or learning advisor points out the differences. By actively identifying and explaining the differences between the two pieces for themselves, students can start to notice the ways in which their own writing is not matching the model.

Doctoral Writing and Feedback: Moving on from Negative Emotion

Susan Carter

I've just had the amazing experience of getting to know Professor Rowena Murray from the University of the West of Scotland. We spent a pleasant few hours talking while working with the community gardeners in the village of Lochwinnoch. While weeding, we discussed how students might learn to manage their emotions, resolve differences between themselves and their supervisors, and be aware of their own personal development from handling something well recognised as challenging: receipt of critical feedback.

It seems important to explain to students that feeling as though they are being criticised personally, although misguided, is pretty common. Barbara Kamler and Pat Thomson express writing's personal involvement well: 'Writing is a physical, emotional and aesthetic labour…. Many students carry their scholarship deep in their psyche, bones and muscle' (Kamler & Thomson, 2006, p. 4). Lucia Thesen recognised high emotion as a significant risk when facilitating peer writing groups for research students, while also noting that the informality of such groups makes them a place where laughter can release that emotion (Thesen, 2014). Feedback from supervisors is formal, though, a gift of their expertise and time and is generally evaluative—and that can lead to feeling hurt.

Photo by Susan Carter

Not inevitably, though. I'm analysing data from 80 doctoral students describing the first time they got supervisory feedback. One doctoral student remembered laughing with disbelief:

> When my first chapter of writing was returned by my primary supervisor, I was enormously relieved to see very positive comments in the accompanying email. Therefore, I was a tad taken aback to open the word file and find it smothered in virtual red pen. My initial reaction was to burst out laughing, welcome to academia, I thought.

Laughter is renowned as therapeutic. Writing about writing, Lamott (1995) sees the importance of humour. Lightening up lets you step out of emotional darkness.

My data are telling me that, commonly, doctoral students experience anger, despair and self-doubt when supervisors give them feedback. Doctoral students are used to high grades. Critique of writing during the doctorate can seem an unexpected blow.

Rowena and I agreed that it is important to acknowledge emotion but not to wallow in it. Lamott (1995) relates emotional survival of writing feedback to emotional survival of grief and other life challenges—as doctoral students learn to handle the writing feedback process, they should note that they are learning life-skills of real value. My own method for handling my negative emotion—anger, despair or grief—is to recognise it and then decide what to do with it. I'm not willing to stay hurt or angry. I find it boring. Being amused by the behaviour of the human species, including myself and my own, is often how I like to go.

I would recommend the following:

1. Diplomatically give supervisor feedback on the feedback process.
2. Tell the feedback story as a joke to another doctoral student—you'll help them to know that the hammering they endure on their own prose is just part of academic culture. This genre is well rehearsed by Jorges Cham in his popular Ph.D. comics.
3. Then settle down and go through, bit by bit, doing the easiest tasks first.
4. Congratulate yourself on how effective you are when under fire.

To the student who really feels unable to work with a supervisor, I'd suggest the following. Ask yourself:

1. What exactly is not working with writing feedback from your point of view?
2. How might it be advantageous to you to bail out of this supervisory relationship?
3. What do you lose by changing supervisor?

One middle-route tactic is to consider where else might you get more useful feedback on writing. Tactful openness with the supervisor is essential, so it's important to let supervisors know that you have joined a writing group, are taking up writing support from a learning advisor, or would like to add another academic to your advisory team. And certainly wait to make sure that the negative emotions you are experiencing are true symptoms of something unworkable rather than just a short-term response. A majority of my study's participants experienced negative emotion—mainly anxiety—on first submission of writing and half of those felt worse after getting their work back. That is something for supervisors to think about.

Disembodied Feedback on Writing

Cally Guerin

I've been thinking lately about the challenges of providing feedback on writing for remote doctoral students (that is, students who do not work on the same campus as their supervisors). When face-to-face discussion about writing is not possible, how do we optimise the feedback that students receive?

These thoughts have been sparked by an interest in coming to grips with what is lost in the disembodiment that comes with some digital communication. For example, peer-reviewing journal articles is strictly a one-way process.

In doctoral study, unlike blind review, students have an existing relationship with supervisors and the research, so that the feedback is contextualised. But there are also important parallels between peer review and supervisors' written feedback, as Aitchison points out (2014). Indeed, with the increasing focus on theses by publication, it may well be a doctoral student receiving that peer review on a journal article.

Comments on writing must be framed respectfully in both blind review and in supervision relationships—that goes without saying—and constructive critique needs to be delivered in encouraging, positive and helpful terms. But perhaps the main difference is that supervisors have a greater responsibility to develop students' knowledge and skills about writing.

However, just like peer review, supervisor feedback on writing has the potential to be misunderstood. If students receive only written feedback on their drafts, they may miss some of the nuances that accompany an enthusiastic nod, or a slight tilt of the head to indicate uncertainty. Face-to-face discussion also allows the supervisor

to respond immediately to the student's body language as they receive the feedback, providing opportunities to ascertain levels of understanding and/or emotional responses. I'm not suggesting here that words are inadequate—far from it—but that feedback is such a tricky and subtle part of the doctoral process that can easily be disrupted. Great care is required if the only form of feedback is to be in writing.

Synchronous video conferencing on platforms such as Skype or Zoom can go a long way to mitigating miscommunications. Our embodied selves communicate so much through tone of voice and body language. Two-way discussions, or 'learning conversations', about writing allow space to ask questions for clarification, to argue the case for not following supervisory advice, and to clarify the rationale for writing choices (Wisker, Robinson, Trafford, Warnes & Creighton, 2003; East, Bitchener, & Basturkmen, 2012).

Not Getting What You Need?: Strategies for Maximising Success from Feedback

Claire Aitchison

Most writers acknowledge the benefits of having a reading audience of one kind or another.

But not all readers are equal, nor is all feedback. Consider for a minute the difference between the kind of response you would expect from these different readers: a friendly academic colleague, a research supervisor/adviser, an examiner, a writing buddy or writing group peer, an anonymous scholarly reviewer, a spouse. Each of these involves different power relations, according to relationships and socially mediated practices associated with the text itself, and the context.

Sometimes feedback practices, roles and procedures are explicit, perhaps even regulated. For example, the Ph.D. examiner is instructed to make particular judgements (typically about the contribution to knowledge, research expertise, and so on). Their interaction with the text has a pre-determined purpose that is independent of both the writer and the reader. Similarly, on submitting a manuscript to a journal or a grant application to a funding body, the writer submits themselves and their writing to a feedback process defined by pre-existing 'rules' over which they have little control. In both these instances, feedback is more summative (i.e., at the completion of the task) than formative (during the development of the text). The reader's role is mostly gatekeeper, examiner; less helper, teacher, mentor. However, in practice, it isn't necessarily so clear-cut.

By contrast, when we receive feedback from people known to us, we're perhaps able to have some influence on the process, the 'rules' are likely to be more flexible and the intention is developmental rather than summative. (Although—I have heard doctoral students say their harshest critic is their spouse, parent or child!)

Feedback will differ, not only according to the context, but also according to the skills and knowledge of the reader themselves. Sometimes we are lucky enough to have one reader who is sufficiently skilled to meet all our needs—someone who can give feedback on the big stuff (the quality of the ideas, the argument, knowledge of the field and so on), as well as critique sentence-level issues.

Feedback will also vary according to the writing submitted. Often a first draft has unclear ideas and imperfect grammar and punctuation. Typically, such early writing benefits most from feedback on the evolving ideas. In the absence of specific guidance, however, the reader may focus on sentence level matters, again causing frustration for both parties.

Guiding Feedback

You (mostly) get what you ask for. Hardly a revelation; and yet I am often surprised by how passive some writers are about the whole feedback cycle. The response you can expect from soliciting open, undirected feedback (e.g., 'What you think of this?') is anyone's guess. There are times when this kind of impressionistic feedback is just what we want, but often, vague requests, especially in combination with limited information about the manuscript, can produce unhelpful responses for the author and frustration for the reviewer.

There is much to be gained from directing feedback, especially at particular points in the process of constructing a manuscript, and especially for novice writers. Being an active feedback seeker means coming to know our own writerly habits, strengths and needs—and learning how these change over time. Being a pro-active feedback seeker sharpens our awareness of audience because it makes us think about the needs of the reader as we formulate our request for their critique.

In writing groups, we've established a practice whereby authors are expected to provide three pieces of information to guide their reviewers: 1. an indication of the maturity of the writing (e.g., first, middle or final draft); 2. the nature of the text (e.g., part of a chapter, introduction to a journal article, etc.); 3. the kind of feedback being sought (e.g., flow, argument, use of evidence, etc.).

It's not always possible, but some students have reported benefitting from incorporating these kinds of informational and agentic strategies for directing feedback when working with their supervisors.

Tough Self-scrutiny as a Doctoral Writing Tool

Susan Carter

This post is inspired by a lecture by John Bitchener, author of a guide to supervising non-native speakers of English (2017). Here I turn his observations into a checklist for student self-auditing.

But before we begin, a caveat we've often alerted students to: rigorous self-auditing, like writing review from others, is often disconcerting.

If students feel that feedback on their writing is more negative than they expected, they could consider how the following may have contributed.

1. A gap between undergraduate or Master's level and doctoral level, especially if prior educational experiences or qualifications were achieved in a different country from current doctoral study.
2. Incorrect assumptions about what a doctoral thesis should be—it is longer, more defensive and with greater emphasis on original contribution than may have been have understood.
3. Misalignment between theory and practice, or between knowledge and application, and uncertainty as to how to work between these dichotomies.
4. Lack of awareness of what theory *does* (as well as what it is).
5. Inappropriate use of hedging and emphasis. Getting just the right degree of emphasis can mean the difference between a statement being convincing or simply wrong.
6. An undeveloped argument at macro levels—the thesis of the thesis—and at micro levels within chapters.

This kind of self-auditing does several positive things. It improves the writing because students see what is not working and it gives students agency for their own learning and builds independence (Park, 2007). Perhaps most importantly, it teaches the habit of positive critical reflection that academics need to survive and to be good academic citizens. Critical self-auditing of writing quality is seldom easy, smooth and comfortable; finally graduating with a Ph.D. is so satisfying partly because it is recognises the high research quality produced by all that hammering.

Managing Feedback on Writing in Team Supervision

Cally Guerin

Team supervision has many advantages for doctoral candidates and supervisors, as demonstrated in the literature (see, for example, Guerin & Green, 2016; Kobayashi, Grout, & Rump, 2015; Lee, 2008; Manathunga, 2012; Robertson, 2017). But it can also bring some challenges, not least of which is how to handle the feedback from two or more supervisors who may not agree. This can become a source of anxiety for the student and can also create tension between supervisors. In some research I undertook with colleagues (Guerin, Green, & Bastalich, 2011), we talked to Ph.D. candidates about the logistics of managing feedback from a team of supervisors. We called the paper 'Big Love', since it seemed that part of the task was to keep everyone in the supervision team happy, much like the husband with multiple wives in the TV show of the same name.

When supervisor comments are in conflict, students can feel torn between whose ideas they ought to follow: the principal supervisor? The advice that makes most sense to the student? Or perhaps find some middle path that may not really address any of the opinions?

Three Ways to Manage the Logistics of Team Supervisor Feedback

Simultaneous Multiple Feedback

Some students send the piece of writing to all members of the supervisory team at the same time. This is followed up with a team meeting in which all members discuss the feedback together. The advantage of this system is that differences of opinion can be debated openly and (hopefully) a resolution reached. Alternatively, some students take the written feedback to team meetings and direct the supervisors' attention to conflicting advice, again seeking consensus. This might be confronting for everyone involved, but also creates spaces to practise the skills of managing an academic debate.

The downside of sending drafts to all supervisors simultaneously is that it is not clear who is responsible for what and when. It's easy for team members to assume that someone else will get on with the task, resulting in a slow turnaround or even no response from supervisors.

Serial Feedback

Another system is to send a draft to the principal supervisor, who uses track changes to mark up feedback, which is then passed onto the next supervisor, and so on around the circle. The advantage here is that supervisors can see the feedback given by their colleagues and respond, simply leaving it to stand if they agree, or explaining why they believe an alternative would work better. This is also more efficient because supervisors don't need to replicate concerns. However, this process can be slow for students who have to wait for each supervisor in turn before receiving their manuscript back.

Selective Feedback

Sometimes it is more effective to send sections only to the supervisor whose particular expertise matches that part of the thesis, such as specific methodological knowledge. And sometimes team supervision can include members who are not involved in the ongoing writing process at all; instead, they are reserved to read through fresh eyes towards the end of the project. This feedback system can cause problems if supervisors haven't seen the overall argument or structure. The parts of the thesis may not fit together very well, or the late reader may identify major or fundamental problems with the research just when the student thinks the project is almost complete.

'Sending—Ready or Not': Feedback Practices and Predilections

Claire Aitchison

When is a piece of work ready to submit for supervisor feedback? How much, and how often, can we expect students to submit writing for feedback? What are reasonable expectations for turnaround of writing and feedback?

Surprisingly the topic came up after a recent 'Shut up and Write' session.

The exchange went something like this:

One student, who was very near the end of his candidature, said he was sending his writing to his supervisor each day. Everyone was surprised.

'What, *every day*?' we exclaimed!

'Yes—he doesn't have to read it', Phil said defensively. 'But I like to get it off my plate. Sending it to him means it is done and I can move on. I've only got 3 weeks before they want the whole chapter finished!'

Another asked: 'How long will you have to wait until you get the chapter back?'

The answer: 'That depends on how much I bug them.'

I asked the group what, when, and how often, they send work to their supervisors.

One student said his supervisor only accepted complete chapters. Another said she only sent small bits of writing—between 4 and 12 pages at a time—because her supervisor 'doesn't have time to read more than that.' One student said her supervisor insisted on high quality 'publication-ready' work, which she disliked doing, because, she said, she spent so much time perfecting the chapters that feedback cycles were too infrequent. Another student said that she sends smaller bits of writing regularly because she needs to know that she's on the right track and to avoid 'wasting time'. Another student was agog—she said she regularly waited 3–4 months before getting feedback on her work.

Everyone sent work electronically and most received back 'Track Changed' versions, although the few social science and humanities people said they got their work returned as hard copy with handwritten feedback.

Another student said she was deliberately not handing in work even though her supervisor expected fortnightly submissions. She explained that, originally, this regime had worked for her, but then she found sometimes she simply hadn't progressed things sufficiently and she was writing 'anything really' in order to comply with the fortnightly imperative. This compliance in turn created other problems—she was having to respond to feedback on work she wasn't even wedded to, thus distracting her from moving forward. The same piece of writing was going backwards and forwards, round and round. Her solution? She had 'gone to ground,' simply getting on with her own work and not sending it to him.

These anecdotes reminded me of how, as a doctoral student, I—wisely or otherwise—controlled arrangements. In the final months of my candidature, I had had to change supervisors, and by then I had very strong views about what the thesis should look like and (I thought I knew) what I was doing. I used the 'deliver only completed

chapter' method as a deliberate strategy to undermine the chances of my supervisors telling me they preferred something different. I only handed it over when I was ready. (Apologies to you, you know who you are …)

Back at the café, the conversation continued as near-completers discussed supervisor turnaround times for reading the whole thesis. There seemed to be a common expectation that supervisors might need up to three months, depending on how many recent revisions there had been—and according to the time of the year. The Christmas break, the beginning of a new academic year and grant writing periods were recognised as particularly slow times for doctoral writers awaiting feedback.

This sharing of real-life examples of complex interpersonal negotiations and manoeuvrings over writing and feedback experiences helped us all have a better understanding of what is reasonable. And the stories showed how even supposedly 'good practices' can come undone as individual workloads and personal commitments impinge.

One thing that struck me was how the more mature students seemed to have an intimate knowledge of their supervisors' likes and dislikes, and a very real appreciation of how they could work in with the competing demands on their supervisors' availability. There was a sense of mutual respect and consideration which stands in contrast to much of the literature that reports on student and supervisor frustrations vis-à-vis feedback on doctoral writing (Cadman & Cargill, 2007; Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Can & Walker, 2011; Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011; Paré, Starke-Meyerring, & McAlpine, 2009).

What can we take from these discussions? Well, as usual, it points again to the importance of early conversations about the key aspects of feedback cycles: *frequency and turnaround times*; the *nature, quality and quantity* of text to be submitted; the kind of feedback required, the *mode of delivery* and the necessity for *timely reassessment* of practices. The conversations also highlighted the interpersonal and procedural aspects of this very human activity and the agency of students to make—or manipulate—systems to maximise the benefits from supervisory feedback.

Emotion and Identity in Doctoral Writing and Supervision

Doctoral Writing: Why Bother?

Susan Carter

Recently a colleague posed this question to academics: 'Your research and publication—why bother?' Now that sounds sullen and disenchanted, but it is a great question for drawing out what really matters about research. This post considers why we bother doing doctoral writing as students and carefully supporting it as academics.

It's based on a workshop for doctoral candidates with a twofold purpose. The first was about emotion, to vent about the tribulations of doctoral writing for catharsis (and

bonding, according to Mewburn, 2011) and then turn to listing positive reasons for doing this work as a motivational exercise. The other is to emphasise that, throughout the thesis, the reasons why the research matters should be overtly stated in writing, specifically in the Introduction and the Conclusion.

My own belief is that we are hugely privileged to spend time on a research project and acquiring the necessary advanced literacy skills. I think of the very bright people I know trapped in boring jobs, perhaps with family responsibilities that mean they haven't got the possibility of doing a doctorate. I know many doctoral students have similar pressures in their lives, but somehow within their own resources they find a way to keep their career moving forward and their minds keen as they learn. Not everyone can.

Here is a list of reminders about what doctoral writing can do for you:

1. Finding an academic voice helps define who you are and what matters to you; it is an act of self-creation;
2. Gaining a sophisticated level of literacy that will be useful in the future;
3. Finally figuring rules about grammar and even appreciating their logic;
4. Writing passages that are really satisfying in their clarity and cleanness;
5. Realising that writing is often flowing more easily;
6. Joining a distinct discourse community;
7. Gaining an ability to mentor others;
8. Widening future career opportunities; and
9. Becoming a stronger person who can manage their own emotions and the large writing project.

Many doctoral students are the first in their family to venture so far into education, and as they write, they write possible further success for future generations into their family's history and repertoire. For some, passion about making the world a better place drives them as doctoral writers; they may be tackling big challenges or smaller ones but know that they join the legions of humans who work in different ways to make things better.

We often acknowledge the challenges of doctoral writing, the way that feedback can be demoralising, that outside pressures can really squeeze, and that the pedantry and perfectionism of academic writing can baffle and irritate. We comment on these kinds of things because we know they can be bothersome. 'Why bother?' may often rise out of irritation, or self-doubt or self-pity from doctoral students or the academics who support their writing. I'd like to gently suggest that most routes through life are harder than doing a doctorate, harder because they are more limited, smaller, and less full of potential.

It is good to take 'why bother' literally, too, and articulate this in the thesis so that there is no doubt that the project was worth doing, worth a doctorate, and that the original contribution is significant.

In the Introduction and Conclusion of the doctorate, students could be encouraged to answer further questions with careful detail.

1. Why did you take up this research?
2. What was the problem that motivated you to seek a solution, or partial solution?
3. Who were hurt by that problem?
4. What was hard for you in this research project and what gave you the impetus to keep going?
5. How does your research mitigate the problem or fill in a gap in knowledge or understanding?
6. Who will benefit from your research findings?
7. Might benefits be wider, in that your methods would work with other problems, or for practitioners in other disciplines?
8. What gaps in knowledge or understanding still exist?

Perhaps one of the most important points this post makes is that questions from supervisor to student often prompt deep level learning more than advice does.

Mental Health, Doctoral Study and Supervision: Can 'Troubles with Writing' Mask Other Problems?

Claire Aitchison

Corridor conversations often reflect problems more widely felt. Recently a friend who had been called to help because the student reportedly was having 'trouble with her writing' revealed how concerned she was about the mental health of both student and supervisor.

For those of us who regularly work in the space between supervisor and student, being called into help is likely to expose us to a disproportionate number of 'troubles'. Whether identified by supervisors, research committees or students, I have come to expect a relatively predictable range of 'troubles with writing'. These 'troubles' can often be sheeted back to the following:

1. unhelpful feedback (typically inconsistent, contradictory, incorrect, uninformative, inappropriately delivered);
2. neglect (typically little or no feedback, no formative feedback, feedback too late to be developmental);
3. student resistance to taking advice;
4. writers' block.

As a literacy adviser, I learned that such 'writing troubles' often coexist with intensified emotional states. Writing is a deeply personal and emotional activity. For supervisors and students alike, much is riding on the ability to explain one's work eloquently and to argue convincingly for significance. The research has to be sound, but so does the medium for conveying this good work: the writing.

But I am interested here in the co-existence of 'writing problems' and mental health. Clearly, and not infrequently, writing can wrench at our soul, unsettling our equilibrium. Writing can make us cry out with frustration, anxiety and fury when it

won't go as we wish, or when we are under so much pressure to produce that we doubt our own ability. It can also bring joy and pleasure, be rewarding and confirming. But writing a Ph.D. is not just any old writing: it is risky, even dangerous. It advertises our intellect, our research and our knowledge to the world. Doctoral writing is monitored and measured. And doctoral student writers are positioned in relationship to their supervisors whose job it is to critique the student's work. All up, doctoral writing carries a disproportionately high burden.

The claim that Ph.D. study challenges student mental health is not new. The opening paragraph of a *Times Higher Education* feature 'Distress signals: The Ph.D. mental health crisis' (13 April, 2017, p. 6) says, '… new figures show that more than half of Ph.D. students experience symptoms of psychological distress and one in three is at risk of having or developing a psychiatric disorder'. This finding is similar to others that report above average rates of psychological distress (such as depression, unhappiness and anxiety) amongst doctoral students compared to the general population. Doctoral distress is also higher than in other groups in universities. The Belgian study referred to indicates that the strongest predictors for poor mental health amongst students are work–family conflict, job demands, job control and leadership style. Writing as such is not mentioned—so can it really impact mental health or is it part of a cocktail of influences or 'troubles'? And is it only students that suffer?

The literature around doctoral student experience continually points to the unique circumstances that may contribute to mental health distress:

1. Isolation;
2. The student–supervisor relationship;
3. The extended period of study required for Ph.D. scholarship;
4. Lack of confidence (imposter syndrome);
5. Prolonged uncertainty—of the research process itself and of the outcome;
6. Insecurity about career options, against which the pressure to publish is increasingly seen as an essential criterion for success;
7. Unmet expectations of doctoral study and supervision.

As I think about this list of potential triggers for doctoral student mental health challenges, it strikes me that a similar list would apply to supervisors:

1. Even with the shift to 'panel supervision', supervision is often a lonely job and many supervisors work in isolation unsupported, and unwilling/unable to share their insecurities and fears—and perhaps with little institutional support when they do seek help.
2. The onus is on supervisors to manage and maintain a healthy relationship through the vicissitudes of personal and professional challenges over time.
3. As experts in the discipline, supervisors may feel more confident about their disciplinary and research knowledge than about how to manage relationships or develop student writing.
4. Increasingly, supervisors, insecure about their own future in the academy, are managing multiple pressures to perform, including meeting their own publication metrics.

5. Supervisors are often seen as responsible for the success or failure of the research project, irrespective of contributing factors. This is a heavy burden to carry.

The call for help for students with 'writing problems' seems to have some kind of institutional legitimacy; there may be designated 'helpers' and resources available to assist. But what would be the 'acceptable' equivalent for a supervisor in distress? Who are their 'helpers'? What resources are available?

In the corridor conversation that prompted this post, my friend explained that there was a cluster of supervisors struggling with depression and anxiety in that particular department. Worryingly, but I guess unsurprisingly, they felt alone and trapped: obliged to continue supervising high numbers of doctoral candidates. Their best legitimate call for help came in the form of requests for writing assistance for their students—to unburden themselves of some of their supervisory responsibilities.

Is Dropping Out Failure? *Je ne regrette rien*

Claire Aitchison

In a world of spiralling credentialism where employers require ever-higher qualifications, and institutions compete to recruit and keep doctoral candidates, it's easy to see how students and supervisors can feel pressured to keep students enrolled. But what if doctoral study isn't for you?

When I met up with a former student she reminisced about her time as a doctoral student. She said how much she had enjoyed herself, especially the intellectual stimulation and sense of purpose. She told me how she still loved her topic—but then she went on to say she deeply regretted dropping out of her Ph.D.

This took me by surprise, because, all those years ago, when she contacted me about withdrawing, she was so definite and had already commenced withdrawal procedures. Her life was complicated in a way she couldn't control and there was scant likelihood this would change in the foreseeable future. I made very little attempt to dissuade her; instead, I opted to support her in the choice she'd made.

As we talked further, she revealed that at the time she did not have the support of her immediate family, in particular her husband.

I left our coffee date feeling regretful: I wish I had been more insightful at the time. I should have been more inquisitive and pushed her harder to reconsider. Perhaps I could have made a greater effort to find the right support? I was experiencing supervisor guilt. Had I failed? Had she? Had the institution?

Another withdrawal: similarly, an incredibly capable person whose candidature had been disjointed with difficult family circumstances and a very demanding job. Jane hadn't fully appreciated the demands of research scholarship and struggled with the writing. From the outset she resented the time it took and never really settled into a routine of reading and writing. She resisted engaging in theory and after 18 months of changing topics and direction, she withdrew. Jane explained that she had come to

realise other things were simply more important to her and she wasn't prepared to spend so much of her time, over so many years, on doctoral study. No regrets.

Both these women had rich, full lives. I respect both enormously as successful, capable individuals contributing to society. One chose to undertake a Ph.D. at the end of her working life: she sought stimulating intellectual engagement, a time to reflect on her professional career and synthesise what she'd learned. The other woman's career was at an earlier stage, newly blossoming, rewarding and demanding. I suspect her original motivation to undertake a Ph.D. was for job security; however, in the meanwhile she had secured permanency.

Many factors impact the decision to undertake a Ph.D. Too often, advice books focus on issues such as choosing the right university, supervisor and research project. Perhaps we should also consider life choices such as identity and desire, stage-of-life, personal circumstances and support networks. Very often, I suspect, neither students nor their families fully appreciate the impact of a parent, partner or child undertaking a Ph.D. Even for the most capable candidates, doctoral study can make unexpected and extended inroads on family time and personal relationships. For international students studying abroad, these pressures can be particularly onerous (Ali & Kohun, 2007).

The decision to withdraw usually involves both pull and push factors. When something needs to change, withdrawing may be the right thing to do, but then again, sometimes a timely conversation or the right kind of help can change everything. We know that support from significant others can make a difference (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013; Mantai & Dowling, 2015)—but so too can adequate prior information so that people sign up for doctoral study with eyes wide open.

There is also the matter of timing. If a candidate is very far down the track and reasonably close to completion, the economic and emotional cost of dropping out is likely to outweigh the pain of hanging on to the bitter end.

Ph.D. study isn't necessarily right for everybody—recognising this, and taking the appropriate action, isn't failure. What is important is making well-informed and supported decisions, thus minimising poor choices, lifelong regrets and unhappy outcomes. It is in no one's interests to have people enrolled in years of study, frustrated and resentful—doing (and supervising) doctoral study is hard enough, even for those who love it!

When Research Moves Too Close: Maintaining Awareness of Boundaries

Susan Carter

Some doctoral students find their study more overwhelming than others. Sure, they face the same challenges as others do: the study is vast; there is so much to read and to write; and almost inevitably difficulties occur with the research itself—it's

hard to find participants, experiments don't work, or data fails to make sense. But beyond all this, some students find that their research topic winds so intensely into other people's lives they experience something of a meltdown. How can such crises be handled?

In a study with colleagues (Carter, Blumenstein, & Cook, 2013), we found that motherhood and inequitable family responsibilities mean women students can find that they are always feeling guilty anxiety. They may feel they are bad mothers because they cannot focus on their children, *and* they find they are bad doctoral students who struggle to meet deadlines. Mothers who are doctoral students can be isolated. Our study found that women stepping into the role of expert sometimes made partners feel uncomfortable; additionally women with an abuse history, used to keeping below the radar, can experience similar discomfort in the role of expert.

Researchers can also find themselves emotionally immersed in the experience they are capturing. One academic describes how she interspersed her participants' stories between her thesis chapters because she found them so moving (Carter, Kelly, & Brailsford, 2012, p. 2).

I was reminded of emotional intensities that alter the researcher's relationship with their new knowledge when I came to a flash of insight in Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*. Equipped with photos from his grandparents, he had a sudden realisation that he was insensitive when he showed them to old distant relatives who knew people in the photos. He writes:

> I was confronted with the awful discrepancy between what certain images and stories meant for me…for whom…[they] could never be more than 'fiercely moving' (in the way that you say a book or a film is 'moving') and what they meant for the people I was talking to, for whom the images and stories were, really, their *lives*. (Mendelson, 2006, pp. 224–225)

Lately the gulch between research and lived reality has been opening conspicuously for me. The stories that we hear before we get ethics approval may speak so much more tellingly than those we gather after approval. The stricture of academic prose, with its scholarly apparatus, its epistemological compliance, its bank of literature, seems too sturdy a structure to handle the raw reality of lives being studied.

It seems to me that where participants' emotions and privacy are at stake, there's always a responsibility to protect them. On the two occasions when I decided not to publish the most interesting data, I did not seek permission because I felt that just asking for it would cause pain. Care of participants doesn't end once an ethics committee gives consent for research, in my view. Participants have given something of themselves and, as patrons and enablers, they need respect. Sometimes researchers ought to simply accept the limitations of mutual commitment.

Mother Guilt and the Ph.D.

Claire Aitchison

Can you be a doctoral scholar and 'good' mother at the same time? Goodwin and Huppatz (2010) critique the idea of the good mother in their book, *The Good Mother: Contemporary Motherhoods in Australia*. At the planning meeting for this book, a young scholar spoke of her intention to write about her double life as Ph.D. student studying in a foreign country while trying to raise her child without family and community support. She described the cultural, physical and financial challenges— but the most difficult of all was the emotional challenge. Her biggest problem was guilt. Guilt about prioritising her needs above those of her child, guilt about not being physically present and emotionally available. This experience is not unique. I have certainly observed it often, and conversations about managing family commitments alongside all the other challenges of research scholarship are frequent in my work with doctoral students and early career researchers.

  Mother guilt for doctoral students can include:

- not being there for the kids. This can be guilt-inducing at any time, but absence for one's personal intellectual fulfilment (as opposed to going to work earning money for the family) can be debilitating;
- feeling the need to hide, from supervisors and others, the extent of the impact of the family on one's availability;
- feeling bad about the fact that one's child/children don't fulfil one's intellectual needs;
- concern about losing the ability to use grownup words from spending too much time with baby;
- resenting being forgotten by the real world outside nappies, sleep time and baby vomit;
- just not enjoying nappies, sleep deprivation and baby vomit;
- the secret truth that one would prefer to be working on a critique of Bourdieu than singing nursery rhymes;
- feeling bad about not being able to meet with supervisors at times they prefer because childcare commitments make afternoons and evenings well-nigh impossible;
- trying not to feel resentful when babies won't sleep or when they get sick because it interferes with writing plans;
- feeling bad about leaving kids, being exhausted and, dare I say it, just not interested in sex.

  Last year I ran a series of regular whole-day writing workshops and I was struck again at the extraordinary lengths women went to, to juggle childcare commitments and their doctoral research endeavours. One young scientist brought her child in with her each week. She had no option—as an international student, she wasn't able to afford childcare.

Over the years there have been a number of parents (including a father) who brought babies/young children to writing group meetings. It hasn't always worked well. But equally, I have had participants who have dropped out because they'd not been able to find satisfactory childcare. It simply isn't easy. The first go I had at doing a Ph.D. didn't work because my second child wasn't a sleeper, and after many months of exhaustion, I simply gave up.

How do we build into our practices a greater awareness and accommodation of those struggling to honour their love of family and desire for rewarding motherhood/parenthood alongside satisfying doctoral study? It matters that we do so.

Finishing the Ph.D.—Or What Happens to Otherwise Normal People in the Last Few Months of the Ph.D.?

Claire Aitchison

There should be a warning to family and friends about what happens in the final stages of the Ph.D. and it should read something like this:

WARNING: Do not try to communicate with this person. Advance at your peril or for your own safety, STAY AWAY.

In preparation for a workshop on the final stages of doing a Ph.D., I asked my family for their thoughts. As quick as a flash, the following words were thrown around the dinner table: obsessive, self-absorbed, single-minded, vague, emotional. They seemed to be talking about me. When I tell this story it always gets a good reception because anyone who has done a Ph.D. will immediately recognise these behaviours.

And that's because at the end stages of the doctorate—people change. Take comfort: it is reversible! Bringing 3–5 years of work to completion requires significant mental effort, at times bordering on overload. There isn't a lot of space left for getting the shopping right, listening to homework squabbles, thinking about dinner.

First, there is so much to do. In order to juggle the multiple demands of tweaking the text, re-checking calculations and results, revisiting arguments, citation choices and theories, sorting referencing and so on, one has to block out peripheral, less important things. The primary final stages task is to bring all the components together into a coherent and unified entity. The whole is more than the sum of its parts. It is a big job. It carries a high cognitive load.

Graphic by Victoria Rolfe

Second, this can be a time of major emotional labouring. The stakes are high and time is tight. Nerves can fray, and relationships become strained—both at home and between student and supervisor. In many ways those irritating but levelling parts of normal life (cooking, doing the dishes, family time and even working) can become valuable safety valves for releasing tension, forgetting the pressure, and keeping a sense of humour.

Another way to keep yourself sane is to get prepared (at least 4–8 months prior to the target submission date).

Final Stages Tasks

1. Do a complete check on what you have done—and what you have yet to do.
2. Get the latest versions of the rules and procedures for completion, submission and examination (they are likely to have changed since you enrolled).
3. Find and follow your institution's 'Countdown check list'.
4. Ensure the Grad School has the right information about you and your project (you don't want them reading out your pre-divorce name at Graduation).
5. Suss out a good proofreading/editing service.
6. Budget for the final stages (costs may include editing and printing services, conferences, and you may have to give up work for a period of time).
7. Plan what you will do after submission (e.g., take a holiday or submit a couple of journal articles).

Monitor your time very carefully and make a timeline that includes:

1. Final revisions, edits and reviews—of each chapter—and the whole manuscript (including referencing, tables and figures). AVOID NEW WRITING or last minute brain waves—BUT do take action if it is really necessary;
2. Supervisor availability and turnaround for final reviewing of chapters;

3. 1–3 weeks for external editing, proofreading and layout;
4. Discuss possible examiners with your supervisor;
5. Institutional processes for nomination, communication and approval of examiners (this can take months);
6. One week for printing and/or making digital versions.

Final Stages Writing

1. Lock in the title.
2. (Re)write the Abstract.
3. Use your Table of Contents as a mechanism for reviewing logical consistency and structural cohesion. It must make sense on its own and across the whole manuscript.
4. Everything you do now must be considered in terms of the project as a whole; whatever changes you make must be cognisant of the overall integrity of the argument and structure.
5. Review your Introduction to check that your research problem, research questions, methodology and results do, in fact, match what you ended up doing.
6. Review your Introduction and Conclusion: they should 'speak to each other' working as book-ends that hold the content together.

Final Stages Editing

Even if you plan to send your thesis to an external proof-reader, it is wise (and economical) to make the document as perfect as possible beforehand. Don't underestimate the time this can take.

One approach to editing is to review the thesis on three levels:

1. Manuscript overview. Review the whole document for cohesion and consistency of genre, voice, presentation, intellectual integrity, formatting and referencing style. Go through the whole document checking references for consistency, missing page numbers, and presence in the Reference List.
2. Macro. Check for consistency of structure, sequence and hierarchy of segments, paragraphing, and balanced chapters.
3. Micro. Check for spelling, punctuation and sentence level grammar.

So Close and Yet so Far

Often doctoral students think that once the hard work of data collection and analysis is done that they are on the homeward track and completion is just weeks away. Sadly, this is rarely the case as these final stages can often stretch out for months and months. It can get disheartening, and you don't want to run out of steam, so—in addition to all the other tasks—see if you can schedule a short break somewhere in the last months to rejuvenate your mind and your body (and supervisors may also benefit from setting it aside for a week or two). Both you and the thesis will be better for it!

Disaster and Change of Plan for Doctoral Writing

Susan Carter

Horror stories sometimes circulate about disasters that struck doctoral research. Sometimes this really does occur. It can be that a few years into the project, a new publication comes out seeming to cover the same ground or produce new evidence that debunks an approach making the already written work seem out-dated or ill-fitting.

Cryer's (2003) book reminded me that one of the seldom-mentioned skills of independent researchers is being able to survive disaster and salvage projects by handling fairly radical revision. Perhaps this is something that supervisors need to point out to doctoral students: professional independence means the stamina to handle demanding revisions if necessary. As much as we have to be able to handle the review process, including multiple rejections, we need to be able to manage writing when the research trajectory changes after a manuscript has been largely constructed.

My own experience was with the first article I wrote completely independently after completing my Ph.D. While busy tutoring on limited term contracts, I moved on to an intriguing topic that I hadn't covered in my Ph.D., so this was my first bit of truly independent research. It took several years to complete the article and when I submitted it, reviewers pointed me to two recent books that did a beautiful job of making most of the same points.

After recuperating from the reviews, I read the books and found that a couple of my less significant observations were not covered. My article had to be refocused to 'add to recent interest' and to foreground what had been less significant in my earlier version. I rewrote the Introduction and Conclusion, cut some stuff out, and theorised a bit more on those small points, taking them as far as I could. It worked and was published.

Retrospectively, I see that the unfolding of that project was another conceptual threshold crossing: learning how to cope, adapt, make do, persevere and do the job required. On the positive side, such experiences mean learning to value your own ideas and persist with them. Most doctoral students dread the spectre of someone else producing their findings before submission. Yet if it happens, it is the trial-by-fire likely to produce a strong, survivalist researcher.

Horror stories have appeal because they are affective, but I'm sure that there are stories like mine that have happy endings because they describe salvage and recuperation.

'Help with Writing' Versus 'Learning About Writing'

Cally Guerin

It seems to me that students sometimes turn up to workshops or join writing groups because they think 'I need someone to help me with my writing'. I think this should be reframed as 'I need to learn more about writing'.

My impression is that sometimes Ph.D. students are looking for someone who will provide editing and proofreading of their work, or simply 'fix it up'. Occasionally I get the impression that they hope someone can tell them the 'answer' to research writing as if they are facing a 'test'. Unfortunately, this approach isn't helpful to building long-term skills. After all, research writing is not just a simple process of imposing a formula; it's far more complex.

I suspect that, at the root of this problem, is the mistake of thinking that doing a Ph.D. is really only about making an original contribution to knowledge in the discipline. From that perspective, the focus is on the technical skills required to undertake the experimental work or to gather and analyse the qualitative or quantitative data. Writing, by contrast, is regarded as secondary.

Of course, disciplinary knowledge is the linchpin of the whole enterprise—one of the key criteria for examination at most universities is that the research makes an original contribution to the field. However, doctoral candidature is also a time for learning the skills required to be an effective researcher. Learning to write well about research is central to this training.

I'm repeatedly reminded of this when I run a workshop for Ph.D. students that includes an exercise using Boote and Beile's (2005) literature review assessment matrix. This matrix lists the criteria that could be used to assess literature reviews in doctoral theses. The assessment criteria are organised into five categories: Coverage, Synthesis, Methodology, Significance and Rhetoric. In the workshop, participants are asked to imagine they are Ph.D. examiners who will use the matrix to assess their own literature reviews. The task is to decide what percentage should be assigned to each of these elements. Nearly always, students award only 5–10% of the marks to Rhetoric, which they understand as relating to the quality of the writing. While they argue that the other criteria can't be done effectively without good writing, they rarely want to place too much importance on the writing as a separate category.

As supervisors, learning advisors and writing teachers, we might provide the most useful support for doctoral candidates if we were to encourage a shift in attitude to learning about writing as a necessary doctoral skill, rather than offering to 'help students with their writing'.

References

Aitchison, C. (2014). Learning from multiple voices: Feedback and authority in doctoral writing groups. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory* (pp. 51–64). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Aitchison, C., & Mowbray, S. (2013). Doctoral women: Managing emotions, managing doctoral studies. *Teaching in Higher Education, 18*(8), 859–870. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2013.827642.

Ali, A., & Kohun, F. (2007). Dealing with social isolation to minimize doctoral attrition: A four stage framework. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 2,* 33–49.

Bitchener, J. (2017). *A guide to supervising non-native English writers of theses and dissertations: Focusing on the writing process*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Boote, D. P., & Beile, P. (2005). Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher, 34*(6), 3–15.

Cadman, K., & Cargill, M. (2007). Providing quality advice on candidates' writing. In C. Denholm & T. Evans (Eds.), *Supervising doctorates downunder: Keys to effective supervision in Australia and New Zealand*. Camberwell, VIC, Australia: ACER Press.

Caffarella, R. S., & Barnett, B. G. (2000). Teaching doctoral students to become scholarly writers: The importance of giving and receiving critiques. *Studies in Higher Education, 25,* 39–54.

Can, G., & Walker, A. (2011). A model for doctoral students' perceptions and attitudes toward written feedback for academic writing. *Research in Higher Education, 52*(5), 508–536.

Carless, D., Salter, D., Yang, M., & Lam, J. (2011). Developing sustainable feedback practices. *Studies in Higher Education, 36*(4), 395–407.

Carter, S. (2009). Volunteer support of English as an additional language (EAL) doctoral students. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 4,* 13–25.

Carter, S., Kelly, F., & Brailsford, I. (2012). *Structuring your research thesis*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

Carter, S., Blumenstein, M., & Cook, C. M. (2013). Different for women? The challenges of doctoral study. *Teaching in Higher Education, 18*(4), 339–351.

Castello, M., Inesta, A., & Corcelles, M. (2013). Learning to write a research article: PhD students' transitions toward disciplinary writing regulation. *Research in the Teaching of English, 47*(4), 442–477.

Catterall, J., Ross, P., Aitchison, C., & Burgin, S. (2011). Pedagogical approaches that facilitate writing in postgraduate research candidature in science and technology. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice, 8*(2). Retrieved from http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1212&context=jutlp.

Cryer, P. (2003). *The research student's guide to success* (3rd ed.). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

East, M., Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2012). What constitutes effective feedback to postgraduate research students? The students' perspective. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 9*(2), 1–16.

Elbow, P. (1981). *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Fotovatian, S. (2013). Three constructs of institutional identity amongst international students in Australia. *Teaching in Higher Education, 17*(5), 577–588.

Goode, J. (2010). Perhaps I should be more proactive in changing my own supervisions? In M. Walker & P. Thomson (Eds.), *The Routledge doctoral supervisor's companion: Supporting effective research in education and the social sciences* (pp. 38–50). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Goodwin, S., & Huppatz, K. (2010). *The good mother: Contemporary motherhoods in Australia*. Sydney, NSW: Sydney University Press.

Guerin, C. (2014). The gift of writing groups: Critique, community and confidence. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Writing groups for doctoral students and beyond* (pp. 128–141). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Guerin, C., & Green, I. (2016). Cultural diversity and the imagined community of the global academy. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03288791.2014.922048.

Guerin, C., Green, I., & Bastalich, W. (2011). Big love: Managing a team of research supervisors. In A. Lee & V. Mallan (Eds.), *Connecting the local, regional and international in doctoral education* (pp. 138–153). Serdang, Malaysia: Universiti Putra Malaysia Publishers.

Hamilton, J., Carson, S., & Ellison, E. (2013). *Building distributed leadership for effective supervision of creative practice higher research degrees Final Report for Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.* Retrieved from supervisioncreativeartsphd.net.

Ivaniĉ, R. (1998). *Writing and identity: The discoursal construction of identity in academic writing*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Benjamins.

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2006). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Kobayshi, S., Grout, B., & Rump, C. O. (2015). Opportunities to learn scientific thinking in joint doctoral supervision. *Innovations in Education & Teaching International, 52*(1), 41–51.

Lamott, A. (1995). *Bird by bird: Some instructions for writing and life*. New York, NY: Anchor.

Laurs, D. (2014). One-to-one generic support. In S. Carter & D. Laurs (Eds.), *Developing generic support for doctoral students* (pp. 29–33). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Lee, A. (2008). Supervision teams: Making them work. *Guides on Postgraduate Issues*, Series 2, number 6.

Lieb, S. (1991). Principles of adult learning, *VISION*, Fall. Retrieved from https://docplayer.net/16690157-Lieb-s-1991-principles-of-adult-learning-phoenix-az-vision-south-mountain-community-college.html.

Manathunga, C. (2012). Supervisors watching supervisors. *Australian Universities Review, 54*(1). Retrieved from https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=424318263696740;res=IELHSS.

Manti, L., & Dowling, R. (2015). Supporting the PhD journey: Insights from acknowledgements. *International Journal for Researcher Development, 6*(2), 106–121.

McCallin, A., & Nayar, S. (2012). Postgraduate research supervision: A critical review of current practice. *Teaching in Higher Education, 17*(1), 63–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2011.590979.

Mendelsohn, D. (2006). *The lost: A search for six of six million*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Mewburn, I. (2011). Shut up and write! The Thesis Whisperer blog. Retrieved June 14, from https://thesiswhisperer.com/2011/06/14/shut-up-and-write/.

Mewburn, I., Tokareva, E., Cuthbert, D., Sinclair, J., & Barnacle, R. (2013). 'These are issues that should not be raised in black and white': The culture of progress reporting and the doctorate. *Higher Education Research & Development, 33*(3), 510–522. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2013.841649.

Murray, R., & Cunningham, E. (2011). Managing researcher development: 'Drastic transition'? *Studies in Higher Education, 36*(7), 831–845.

Paré, A. (2010). Slow the presses: Concerns about premature publication. In C. Aitchison, B. Kamler, & A. Lee (Eds.), *Publishing pedagogies for the doctorate and beyond* (pp. 30–46). London, UK: Routledge.

Paré, A. (2011). Speaking of writing: Supervisory feedback and the dissertation. In L. McAlpine & C. Amundsen (Eds.), *Doctoral education: Research-based strategies for doctoral students, supervisors and administrators* (pp. 59–74). New York, NY: Springer.

Paré, A., Starke-Meyerring, D., & McAlpine, L. (2009). The dissertation as multi-genre: Many readers, many readings. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, & D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a changing world* (pp. 179–193). Fort Collins, CO: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlour Press.

Park, C. (2007). *Redefining the doctorate: A discussion paper*. York, UK: Higher Education Academy.

Robertson, M. J. (2017). Team modes and power: Supervision of doctoral students. *Higher Education Research and Development, 36*(2), 358–371.

Shortland, S. (2010). Feedback within peer observation: Continuing professional development and unexpected consequences. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 47*(3), 295–304.

Strauss, P. (2013). 'I don't think we're seen as a nuisance'—the positioning of postgraduate learning advisors in New Zealand universities. *Text Journal of Writing and Writing Courses, Special Edition.* Retrieved from 21textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue21/Strauss.pdf.

Thesen, L. (2014). 'If they're not laughing, watch out!': Emotion and risk in post-graduate writing groups. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Writing groups for the doctorate and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory* (pp. 172–176). London, UK: Routledge.

Wisker, G., Robinson, G., Trafford, V., Warnes, M., & Creighton, E. (2003). From supervisory dialogues to successful PhDs: Strategies supporting and enabling the learning conversations of staff and students at postgraduate level. *Teaching in Higher Education, 8*(3), 383–397.

Wu, S. (2013). Filling the pot or lighting the fire: Cultural variations in conceptions of pedagogy. *Teaching in Higher Education, 7*(4), 387–895.

Chapter 3
Managing Productivity

An important aspect of doctoral candidature is learning the habits and discipline of actually writing the document. Most candidates are new to writing documents that are as long as a Ph.D. thesis, and experience a steep learning curve as they discover new processes for approaching their writing. For many doctoral candidates, managing time and energy can be very challenging. Here we explore writing retreats, writing processes, habits and attitudes to writing. This chapter uncovers the ways in which doctoral candidates can be encouraged to carve out time to attend to their writing, both through self-regulation and participation in various kinds of writing groups and writing retreats.

Many of the ideas presented here have developed from the pioneering work on writing retreats by Barbara Grant and Rowena Murray, and the 'Shut up and write' model endorsed by Inger Mewburn. Posts on various models of writing retreats were provided by the editors and guest bloggers. Here we report on our own experiences of experimenting with various models of writing retreats and groups, and suggestions for managing the writing process. We distinguish between reviewing and editing, reverse-engineering, and managing the repetitive reworking of drafts.

Regular habits are key to ensuring the writing is produced. New Year resolutions can be an appropriate moment to set up new habits, but the discipline required to manage doctoral writing is ongoing throughout candidature. And pieces in this section reflect on how to maintain motivation, including reminding ourselves of the joy to be found in written expression—and the pitfalls to be avoided. Doctoral writing can be hard going at times, but also immensely rewarding.

Writing Groups and Retreats

Writing Groups, Writing Retreats, Boot Camps and Other Social Writing Events for Doctoral Writers

Claire Aitchison

The editors of this blog are keen advocates for doctoral writers to come together to do, and share, their writing—whether that be in regular small writing groups, writing retreats or boot camps. We know that writing groups of all kinds are popular, and that our friends, colleagues and students are actively engaged in facilitating and promoting such events both on and off campus, in virtual and physical spaces, both large and small, across many countries and institutions.
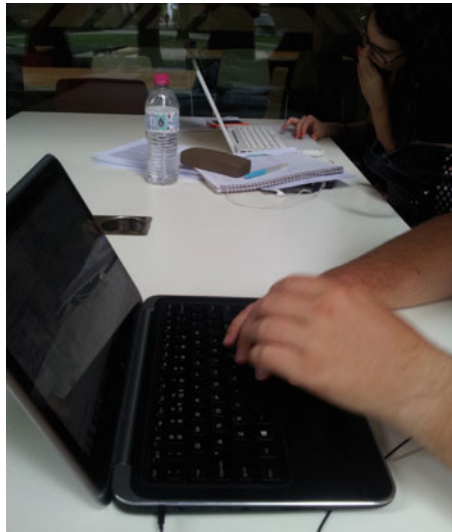
Photo by Claire Aitchison

There's extraordinary variety in how groups are organised and facilitated and a growing interest in social writing activities as higher education institutions, individuals and educators recognise the benefits.

The primary purpose for joining or facilitating social writing events such as boot camps, 'Shut up and write', and retreats is to *increase writing productivity* in a 'space' shared with others. A sense of community develops through the common endeavour to write; in these forums, participants rarely share or discuss their output in a formal way.

Other writing communities come together to *improve the quality* of writing. The primary purpose of this kind of community is to discuss and critique the work of the members. Typically, these participants come together in small groups that meet

regularly (e.g., fortnightly), where they build trusting relationships while developing writing know-how through continuous cycles of feedback and review.

The Joy of Social Writing Events

I have facilitated a variety of social writing events, from small groups to large boot camps, from highly structured intensives with workshops and facilitated feedback to very relaxed, unstructured events. Some have been held in empty school classrooms, some in luxurious off-campus accommodation where participants can relax together, building collaborations and friendships. As I reflect on the joy of writing as a shared practice, I savour many happy memories:

- Playing Researcher Trivial Pursuit at the end-of-retreat dinner
- Writing groups with fortnightly bake-offs
- Writing group annual Christmas dinners with writing-related 'prizes'
- Participants emotional with relief at having broken the writing drought
- End-of-event gratitude expressed through heartfelt gift exchanges
- 'Shut up and Write' celebrations when participants submit/graduate
- Boot campers being won over by the fun of motivational games and rewards
- A writing group that held 'theorist lunches'
- Deep and enduring friendships and collaborations
- A weekend beach house writing retreat run by doctoral students
- And, of course, **SOME AMAZINGLY GREAT WRITING**.

Writing and sharing in the company of others has so many rewards.

Writing in the Company of Others: 'Shut up and Write!', AcWriMo, Boot Camps, Writing Retreats and Other Fun Activities

Claire Aitchison

I am watching curious passers-by look inquisitively at this small group sitting outside in the sun tapping away at their keyboards. It's hard to tell those who are intentionally part of our new 'Shut up and write! ' from those who just happened, accidently, to lob here today. There are the usual café sounds: orders being given and names called, cutlery clattering, cups meeting saucers and spoons. Some people look askance, others quickly soften their voices and look away—as if they have walked in on someone in prayer.

Photo by Claire Aitchison

It's 9.15 am and people continue to join us. We are now eight definites and four fringe-dwellers; perhaps the outliers are hedging their bets, not sure enough yet to sit with us.

At the break, we talk. Everyone is a doctoral student and immediately there's an exchange about thesis topics, stage of candidature, software programs, the recent boot camp and other group writing opportunities on campus. Everyone wants to make writing normal business. Everyone needs to build writing into their lives so they can get their Ph.D. done.

Then we settle down again to write. Together. In silence. It's magic.

Writing Group Models

There are lots of ways you too can experience this magic.

Writing marathons are productivity-focused events that usually involve measuring output (e.g., word counts) against time. Some examples include AcWriMo (Academic Writing Month) and boot camps.

AcWriMo was started in 2011 by Charlotte Frost and is an annual online month-long 'write-a-thon' fashioned after the successful NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month). Originally, writers participated via the host—PhD2Published; writers determine their own writing goals and are supported by social media including dedicated posts, twitter feeds and participant exchanges.

Boot camps work on a similar principle, except that they often bring people together in the same physical space; they are mostly facilitated and very often centrally provisioned by university graduate schools or writing centres. Like AcrWriMo, participants set personal writing targets to meet in a set period of time, such as two or three days. Thesis Whisperer gives a great account of how a Boot Camp works.

Other Social Writing Options

'Shut up and write!' (https://thesiswhisperer.com/shut-up-and-write/) is a mini writing sprint, rather than a marathon, usually for an hour on a regular basis (e.g., weekly) in a convivial place. This kind of writing event is popular with doctoral scholars and academics because it's a relaxed arrangement without hard rules or long-term commitment. Participants simply turn up and get on with their writing, in the company of others, for two 25-min bursts, with a five-minute break in the middle.

'Meetup' writing groups. 'Meetup' is a global social networking phenomenon and yet another vibrant social writing avenue. The group meets weekly at a pub in central Sydney where participants write, eat and drink together for 2 h under the 'cone of silence'. Thereafter, people mix and socialise as they see fit. I was amazed to discover this group included professionals of all kinds: scriptwriters, bloggers—and doctoral students.

Writing retreats are another kind of extended writing together opportunity favoured by doctoral scholars and academics alike. Whether highly structured (as described by Murray and Newton (2009) or more organic (see Barbara Grant's 2008 Guide), there's growing evidence of the value of retreating from the everyday demands and routines of academic life to spaces entirely dedicated to writing.

Writing buddies and intimate circles of productivity. Finally, I'd like to include a plug for the common, but undervalued, practice of hiding oneself away with a colleague/s to write. I've been lucky enough to spend weekends away with doctoral scholars in which we have shared writing, cooking, walking and talking.

Back at the University of New South Wales' 'Shut up and write!' I overhear a passer-by say (*I'm not kidding, I promise!*): 'This looks good … I want to do it—but I don't have time'. But that's the point, isn't it?—'Shut up and write!' and these other group writing activities are booming because they work especially for those who don't have time. The popularity of writing in groups is evident everywhere. So, if you haven't already, get yourself into some kind of group writing activity and reap the rewards.

'Sit Down and Do Your Work!' Disciplining the Writer

Claire Aitchison

If you've ever been in a school classroom, you'll be familiar with this refrain. Recently I've been volunteering to read with primary school children, and as I've sat with these young ones who are often fidgety, yawning and distracted, I am intensely reminded of the bodily or corporeal aspects of learning.

In contemporary educational theory, there is a relative lack of attention to bodily aspects of learning—except where it emerges as mostly negative discourses about classroom management or (student) disability. There is even less serious attention to the role of pedagogy for developing bodily habits of learning. In Education, western perspectives are built on a romantic view of childhood that favours individual creativity, student-directed learning and limited teacher intervention. This orientation has positioned regimentation and discipline as negative, even damaging, to creativity and learning. Today's teachers employ pedagogies that focus on cognitive development and ignore bodily aspects of learning. (If you're interested in reading more about these ideas, I'd recommend a wonderful book by Watkins, 2011.)

I've been thinking about how this relates to doctoral scholarship.

Those working with doctoral students will have observed and experienced a huge range of individual work practices over extended periods. We also know that we all struggle sometimes to settle down and get on with the job. Self-discipline comes more easily to some than others and varies according to the task and context. Emotional aspects will also be powerfully affecting. Doing doctoral research is particularly fraught because achievement and progress is so individual. Disciplining oneself is so much harder than submitting to an imposed discipline.

But as far as writing goes, there does seem to be an increasingly popular alternative to solitary, self-directed approaches—in the form of writing retreats.

When I attended my first writing retreat with Murray (2014), she told us we were to sit together silently and write in structured blocks of time over three days. I was skeptical: I found her approach surprisingly un-cerebral, and I couldn't imagine this mixture of doctoral students and senior academics submitting to her instructions. I couldn't imagine myself bowing to somebody else's structured routine, nor writing on demand. I was used to writing whenever I could fit it in—and certainly not in the company of strangers with my productivity being overseen. It felt like a drill hall with Rowena as the drillmaster. Initially I baulked, but eventually I did settle down—and by the third day, I had developed a kind of bodily stillness that enabled increasingly long stretches of thinking and writing.

Since then, I am amused by the popularity of this approach in the halls of the academy. Who would have thought! Visions of anarchic schooling and army drills juxtaposed alongside doctoral scholarship! Approaches that attend to the body couldn't be more different from traditional doctoral teaching and learning practices that are usually thought of as cerebral, individualised and intimate spaces defined by the supervisor–student relationship.

In structured writing retreats, an individual's predilections of habit are overwritten by the regimentation of the program. In these spaces, curriculum is subservient to pedagogy—an enabling corporeal pedagogy. At such retreats, consenting adults commit themselves to a training regime that disciplines the body and thereby the mind. It is an explicit pedagogy that aims to ensure a physical commitment to sitting still and writing.

I run a lot of writing retreats for academics and researchers. Retreats vary from the boot camp to the more laissez-faire—but they all use regimentation to discipline the physical body as the foundational step for enabling productivity.

I have enjoyed working with some incredibly self-disciplined doctoral students who have managed to regulate their lives, studies and writing amazingly well. Such students have replaced the external disciplining 'teacher with stick' with their own personal training regimes and routines, using, for example, writing schedules and self-imposed due dates; often they establish social supports that include obligations to produce. I have also worked with others who find it incredibly, almost pathologically, impossible to organise and discipline themselves. This group, especially, can benefit tremendously from corporeal pedagogies where they can learn the kinds of scholarly habits and strategies that enable productivity.

Writing Retreats aka Binge Writing: Luxury-Class Doctoral Writing

Susan Carter

I am at a desk overlooking trees soaking up misty rain. This post represents a spasm of procrastination from the article that I'm writing on my new research interest.

Beside me, I have an ambitious stack of reading for the week; I need to get my head round the recent literature. In front of me, the laptop, currently showing my resurrected EndNote library. Around me, other women academics are writing, including a couple who are finishing their Ph.D. theses, and a couple who are newly graduated and now pumping out articles.

It's the third day of one of Barbara Grant's writing retreats for academic women. I have read five articles and skimmed two journals—two books and another five journals sit waiting. I have also written 3,749 words, a bit boring and disjointed, but first draft material sitting in a document. I know that by the end of a fairly blissful week I will have accomplished a draft of an article to fine tune later, and may have almost caught up with this reading.

Boice (1987) suggests that 'binge writing'—days given only to writing—actually handicaps academic writers, because it encourages procrastination. He recommends, instead, making space for short bursts daily. Sustained daily short bursts of writing are recommended by Bolker (1998) to produce what she describes as the dissertation written in 15 minutes per day. Boice's and Bolker's approaches avoid fetishizing writing or making it a sacred ritual requiring trappings, place, silence, atmosphere… I too find it helpful to see it as part of the ordinary pattern of each day.

So what do writing retreats give participants? The writing retreat offers a dimension I do not get in short snatches at my office desk. It's the business-class luxury approach. Most conspicuously, it offers a quiet space allowing real *thinking*. This is the oasis that I keep ahead of me through all the times I write at a desk cluttered with folders relating to committee work, teaching work, reviewing work. I'm always able to write at my desk, but I cannot immerse myself in the same level of thinking. At the retreat, there is just a desk, my reading and laptop and no other demands.

And there is the social dimension of writing with others. Working around others obviously deep in thought is somehow energising, as though we mutually thrive on each other's absorption in their writing. The tapping of fingers on other people's keyboards motivates us.

Encouraging doctoral students to write daily makes sense; if writing retreats are established for them, they are likely to find clarity of thinking, energy from others—and are likely to shift their writing forwards.

Thesis Writing Boot Camp for Doctoral Writers

Cally Guerin

In the past I've been reluctant to go down the 'Thesis Writing Boot Camp' path. To me it sounds punitive, as if only the naughty students who have failed to make sufficient progress need to attend. And when unfit writers arrive, they'll be forced into doing the work they didn't complete previously, pushed to the limits of their ability in exercising their minds (if not their physical bodies). My own attitude to working with research students is focused on creating an inclusive, collaborative community of mutually supportive scholars—I want them to feel that I'm looking after them, rather than criticizing their hard work and extensive, long-term efforts.

But boot camps have become part of the annual program in lots of Australian universities since Peta Freestone and Liam Connell introduced the concept at the University of Melbourne. Boot camps seem to follow from the popularity of writing events and retreats. Students know what's happening at other universities and want to be part of what they see being effective elsewhere.

So I decided to give it a go.

I wanted to keep things fairly simple as a first foray into this kind of writing event. The schedule was set for five mornings in one week in February, 9 am–1 pm, to kickstart the 2016 academic year in Australia. The event was held in in our usual building, but in a separate section away from participants' offices. By using this familiar space, participants could travel to the sessions easily instead of finding a new bus route or car park; could have ready access to their offices to run back for any forgotten materials; and could use their university internet connection (for writing purposes—not for checking distracting email or social media!).

Participants were reminded one week before the start date to think ahead about the overall writing outcomes they wanted for the week. We worked to a timetable of three writing 'sprints' each morning; a timetable for the week's 15 sprint sessions was provided so that participants could assign specific tasks to work on each session.

The group meeting and discussion time was kept to a minimum, as the focus was on producing the writing. We had just half an hour at the beginning of the first morning for participants to introduce themselves to each other and explain their projects and approaches to the writing tasks they had set for themselves; then another short session at the very end was used to report back on achievements during the boot camp and to make a writing plan for the rest of the year.

During the morning, we had two short breaks to allow for more discussion time and social chat. An urn, tea and coffee were provided—very simple catering, but enough to refresh the writers (and keep them nearby, rather than wandering off to get a cappuccino in the café across campus and arriving back late to the next writing session).

Some participants were unable to attend all five days, owing to other responsibilities, or found they needed to arrive late or leave a little early sometimes. These adults had signed up voluntarily (unlike some compulsory boot camps); this group was more

than capable of making sensible decisions about their time and priorities. A week-long boot camp doesn't work for everyone, and gracious withdrawal is perfectly fine. Nevertheless, overall attendance was consistent and the public commitment to the boot camp seemed to provide a sense of accountability to the facilitator and the group for missed sessions.

By Friday lunchtime, a lot of words had been written, and good progress made in conceptualising thesis arguments and structures. The habit of writing on demand was established, and participants could brag to themselves and others about what they'd achieved through their concerted, consistent efforts. The hope is that this sense of achievement will encourage participants to continue writing to a self-maintained schedule.

Experimenting with Academic Writing Month (AcWriMo)

Cally Guerin

At Adelaide University we have just tried our first experiment with Academic Writing Month (AcWriMo). Inspired by National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), Charlotte Frost developed an academic version of this concept that has grown into a worldwide phenomenon. Despite feeling that the word AcWriMo sounds like 'acrimonious', I found the exact opposite to be true. I know that some academics have expressed reservations about the concept of AcWriMo, but I decided to try it anyway.

As an academic developer running programs for research students, I wanted AcWriMo to achieve several things. Mostly, I hoped that this experiment would:

1. encourage more writing;
2. build a sense of community; and
3. provide a form of online writing group for those who can't (or don't want to) attend face-to-face sessions.

We used Wikispaces for the register of individual goals and tally of daily output, as well as for community discussions. Wikispaces was free and really easy to use, but no longer exists. However, there are alternative free websites available with similar functionality.

Quite a bit of the early correspondence to set up AcWriMo took place via the (supposedly outdated but really quite convenient) email system. This is probably because my initial email inviting all research students to participate was sent out through the university-wide email list. I'm of the generation that likes email, and the participants don't seem to mind such an old-fashioned approach, especially since it is our university's usual form of communication.

Participants set writing targets ranging from 100 to 500 words per day. Any kind of target is fine—the key is making a public commitment and then feeling an obligation to follow through. As a role model for my first group, I wasn't always as productive as I'd hoped, and several others commented on the Discussion Board that they'd

had unexpected interruptions during the month, too. Many, however, exceeded their promised word count, and I for one found myself trying to write just one more sentence so that I could meet my obligations.

Thousands of words have been written during this concentrated effort; maybe they would have been written anyway, but now we have a record of the achievement. There is certainly a sense of a community developing, with a few key contributors to the Discussion Board but no doubt plenty of others reading and lurking in the background—they are all busy adding to their daily scores, even if not responding directly to my discussion prompts. Already some have asked if they have to finish at the end of November, or can we continue to have the Wikispace (the answer is a resounding yes!). And finally, most of the names on the register are not people I've come across in the other writing groups and workshops I run for research students, so AcWriMo seems to have reached out to a different group from our other offerings.

Overall, as a lead-up to the end of both the calendar year and the academic year in Australia, this has been an invigorating experience. I'm already planning to do it again.

Writing Processes

Questions Students Ask

Claire Aitchison

I started this blog during a writing retreat for research students. Some writers were working on a paper that needed to serve the dual purpose of being a stand-alone publication while also fitting their thesis as a series of publications. Others were writing papers connected to their doctoral research that wouldn't be submitted as part of the examinable thesis. And some were writing chapters or sections of the more traditional 'big book' thesis. Students came from all stages of candidature and from all disciplines. In this post, I reflect on the questions students asked in individual consultations.

- Should I just write it first—let it all out, and then structure later—or decide on the structure first, and then write into that?
- Should I write the chapter first and then derive the article from that, or the other way round?
- I've got this rough draft of a chapter and my supervisor says I have to make it into a publication—it is 14,000 words and needs to be 7,000. How do I do that?
- One of my troubles is that I write bits of information and it is just blocks of stuff. My supervisor tells me I need to connect the bits together. How?
- One of my supervisors is sick, and the other goes on sabbatical at the end of the year. I need to finish asap—how long will it take me to write the thesis?

- My supervisor says I am verbose. It could be cultural—but it seems too abrupt, like I'm writing a manual when I do it your way.
- How do I write a methodology section? I have read so many methods books that I feel overwhelmed. Now, apparently I am writing like one!
- I feel like I'm going round and round. I don't know what I'm saying anymore.

It's interesting to note that most of the queries were about writing processes—how to actually *do* the writing. This is such a beautiful challenge. Some people like to begin with an outline: they need the roadmap to guide their writing. Others like to write freely, drafting as they gradually and organically find the form (and the ideas) they require. It's easy to see why these two very different approaches can sometimes lead to misunderstandings between supervisors and students.

A number of student queries were about cohesion and linking. These prompted us to discuss the organisation of ideas—sequencing and logical development of an argument, along with metadiscourse for linking segments and helping writers articulate the rhetorical raison d'être of their structure.

Other questions related to writing style. The student concerned about writing the methodology section was experiencing 'model assimilation'. Methodology books are mostly written in a textbook style for a student audience and provide a theoretically detailed account of the topic. Doctoral writers often mimic this style initially. Helping students identify voice and writerly stance can assist them in replacing the voice of the informant with their own authorial voice as their project develops.

When the big book thesis also contains a series of related, integrated publications, writers will need greater dexterity (and nerve!) to accommodate the unpredictability and uncertainty of these emerging forms. There are fewer models for students and supervisors to draw on, and they may have less control over the form and timing, especially as plans can be disrupted by the reviewing and publication process. In addition, students sometimes struggle to distinguish between the requirements of a chapter and a journal article where the same story must be told differently.

These questions made me wonder *where* students can find answers.

Of course, students can speak to their supervisors … or can they? Some questions cannot be asked of supervisors; at times students may feel uncomfortable asking their busy supervisors, or maybe they just want a second opinion. In the main, doctoral students have few opportunities for low stakes conversations about their writing. Family and friends (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013) hardly seem best placed (and too many questions may stretch the friendship!).

Increasingly, institutions are providing opportunities for students to access writing help (e.g., via 1:1 consultations, workshops, guest lecturers or credit bearing courses). Nevertheless, ongoing support for doctoral writing is still, all too often, secondary to the task of getting the research done. Not all institutions are well resourced; not all recognise the value of supporting writing. Similarly, not all students are comfortable seeking feedback on their writing. In fact, some say they have only ever shown work to their supervisors—despite the fact that doctoral scholars who regularly show, share and talk about their writing are less likely to experience writer's block or the debilitating shock that can accompany critical feedback.

The student queries above also speak to the very nature of writing and authorship. They remind us yet again of the deep complexities of doctoral writing—of the temporal and relational nature of writing, of the emotional and subjective aspects of writing, of the skills and knowledge requirements for discipline-specific research writing. Open, genuine discussions about writing help bring these complexities to the fore and help reduce the stigma some people feel about sharing their writing.

In many ways, any writer embarking on a new writing task faces these questions, particularly when they are not part of a dynamic community of writers. Questions about writing are perfectly legitimate; our institutions need to encourage and resource vibrant and ongoing discussions about writing that are deeply embedded in the practices of scholarly research.

Writing, Reviewing and Editing—Not to Be Confused

Claire Aitchison

Writing	(V)	To form letters, words, or symbols on a surface with an instrument
Reviewing	(V)	To examine or assess something with the possibility or intention of instituting change
Editing	(V)	To prepare written material for publication by correcting, condensing, or modifying it (www.thefreedictionary.com/)

When working with scholars on their writing, it can be useful to draw distinctions between writing, reviewing and editing. In the act of writing, we generally move between these tasks automatically and unconsciously. Each of these activities is a key skill for producing text, but their inappropriate application can be counter-productive, especially for novice writers. Time spent on editing too early in the writing process can, at best, be time wasted, and at worst can contribute to writer's block. I've found that a greater awareness of these components of writing practice can help doctoral students become more productive writers.

I use this simple three-step activity to help identify and separate these writing tasks.

1. **Writing: Six minutes of 'free writing' à la Peter Elbow (1998)**

In this timed activity, participants write without stopping for six minutes, oblivious to spelling mistakes, poor expression and so on. It is essential that writers switch off their internal marker/editor/reviewer selves, and simply put their ideas as words on the page. (I usually give a writing prompt such as: Today I am writing about….)

2. **Reviewing**

Writers read over their text without interfering with it in any way. Then I ask them to record at least one positive comment and at least one comment identifying a change or aspect for improvement.

3. **Editing**

I then ask the writers to go back over their writing and edit their work.

Finally, we discuss the difference between these tasks, our relative confidence and competence with each of them, their different purposes and how they impact on the progression of the text. This is fruitful for identifying why writing has stalled and for pointing out strategies for more productive behaviours.

It's easy to understand why some of us who have spent years marking, reviewing and critiquing the work of others may automatically default to 'editor/marker' when we sit down to write. But there are times when this activity may need to be corralled—or banished altogether.

Different stages of writing require different tasks. For example, when fleshing out new thinking, it can be useful to actively turn off our internal critic and stop editing and reviewing, focusing only on putting words onto the page. Reviewing is good to bring to the text after periods of writing, particularly to new writing that has settled for a while. Editing, like housework, is a job that permanently beckons and feels always unfinished. Editing is an end-on task whose function is to get the text ready for show. But productive editing can also be done en route, when we're feeling 'brain dead' and need a break from writing, at points that make sense for the author, or following self-reviewing activities.

Reverse Engineering of Writing: Reading to See How 'Good, Interesting Writing' Works

Susan Carter

This post draws heftily on Gina Wisker's website, the Good Supervisor (http://goodsupervisor.co.uk, password 'brighton'—please note that it is not Palgrave Macmillan 2012 book of the same name). Here I give an example of one of Gina's exercises that doctoral writers could undertake to improve their writerly skills. It's a series of reverse-engineering prompts designed to help doctoral students learn how to 'notice' (Kumar & Kumar, 2009) the strategies that good research writers use. I noticed that Gina Wisker says to pick 'good interesting' exemplars—that is exactly the kind of writing that early career researchers should be encouraged to notice and produce.

Gina's Exercise
Find two good, interesting articles (or dissertations) in your field. Then analyse them according to the following:

- How the abstract establishes the reason for the work, why it was conducted the way it was, and what its importance and impact in the field are;
- How the introduction introduces the context, the need for the work, where that work fits in, what credibility (such as background, work, research, experience) the author has to write it and how it briefly gives an idea of the rest of the article;
- How the literature review engages with the literature, with both the established theories and the relatively recent critical work in the same/similar areas, so, how it engages with the main arguments and concerns related to this area, this question, this work, and also how this new work enters the dialogue with those previously written pieces and emphasises its new contribution to this ongoing discussion;
- How the methodology/methods section discusses, describes and defends why the work was undertaken in the way it was, that is, in what ways and why not in others, and the limitations and ethical procedures;
- How discussion of data engages with the data produced; how it explains the analysis, and how it looks at the evidence in the information found, ensuring that this is all related to the initial question (in social sciences, humanities, related fields), or hypothesis (in sciences and related fields);
- How it shows that the evidence/data/findings do relate to the initial question or hypothesis, etc., and to the theories which have helped to ask the question or address the hypothesis, which underpin the understanding and approach to the field and to the data analysis and discussion. Look at how it makes claims and informs them with the underpinning theoretical perspectives, how it backs them up with some form of evidence rather than overloading with large amounts of undiscussed, unrelated information or data; and
- How the Conclusion closes. Is there a sense of exhaustion and repetition? Or does it draw the main findings (factual and conceptual) together to make a statement about the main *factual* findings (new information and knowledge), and new *conceptual* understandings about the field, as well as their *meaning* in the field in terms of areas explored in this work? Does it clearly signal the importance of the work?

Each one of these bullet points would form the basis of a workshop or supervision meeting. I like to emphasise the word '*how*' in the above exercise, and ask students to look closely for the mechanics of language that articulate all these workings of their chosen examples.

This process is what Helen Sword calls 'reverse-engineering [of] exemplary prose' (Sword, 2017, p. 67). That is, by noticing exactly how a good writer achieves their purpose, a doctoral writer can check whether their own writing is as successful and do so armed with an informed sense of the linguistic strategies they might employ. Sword (2017) suggests some examples of what might be noticed, including:

- the author has made complex concepts accessible by using real-life examples;
- the author avoids gratuitous jargon and contextualises crucial technical terms so that readers can easily work out their meaning.

You will find some of Helen's resources at http://helensword.com.

The Writing Process: Agonisingly Slow?

Cally Guerin

I've been in conversation lately with a student who is analysing and writing about his research. He has done excellent fieldwork and gathered lots of wonderfully revealing data. Now that he is mapping out what to do with all that information, the work is starting to feel rather slow and repetitive. When I try to reassure him that he's doing a great job and that this is what writing a Ph.D. is like, he nods politely but the skeptical look in his eyes suggests he doesn't believe a word I'm saying.

At present he is engaged in the slow, careful mapping out of each chapter. Big decisions are being made about the main themes or categories—is that the best heading to characterise the concept? Does that particular block of material work as a single category, or should it be broken into separate sections? Then what is the best order for these themes? It is necessary to move the sections around, to try out a few structures, to assess which works best and to recognise what doesn't work as well and understand why.

Once the basic skeleton of the chapter is decided (knowing that it may well change again), the next stage of gradually building up the complexity of each section begins. Starting with the juiciest quotations, then interpreting what they mean, linking to the literature, theorising about the bigger picture that is gradually appearing.

The uneven development of each section as it comes into being can be discouraging. While it feels like a great deal of work—and effort—has been expended, nothing is completed. As key words are jotted down under headings, reminder notes are made to look up references, dot-points are added all over the document, the writer can see how much remains to be done. It is a process of going over and over the same ground, gradually filling in the story without reaching an obvious endpoint.

And even when the sections and chapters appear to be written up in full, they still require a lengthy process of reworking draft after draft. Indeed, it is precisely this iteration and reiteration that Paré (2011) identifies as a crucial difference between undergraduate and doctoral writing.

The final neat, smooth product we see in the completed thesis or published article doesn't reveal anything of this arduous intellectual work. That neat series of six headings might not look like a huge output for a full day's work, but represents hours of concentrated endeavour.

This really is a normal part of doctoral writing, particularly for qualitative researchers, although it can be rather dispiriting.

The Power of Walking

Cally Guerin

The final stages of thesis writing are a very difficult phase for anyone, both physically and mentally; most students seem become quite obsessive (even irrationally so) at the end of a Ph.D. before they can emerge into the bright sunshine on the other side of submission. This student identified his main struggle as trying to stand back from all the material dealt with over the years and assess it objectively. Instead of noticing what has been achieved, he doubted the worth of his efforts: is the research valuable to the discipline? Is it sufficiently original? Is it a substantial contribution to the field? After years of working with the same ideas, they can lose their freshness and no longer seem valuable.

In an attempt to reassure and offer a practical solution, I suggested he think through ideas when walking to university and then again when walking home. He looked rather bewildered (and maybe thought that I too was going mad in a kind of *folie á deux*). But I genuinely believe that a great deal of very useful thinking can happen while walking.

The best advice I ever received as a doctoral student myself was to try and keep the idea I was working on at the front of my thinking all the time—while waiting for the bus, while doing the washing up, while watching the photocopier, while doing any mechanical, mundane task. The point is to keep turning the idea over in your mind until the pattern or connection appears.

I have extended this thinking activity to walking. There is something about the soothing rhythm of walking that aids thinking—it needs to be fast enough to get the blood pumping, but not so speedy as to take up all your concentration. For me, this is much more effective than sitting staring at the computer and drinking yet more coffee, nibbling on yet more dry-roasted almonds (or, preferably, chocolate sultanas). I was therefore delighted to come across a recent study by Oppezzo and Schwartz (2014) that provided some serious evidence for what many of us have long suspected: walking outdoors really does stimulate creative thinking. Even Nietzsche (1998) is supposed to have said that 'All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking'. So I advocate walking and thinking as a regular part of academic life.

During mental health week in Australia we are reminded of the importance of maintaining our mental health, taking up moderate exercise and doing enjoyable activities to help cope with the stresses of modern life. There is a parallel discourse about the apparent increase in mental illness amongst academics and doctoral candidates. So I'm forced to consider how my advice fits with the recommendations to exercise but perhaps licenses obsessive work patterns by focusing on an idea and constantly turning it over in one's mind. On balance, I hope that these two approaches to doctoral writing create a manageable equilibrium. Not everyone is fortunate enough to be comfortably mobile, but those who are should gratefully make the most of it.

Habits and Time Management

Getting the Right/Write Habit

Claire Aitchison

Successful writers have routines and practices that become habitual; these include habits of mind, body, time, place and pace. Some of these habits are good, productive and sustainable—others not.

As an undergraduate I smoked my way through the writing of many an essay, mostly late at night with the aid of copious quantities of caffeine. Thankfully I'd kicked the smoking habit by the time I became a paid academic, and these days, staying up late—with or without coffee—is entirely out of the question. I rarely write after dinner. I'm a morning person and that's when I do my best writing.

Writing habits of the seriously successful are far more interesting. Apparently, Hemingway stood to write; Voltaire, Truman Capote and Proust preferred to lie down. Many authors fit their writing in around other jobs: Scott Fitzgerald wrote at night and on weekends when in the military; Philip Larkin wrote his poetry after work, after dinner.

Some writers set themselves gruelling targets: Anthony Trollope wrote 3,000 words in three hours each morning before going to work. PG Wodehouse averaged 2500 words a day until his late 80s. On the other hand, Gertrude Stein wrote for only half an hour per day throughout her life.

Some authors favour the solitary life, but some, like Jane Austen, wrote in the company of others—in her case, with her sister and mother who sat doing needlework. Oh, and my bad habits pale when compared to the big drinking and barbiturate consumption of people like Hemmingway, Tennessee Williams and Dorothy Parker.

Habits of mind that work as 'ideas incubators' often involve physical activity: Toni Morrison does her thinking during activities such as driving or travelling to work. Walking, running and swimming are also productive thinking activities for many.

So, if we pause to consider our writing habits (good, bad or non-existent), what can we take from the lives and habits of successful writers?

Firstly, it seems imperative to have a routine—and the discipline to stick to it. Markus Zusak (author of *The Book Thief*) said: 'I just make sure I write every day at the same time, and that my room is ready: I don't need any other reasons to procrastinate' (7 January 2014, *The 7.30 Report*, ABC TV, Australia).

Habits and routines are highly personal; what works for one, doesn't work for another. Imperatives such as commitments made to colleagues and deadlines can help, but, without a routine for getting the writing done, even these may not be sufficient.

At the beginning of each year I do a stocktake and set some concrete writing objectives. I itemise my writing objectives for the year and schedule completion dates for each. This schedule is pinned by my computer. Some years I'm more

successful than others; nevertheless, this activity gives me something concrete to work towards—and a way of measuring my progress (or otherwise). I also reconsider my weekly timetable to plan just *when*, in the week, the writing will actually get done.

Some habits are better than others. Some routines and habits can last a lifetime—others may shorten your life! These days many of us in higher education have less certainty around our working lives, and habits and routines can be regularly disrupted. It can feel like we have no control, and that writing is an illegitimate pastime (see Murray, 2013).

This context requires us to be more flexible and to regularly reassess our habits and routines—but equally, we may have to be more disciplined, more determined and even smarter to ensure the writing habits we develop are healthy and sustainable.

New Year's Resolutions for Doctoral Writers

Susan Carter

In a seminar hosted for doctoral students each January, I suggest activities to support doctoral writing for the coming year. Before drawing up their resolutions, doctoral writers can do a self-audit through introspection by

1. acknowledging successful working practices by listing things they have done reasonably well; and
2. listing bad habits that might be rectified.

Weighing up the previous track record can lead to New Year's resolutions, deciding what might make this time round more successful. Curry and Lillis (2013, p. 3) explain that 'the ways that people do things often become part of their implicit routine or habitual patterns of activity'; that is, the real goal is to build better habits into our regular (implicit) routine. Here's workshop prompts.

New Year's Resolution Exercises for Doctoral Students

Time Management
Make a time frame for the year ahead. What progress you want to make over the coming year? What is the realistic time frame for each step? Where do you need to be by January next year? So where do you need to be by July this year? What will you need to do each month to get there? Take the first month and plan each week. For this year, at the end of each month plan ahead for the next.

Changing Habits
If you do something consistently for two months, you will have established a habit that you can maintain. But if two months seems like a long haul, a good beginning

is to start with a two-week time frame. What is the first item that you might give two weeks' consistent effort towards? Are there little rewards if you achieve this metamorphosis? Pencil these promises into your diary or the digital equivalent.

Orientation

- Revisit your research proposal and outline of thesis structure;
- Remind yourself of your initial ideas (and enthusiasm) for the research project;
- Re-examine your aim: are you still working toward this goal? Has anything changed?
- Does your initial idea for the structure of the thesis seem viable? Has anything changed to make this form less applicable? Try and picture the thesis as a whole so that you have a better sense of how each of its parts function in the overall context.

Written Work

- Re-examine what you have written so far. Write a summary, noting the key elements of existing chapters.
- How is the next stage in your thesis going to draw on or link to prior sections? Pick up the existing threads with a mind to reworking them into the writing to be done next.
- Focus on the element of your research that most interests you.
- View writing quantitatively—how much do you have? How many words will be in each chapter? How many within each section? Now count the words every month so you can see the growth.
- Make a writing contract with a colleague—we will both turn off all morning (or whatever).

Help from Others

- Make a plan for where you want to go after completion.
- Talk to someone (supervisor, partner) about what you are writing.
- Plan towards giving a seminar or conference paper. Having a specific target can help motivation, and writing a discrete paper is a good reminder that you can in fact produce polished, finished work.
- Maintain contact with others: your colleagues and other doctoral students. Put dates into your calendar so that you participate in departmental seminars. Arrange coffee or lunch with doctoral friends.
- Participate in (or set up) a reading group with other doctoral candidates in your discipline to discuss particular articles, readings, theories or methodologies.
- Join or set up a writing group in which you review, edit and comment on each other's work—not necessarily limited to those in your field.
- Book seminars provided by the graduate school or library.
- See your subject librarian to ask about new data-bases that you could use.
- Email a world expert to ask advice on a small point. Then insert the response somewhere in your thesis, referencing as 'private conversation, date'.

- Join Twitter #phdchat to ask and answer questions.
- Link to an inspiring or sustaining blog like Thesis Whisperer (https://thesiswhisperer.com).
- Review the supervisory relationship, and plan a strategy for improving it. You can communicate better and produce more writing by knowing your own weaknesses and strengths as well as your supervisors'. Then thank them for the previous year's support, emphasizing what worked really well.

How Long Does It Take to Write a Thesis?

Cally Guerin

The idea of being able to create a schedule to write a thesis seems pretty obvious, straight forward and achievable. If there are 80,000 words to be written over three years, where's the problem? Assuming five-day weeks and one month for holidays each year, that leaves 720 work days. That's just over 110 words per day. So why do doctoral writers struggle to get this done? Clearly, there's a lot more to it.

When I meet with doctoral candidates who appear to be busy writing, they often disappointedly say they are still working on the task they were doing last week, and the week before, and the week before that. Many start out being very optimistic about how quickly they can write certain sections of the thesis. It seems that there is something here about time management related to habits of writing, and also understanding the size of each writing task.

Those doctoral writers who report feeling that their progress is slow are at a loss when it comes to strategies to speed up. In thinking about how to respond to this, I came across Helen Sword's recent article 'Write every day' (2016), in which she reports on the broad range of writing habits described by successful academic writers. What becomes immediately clear is that there is not just one time of day, amount of time nor place that works best—for each person it's different and depends entirely on other factors in their lives. Finding out what suits each individual—or adapting to what one's own life allows—is part of succeeding in doctoral writing.

It is sometimes too easy for supervisors and writing teachers to imagine that Ph.D. candidates have only their thesis to work on and can devote themselves full time to writing. But of course, many candidates have (sometimes substantial) work commitments, and family responsibilities for children and/or elderly parents—after all, Graduate Careers Australia reports that the median age of Ph.D. candidates in Australia is 35, a life stage where much family commitment is at its peak. Even those who are relatively free of other work and family responsibilities might have teaching duties, or may be preparing conference presentations or journal articles.

Added to all this, there is a pervasive perception—especially by those who aren't doing much of it—that writing isn't really 'work' (Murray, 2013). This means that

families or bosses can sometimes regard writing as less important than their own demands for candidates' time and attention.

So, all these other commitments and responsibilities mean that every day is *not* the same, and therefore each of those 720 days of a three-year candidature doesn't actually allow the same space for writing. The 110 words per day plan is already breaking down.

But, the thesis does have to be written if the candidate is to get their degree. Keeping a diary to see where the time disappears to can be invaluable. Honest recording of time use effectively draws attention to what and when writing is disrupted by other responsibilities or commitments.

Armed with accurate information, it is then possible to work around these interruptions. Often we imagine our days being spent differently from what we actually do, unaware of just how much time particular tasks take. Identifying these distractions is one thing—changing the writer's reactions is another. Learning to say 'NO' is not easy.

Of course, there is no answer to my original question; writing can take so much longer than expected. There are days when the writing tasks seem obvious and are quickly laid down in a decent form; on other occasions it takes an age to find a good structure that allows the argument to emerge in a coherent order. One of the challenges for new researchers is to make realistic estimates of how long each writing task will take, and then match that with how much time they have available for the task. It can be encouraging to slightly over-estimate how long tasks will take; then, if the job is completed a little ahead of time, a warm glow of success can be enjoyed (Zerubavel, 1999).

Writing and Time-Scheduling

Claire Aitchison

We acknowledge that, in planning for timely completion of the Ph.D., writing productivity is a complex phenomenon. But it is possible to make a reasonably accurate guesstimate by adopting practices that increase productivity *in combination* with output calculations that are based on project targets, writing tasks, and real, personal circumstances.

A common practice is to identify the average length of a thesis (measured as chapter, page or word count) and estimate backwards from that. This helps students to appreciate the size of the task ahead—and while word (chapter or page) count is a blunt instrument, it can be useful. Identifying the target size for the thesis allows the writer to map out the number and relative size of chapters, and itemise the jobs ahead. But still we come back to the question of how long it takes to write a thesis. Is it possible to make a realistic assessment of the time we need to put aside for writing in order to meet our targets?

The Long-Term Schedule—Planning to Submission

With doctoral students, I like to have an early conversation about the expected length of the thesis, so that we all agree on the size of the writing task. A draft Table of Contents with word counts for each segment becomes the working target guide. Next, we make an early Gantt chart to map out the months and years of writing ahead. This can be done using an Excel spread sheet (there's lots of help online), or by using online Gantt chart software associated with a project management tool, such as Trello (check online for other options). Many universities also offer workshops on project managing the Ph.D., and these may recommend specific software, approaches, or support.

But having a Gantt chart is only part of the story. Every other part is so much harder to pin down!

Some writing is slower, and some faster; some is light—even easy—and some is hard going. In initial discussions, when we need some (albeit imperfect!) guide for measurement, I often suggest students allocate a minimum of three months for an 'average chapter,' adding or taking from this depending on the kind of writing task. If new reading and fields of knowledge are required, the writing output will be slower. On the other hand, some parts of the thesis will be quicker to write because no referencing is required. For example, in the method section, describing the sequence of data collection may be relatively speedy compared to explaining the choice of methodological approach. Co-authoring is often slower than solo authoring. Some chapters are smaller and should be quicker; however, the Introduction is likely to take less thinking time than the Conclusion. Typically, over the period of candidature, as students become more familiar with the literature, their data and findings, it takes less time to write a chapter.

The Writing Schedule for Everyday Life

Making doctoral writing fit into everyday life makes a plan achievable. And this requires an accurate assessment of one's own life, writing preferences and habits. Zerubavel's book, *The Clockwork Muse* (1999), is a fabulous resource for making realistic plans to integrate writing into our routines. I've used it with individuals and in workshops.

Firstly, students identify *how many hours* they can realistically set aside for writing each week. The stated targets vary from 10 to 50 h per week. We then set out to test the veracity of such goals by completing a weekly (or fortnightly) schedule. Sometimes, there is a degree of reluctance—but when this task is taken seriously, it generally reaps big rewards—and can be a Ph.D.-life changing activity!

Making a Schedule for a Writing-Integrated Life

Complete the weekly schedule by first blocking out time that is not available: this might be work time, children's sport, Friday prayers, and so on. Also set aside time each week for fun, family and social activities.

Once these items are identified, the calendar suddenly looks very full—but before we try to identify the 10–40 hours planned for writing, we consider the following.

- **Idiosyncratic rhythms**. Some people are morning workers, being most productive before the household wakes; some need total quiet, so avoid writing on campus.
- **Different kinds of writing**. Try to schedule cognitively demanding writing sessions when and where you write best. Use shorter time slots, or perhaps less peaceful locations, for undertaking mechanical work like updating references and minor editing. Identify suitably lengthy sessions for major restructures, or for responding to supervisor feedback.
- **Momentum**. If possible, it is better to write more frequently across a week, than in chunks of long whole days with large gaps between sittings.
- Importantly, build in **rewards and contingencies**. As a doctoral student I had a favourite TV show which I allowed myself to watch (with an indulgent glass of wine) on Tuesday nights—provided I had completed my writing targets. I always identified Sunday afternoons as a 'catch up' space in case life had got in the way during the week. And when I didn't use it for writing, Sunday afternoons always seemed so special!

Having considered these parameters, it is time to complete the schedule. Once that's done, give it a test run for at least a fortnight before tweaking or reshaping. It is essential to have a timetable that is as realistic as possible—and then, stick to it.

Learning how to make realistic judgements about how long it takes to complete a given writing task is a skill that will be useful well beyond the Ph.D. Being able to more accurately predict one's own writing productivity contributes to work–life balance and means co-authors can trust you to deliver on time, reducing the likelihood of long, late, last-minute write-athons. It's worth giving it a go!

Writing Spaces—Where Are Theses Written?

Cally Guerin

As I sit down at my laptop set up on the kitchen bench, I find myself wondering where all those Ph.D. theses get written. I'm not certain why this is where I choose to write. Sure, it's a bit warmer here in the kitchen during the cold, wet Adelaide winter, and I can get up now and then to stir the quince jam that's bubbling away on the stove. I do have a perfectly good study, but when I've got the house to myself, I always seem to end up on the kitchen bench to write. And I know of others who actually prefer the busy life and noise of the family to surround them as they settle into their writing at the kitchen table.

A friend confided that she could do serious writing only in her work office and seemed unable to make progress anywhere else. She described entering her office as 'putting on her carapace', harnessing herself to the intellectual activity of writing. Trying to write while in another country on study leave just didn't have the same soothing sense of habitual scholarly demeanour.

Laptops and wifi make it easier than ever to work in cafes with a lively buzz of activity in the background. The local park might beckon in good weather. For those with busy work and family lives who undertake doctoral studies part time, a lot of writing can be done in the car while waiting for children to finish their sports practice.

Doctoral students are often encouraged to establish regular habits around writing times and places (e.g., Kearns & Gardiner, 2012). This writing might take place in brief snatches of time (snack writing) or in extended writing binges (Murray, 2002, 2011). Does 'writing as a social activity' (Aitchison & Lee, 2006) also call into play the social nature of those spaces?

Occasionally, I grumpily tell students that they can't complain about feeling isolated if they choose to work at home alone every day and not participate in the collegial life of their discipline. But they reply that sometimes the open-space offices shared by 10–20 students have problematic noise and activity levels. While such arrangements might create a sense of community, there is always someone chatting or taking a phone call, or entering or leaving the space, distracting and disturbing others' concentration.

What kinds of writing spaces are most conducive to the kind of rigorous intellectual activity that is required at doctoral level? Perhaps we are kidding ourselves about how much writing actually gets done in those institutionally sanctioned, relatively public spaces.

Starting Again: Picking up the Pieces After an Extended Break from Writing

Cally Guerin

Sometimes doctoral candidature is disrupted for extended periods, and candidates need to take a leave of absence. Sometimes this is because of very positive, planned life changes such as maternity or parenting leave, or good, short-term job opportunities that arise. Other times the interruption is for illness or injury, carer responsibilities for elderly relatives, or pressing financial need pushing candidates into paid work for a while.

But when those events have run their course, the task of starting again on the writing needs to be addressed. For some, the chance to get back to their writing is an eagerly awaited moment, and they are filled with new energy to kick-start the project. For others, though, it is a very daunting prospect that is approached with great anxiety.

We must remember that, not only has the momentum of the project been disrupted, but also the emerging researcher identity has been disrupted. The writing of the thesis is closely linked to developing doctoral identities (Aitchison & Lee, 2006; Lee & Boud, 2003; Kamler & Thomson, 2006). For those who have taken a break from that identity and are now trying to return, there are pressing questions to face: How does my identity as a new parent fit with my identity as a scholar? As a cancer survivor, will I have the energy required to complete this intense writing phase? After a major accident that involved head injuries, is my concentration span sufficient for rigorous, scholarly research? Now that I am a bereaved widow instead of a carer for my terminally ill partner, will the writing fill up that aching gap of grief or will it be too isolating when what I really need is human warmth? Never underestimate how confronting these questions might be, nor how far beneath the surface they might lurk, stalling progress without being consciously acknowledged.

Disruption to candidature doesn't have to be an entirely negative experience, however. Starting again after a break can be a chance to re-assess the project and its direction with fresh eyes, and maybe even make significant changes to improve the final product.

As a Ph.D. student many years ago (back when people relied on hardcopy from typewriters rather than electronic copies stored in cloud technology), a student at my university lost the single copy of his almost-finished thesis when his home burnt down in a terrible bushfire. Traumatic as this was, the student courageously started again, rewrote the thesis, and ended up with an excellent, medal-winning thesis that was published to great acclaim. The story went that, in the process of starting again, he was able to reassess his approach to the work and rewrite the thesis based on the digested, synthesised knowledge that had developed over the entire candidature. Of course, I would never wish such trauma on anyone, but the salutary lesson here is that a bit of distance from the project can bring unexpected improvements to the writing.

What advice can we offer students who are returning to doctoral writing after an extended interruption? The obvious starting point would be to read the last version of any existing chapters, go through the notes collected while reading the literature, and establish where the project is actually up to (as opposed to hazy memories that may be more or less optimistic about how much had been achieved previously). With that done, it is possible to make an overall, big-picture plan of what remains to be done, in what order, and in what timeframe. Then I'd recommend breaking the work into manageable, bite-sized tasks rather than thinking of it as the monumental undertaking of 'writing up' the entire thesis. It's also a useful strategy to start with the easy bits first, as it is always encouraging to see something ticked off the list of jobs and some progress registered.

Just Do It! (and Delete the 'Publish or Perish' Warning)

Cally Guerin

I was talking to Ph.D. students recently about how they can't afford to be precious about their writing—that they need to simply see it as something they do as part of their job, the 'normal business' of academic life (Aitchison & Lee, 2006). Afterwards, a participant sent me a comic that she has pinned onto her noticeboard. In it, an academic is explaining that, in academia, we have a saying 'publish or perish!'. The other person (not an academic) responds matter-of-factly: 'Yeah, we have that too. It's called "Do your job or get fired".'

It's a harsh message, and one that I would not endorse without reservation. I am fully aware that some academics' working lives allow them to get on with their research and publishing, while others have such heavy teaching and administration loads that their research output drops off. Nevertheless, doctoral candidates do need to get the writing done, and many also want to see their work published. If they are to succeed, it is important to discourage two fairly common attitudes towards doctoral writing: firstly, that writing is somehow special and more difficult than other elements of research; and secondly, that writing requires all sorts of particular conditions before one can get down to work.

For some writers, the routine preparation for writing is to 'Sit down at my desk within reach of the keyboard, hold my hands over the keyboard, and start typing'. I think this is an excellent way to approach the task.

Establishing 'good writing habits' that help us get on with the job really means 'good for *you*'. What works for one person's life context is not necessarily the answer for someone else. Rising at 5 am to write for three hours before breakfast is ideal for some, but not if you are unable to get to bed early or will be met by a crying baby at 5:30 am; large quantities of amphetamines might have aided Jean-Paul Sartre, but this technique is unlikely to be sustainable for most of us.

Increasingly, academic writers are taking a disciplined stand, forming various kinds of writing groups and writing to order. These are useful ways of proceeding with the job of writing as an everyday practice.

But if one more person mouths the tired cliché 'publish or perish' at me, I might scream. The situation is obviously far more complicated than that simple dichotomy announces, and there are all sorts of reasons one ought to avoid publishing research prematurely (Paré, 2010). I challenge readers to devise an alternative motto to take its place, perhaps along the lines of 'Write it or regret it'; 'Write for your life'; 'Stay calm and write'.

Writing Up—An Everyday Job

Cally Guerin

The Postgraduate Students' Association at our university recently organised a screening of the wonderful *PhD Movie* (2011). Just as heartbreakingly funny as the Piled Higher and Deeper comic strip itself, the film explores the 'reality' of being a doctoral student. And, as one might expect, there was minimal mention of actually writing the thesis! Sure, it was set in a laboratory, and these are the students who never quite complete anything, but even so, it worries me that writing is left out altogether.

We need to wean Ph.D. students off the idea that 'writing up' is something that happens at the end of the whole process. When students (especially those in the hard sciences) start making Gantt charts to create a timeframe for their doctoral studies, the temptation is to allot the last six months to writing. How do we persuade them that writing is something that needs to begin from the very start of candidature? Certainly, they'll probably focus on the finer details of collating the whole thesis in that last six months, ensuring that the document is properly unified, checking and re-checking the bibliographic details, updating the literature review to include the absolutely latest publications that are relevant, and completing all the final editing and careful proofreading. But to think that the bulk of the writing can be undertaken in six months is not realistic for the vast majority of Ph.D. students. Why does the 'writing up' model endure?

I see lots of students who are keen to attend writing workshops at the beginning of their candidature; they appear eager to get maximum input starting out on this big project. In my Australian context, there is generally significantly less coursework in the early stages than is usual in the US, for example, and Australian universities tend not to insist on participation in composition and rhetoric courses. Structured doctoral programmes are only now taking shape in most Australian institutions.

Then, I notice that as students move further into their research, the focus on data collection (field work, laboratory experiments, reading ancient documents in dusty archives) often starts to take precedence, and the writing falls into the background. Meanwhile, much of what has been covered in the early workshops is relegated to the 'must remember that for later' basket, where it can be overshadowed as all sorts of other research information crowds in.

However, for the vast majority of doctoral students it's good to start writing early and keep writing (Kearns, Gardiner, & Marshall, 2008). I want to get the message across that writing is a skill that requires maintenance and regular practice, especially as it doesn't necessarily come easily to many of us. The reason for providing writing development workshops early in candidature is precisely so that there is time over the next few years to hone those skills. Until students start doing some serious writing, it is hard to have an accurate picture of where their writing difficulties might lie.

So this is a plea to encourage doctoral students to believe that writing a thesis nearly always takes longer than imagined, and writing skills can't be developed overnight.

If the habit of writing every day (well, most days, anyway!) can be established early, those last few months will be more manageable.

Motivation, Pleasure, Humour

Olympic Endurance and Doctoral Writing: On Motivation

Susan Carter

This post was prompted by the 2016 Olympic Games backdrop to reading about writing. I have loved watching Olympic athletes' demonstration of determination, self-possession and focus. Simultaneously, I have been reading two books that deal with writer's block, bringing the intensity of emotion around writing to the fore: Alice Weaver Flaherty's (2015) *The Midnight Disease: The Drive to Write, Writer's Block, and the Creative Brain* and Peter Elbow's (1998) *Writing without Teachers*.

I see connections between Olympic effort and doctoral writing. While those writing Ph.D.s are not striving to be the best in the world, they are labouring to become a world expert in their niche. They do need to acquire some of those strengths that world athletes take to the limit.

And the limbic system seems important to this. Neurologist Flaherty describes the limbic system as the bit of brain just behind your ears that stimulates creativity and motivation. It is probably significant for world athletes and for doctoral writers. It may instigate the persistence that Olympians endure in the build-up to competitions, and the real grit required to push through tough patches. All that is long, slow and boring, unlike the richly emotional images of winners and losers at the games.

As a New Zealander, I watched with teary interest the interview with bronze-winning 19-year-old pole-vaulter Eliza McCartney. Her exhilaration and her comments mapped so readily onto someone graduating with a Ph.D. She paid tribute to her trainer and other supporters. She giggled that the bronze was the most satisfying medal to get because you knew you'd only just made it.

The interviewer reminded her of some lows in her sporting build-up—'so when you couldn't even get out of bed, how did you feel about your sporting career?'— that seemed pertinent to writer's block and doctoral writing. Eliza explained from her position of success that, in sport training, the good days are not that common. Most of the time, it is hard, it takes a long time, things go wrong, you mess up. For her, at these Games, it all came together. That feeling was rare. Well, the same seems true of academic writing.

Flaherty (2015) had experienced both hypergraphia—the obsessive urge to write—and writer's block, and found herself ricocheting 'between euphoria and terror' (2015, pp. 11–12). She became intrigued by the limbic system because research suggests that it motivates the ability to make things meaningful. So she began considering writer's block as a mental condition.

The Midnight Disease picks its way delicately through the connection between creativity and unbalanced states of mind. Flaherty concludes that writing procrastination is 'usually better treated by putting the writer in an appropriate limbic or motivational state than by cognitive strategies like making a To Do list' (Flaherty, 2015, p. 16).

Meanwhile, I'm also re-reading Elbow's (1998) *Writing without Teachers*. He, too, bases his pedagogy for writing support on his own experiences of hating writing at one stage, and later writing in a mad frenzy as a cure for depression. He changed the book's initial title, 'writing without tears', when he realized that he 'didn't want to define tears as a problem' (1998, p. xvii). Like Flaherty, he grew to understand depression, frustration and writing blockage as part of learning and creating. Elbow's inspirational pedagogies for writing, including free writing and his early facilitation of peer writing groups, underpin how many of us still offer support for writing. They exemplify the productivity of pain, struggle and determination.

The two books, set against the Olympic Games backdrop, have raised questions: are pain and despair a constructive and unavoidable part of academic writing, and are there risks to emphasizing this when we teach about writing? As individuals, how do we learn discipline to handle the slog? Is it possible to crank up our limbic systems?

Flaherty thinks yes. After looking at the way that some prolific artists and writers resorted to alcohol or drugs to prompt their creativity, she found herself 'grudgingly' admitting that exercise is one healthy way to stimulate the limbic system. The old adage of a healthy mind in a healthy body has neurological evidence.

Real Writing Aversion: Can It Be Overcome?

Susan Carter

The focus here is on the psychology of writing aversion. I'm working again with one of my favourite ex-students; let's call her Dr. X.

Dr. X left school at 14 after some unfortunate experiences there. Her passion for her practical work in health drove her into study. Older and wiser, but still with an admirable degree of attitude, she has since graduated with a Ph.D. due to her sheer grit in persisting through the writing of her thesis. She was one of those doctoral students who thrive when doing research, yet is intensely averse to writing about it. Takeaway message: Any relationship with writing is likely to be influenced by past experiences. Negative experiences can't be changed, but luckily the relationship with writing can be changed.

With the Ph.D. conquered, Dr. X is determined to become more comfortable with writing. How does someone get over phobia towards writing? She would like to feel the same pleasure producing articles that she has when lecturing. I've suggested stepping out of the rigid hard science objectivity and trying some of the elements that make her lectures so popular. For example, the equivalent of opening a lecture

with a short YouTube clip might be to begin her article with a juicy quotation from fiction followed by a short gutsy sentence aimed to attract attention.

Could a relationship with writing be improved by changing how it is talked about? Brause (2000, pp. 11–16) considers metaphors commonly used for thesis writing: 'mountain climbing, running the rapids, running a marathon, coming of age, a train ride or journey, a war or battle, a hazing experience, a birthing experience, a dance' and 'a blind person: An individual stumbling in a room never visited before.' Brause points out how cultivating an identity based on perceiving yourself as a victim of academia might not help you feel your writing is comfortable, homely, and enjoyable.

I know how therapeutic a good whinge session with fellow sufferers can be (see Mewburn, 2011). But, if you suspect that your own troubling writing experiences are more catastrophic than the healthy social exchanges that energise doc student talk, you can change your own attitude. Following Brause (2000), stop using your routine lament for at least six months and then see if writing feels any better.

Perhaps it is possible to project from the gruesome writing stage to the elation at completion, when new doctors often recognise personal development and satisfaction: it isn't just the degree they walk away with, but greater certainty of their ability to manage themselves. For example, one study began being sceptical 'about the Romantic project of self-discovery through education' (p. 139) and found (almost embarrassingly) that their new Ph.D. graduate participants fairly often described the 'joy' of the doctoral process amongst somewhat ecstatic descriptions of how much they grew as people (Leonard, Becker, & Coate, 2005). Maybe another self-help trick is to accept writing as an essential part of the struggle towards discovery. I like O'Connor and Petch's (2012) assertion that 'the mechanistic model diminishes the experience of writing […] Writing must […] be thought of as a form of truth emerging from self-development' (pp. 82–83).

You can, of course, choose to stage-manage your writing environment as a pleasure zone. O'Connor and Petch (2012, p. 79) declare: 'we must take this active and dynamic sense of the body into account when constructing embodied writing environments. We must realise that the body in itself has its own traditions and history in as much as it is open to new possibilities. The body that writes is situated at the intersection of both practice and possibility'. Not a bad legend for a writing-averse researcher.

Sin, the Motivator

Susan Carter

Threatened with the prospect of possibly losing academic status while being restructured, I realized how addicted to academic writing I have become.

I'm addicted to writing as a game that is competitive, edgy, frustrating: it is a bit like cryptic crosswords only even more multi-dimensional. I like jostling in this competitive world, controlling my emotions around writing and criticism (including

my own dissatisfaction), hunting out thought in amongst the words. I don't mind when it is hard. At least it feels real. I feel slightly guilty at recognising that writing is an addiction.

I know that guilt seems counter to the logic that, in academia, writing is good. A good doctoral student is one who is writing. I'm conjuring up writing's wicked attraction against the grain here. I'm hoping, though, that in amongst those who find writing to be hard labour, some of you will recognise that you also have a love–hate relationship with academic writing.

I did a bit of soul searching about the vanity of addiction to writing. I almost like myself best in the way I write—I've got more stamina and agility as a writer than I have with almost everything else I do. Rather than feeling conspicuously embodied as a writer, for me writing is about voice and identity (see more in Carter, 2012).

Consider the metaphor: 'The university is like a bad boyfriend. One day it is going to break your heart' (Mewburn, 2011). The university can only be a heart-breakingly bad boyfriend if, or because, we care so much about knowing, thinking, writing and entering into the exchange of ideas. Knowing more, knowing it better, and naming, owning knowledge. Saying things accurately.

Along the same lines as 'bad boyfriend,' at the Academic Identities Conference in Auckland, keynote speaker Eva Bendix Petersen also used the term 'bad love' to describe academics' addiction to the university. However, Eva's metaphor was, more centrally, addiction: 'You think you are an academic at a conference; I see a room full of junkies waiting for their next hit. And like junkies, you want to get young people hooked too. When a student's eyes light up because they have learned to love your topic, yours do too because you know you have another person hooked. Your trade is secured'. Scary, or a touch of realism?

Eva was principally investigating why academics have been so compliant with the neoliberalism and commercialisation of universities when we're meant to be the consciences of society. Her answer, found through interviewing academics, was that we are hooked on our guilty pleasure for research.

Maybe this thought about the sin of academia—vanity, desire, addiction—can be used as motivation for doctoral writing.

Is Doctoral Writing Doing You Harm?

Claire Aitchison

Writing is a physical activity that subjects the body to specific routines and impositions—it **wears on the body** in particular ways. I recall my grandfather's deformed fingers: he had callouses from holding a pen, the physical manifestation of a lifetime of writing. Writers these days wear different traces of their labouring.

Writing is the business of doctoral scholarship, but not all doctoral students realise that, when they sign up for a Ph.D., they are signing up to become a writer—like it or not. Despite the acceptance of a growing diversity of doctoral output (new forms of the thesis such as inclusion of artefacts, performances, exegesis, series of publications, multimedia and so on), the vast majority of doctoral students still solo-author a large manuscript for examination. In addition, students will write for publication and undertake numerous other writing tasks on a daily basis. Doctoral scholarship involves not only mental aptitude and fortitude, but also many hours of writing labour.

There is wide recognition now of technology-related injuries, and yet doctoral scholars are rarely warned of this. Contemporary writing-related harms include, for example, wrist, hand and shoulder injuries from use of the mouse; pain from repetitive keyboarding actions; neck and eye strain associated with peering at small screens; finger and thumb strain from texting and scrolling; back issues from prolonged sitting, and so on. These are very real and potentially significantly debilitating side-effects that can have lasting impacts on our bodies.

I am not qualified to give advice about workplace ergonomics or writing injuries—there is plenty of information available elsewhere—but I do advocate that, in the haste to produce text, doctoral students (and academics) should be mindful of the potential harm.

Lightweight laptops and tablets and ready access to the Internet give us the capacity to set up and write anywhere, any time. Our portable devices provide us with the capacity to access the information (literature and data) that we need to write, and simultaneously to store and share our writing from the same device.

Our writing lives have been liberated from the need to sit in a defined space to access the same computer in the same location. It has also meant that, as individuals, we need never leave off writing. The accelerated expectations around publishing and speedy completions are further exacerbated by these new technologies.

But is there a price to pay for so much writing activity? Or too much speedy writing? How can we protect ourselves against emotional and physical damage?

Whenever I run writing-intensive events (retreats, boot camps) there will be a number of people who arrive with an array of creature comforts—home-made and purpose built accommodations to improve their writing experience.

The DIY Stand-Up Desk

Just recently, someone arrived carrying a corkboard, a plastic container, a riser, computer, mouse and heat packs for a three-day writing intensive. All too often these folk are taking special care of their bodies because *they have already suffered* injury. It is harder to convince others (especially bright and shiny, enthusiastic new doctoral students) of the need to avoid injury.

Some say sitting is the new smoking. If you are about to commence a Ph.D., consider how much time you will be sitting at your desk. You deserve a safe and comfortable work space—you will spend years of your life there.
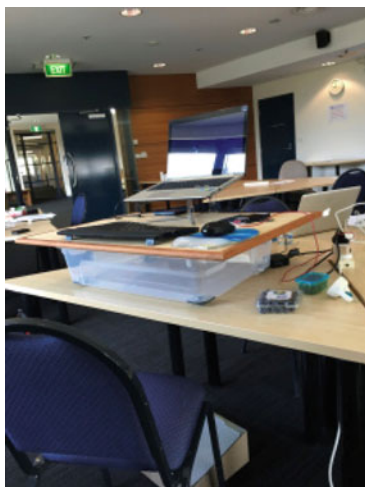
Photo: Claire Aitchison

How to Take Care of Your Writing Body—A User's Perspective

The first thing is to be proactive—don't wait for an injury before you assess your bodily needs and build a safe working space, whether that is at home, in the postgrad room, a café or at boot camp. It's your body and no one else is likely to look after it.

Do your homework—there are numerous sites with advice on how to avoid computer injuries. They all refer to things like screen-to-eye level, making sure arms and hands are horizontal to the keyboard, good posture, and so on.

Look and learn from others at boot camps and such events; chat to them about their crafty equipment and practices.

If you can, it is sometimes well worth getting a specialist workplace assessor into help advise you.

Seriously consider forking out for the right equipment early on: (if you are still a seated writer) a proper ergonomic chair; a big screen (or two); a separate keyboard; the right kind of mouse; a footstool.

A standing desk. These can be quite expensive, but, in my own experience, can be life-changing. It is so much harder to hold stress in the shoulders and arms when standing—and being on your feet is bone-strengthening.

Special Things for Boot Camps and When Away from Your Normal Writing Environment

Some basics that I have picked up from others, through my own experiences and from professionals such as physiotherapists:

- Bring a cushion (seats can be hard and immovable).
- Keep moving—if the organisers don't prompt you to move, get an app.
- If you can, stand up—even for short periods of time.
- Use a separate keyboard. Laptops don't allow for the correct eye–screen adjustment.

If you are using your laptop (preferably with a separate keyboard), bring something to raise the height of the screen—and increase your font size to reduce eyestrain.

Once you are aware of ergonomics for a healthy and long writing life, you can make small inexpensive adjustments such as these so that you can keep on writing whenever, wherever you like.

Lastly, one of my favourite pieces of writing equipment is wonderful smelling hand cream—aromatherapy for the soul. I never go anywhere without it!

A Sense of Humour Towards Doctoral Writing?

Susan Carter

I want to make the case that applying humour to doctoral writing is a great coping mechanism. Silvia (2010) takes a hard-nosed, pragmatist approach to writing, detaching all emotion and treating it like any other task. He's cheerful about this, and irreverent about the need for inspiration from within, advising: 'put your "inner writer" back on its leash and muzzle it' and focus on the 'outer writer,' productively facing outward (Silvia, 2010, p. 3). It's a good-humoured survivalist approach, given the relentless accountability regimes that we currently work within.

Silvia waves aside the idea of emotional blockage: 'I love writer's block. I love it for the same reasons I love tree spirits and talking woodland creatures—they're charming and they don't exist. […] Saying you can't write because you have writer's block is merely saying you can't write because you aren't writing. It's trivial. The cure for writer's block—if you can cure a specious affliction—is writing' (Silvia, 2010, pp. 45–46). Those who find writing really tough to crank out will hate such an attitude, but those who find it difficult to wring writing from their doctoral students might identify with Silvia. And it is useful to most of us to find different ways to ensure that writing gets done.

Silvia's (2010) practical, workerly advice is to use an Excel spreadsheet, set daily writing chores at the start of the week, with columns for the date, the task, whether it was achieved that day or not, and the word count, if relevant. He includes data analysis and literature review as possible chores, but the day's work needs to be measurable, and a record made of whether it was done or not. That way there's no need for emotion—you simply know the writing will be done within the stated timeframe. You can produce bar charts of your monthly word count to cheer yourself up. I tried this for a while and on a couple of days it pushed me to grouchily churn something out just so that I could tick it off.

I like the steady sense of humour throughout Silvia's book. Maintaining a sense of humour helps any long, tedious discombobulation, which is often how doctoral writing is experienced. Doctoral students who manage to see the funny ironies of their experience probably end up better equipped for completing and for what comes after graduation, I suspect.

Another writer-on-writing raises the necessity of humour for survival. Anne Lamott takes an almost opposite position to Silvia, rampaging through writing-based emotions that she dramatically feels demand suicide or murder of critical reviewers (Lamott, 1995). Yet her exaggeration is premised on humour: by overstating, she spoofs and thereby mitigates the negative emotions around writing and feedback.

Many doctoral students trying to capture academic tone and discipline epistemology in their writing will warm to the thought that 'We're mimics, we're parrots—we're writers. […] You may start to feel that you are trying to pass off a TV dinner as home cooking' (Lamott, 1995, p. 177). It's nice to hear an experienced author talk like this about self-doubt.

She describes drafting and revising realistically: 'Writing is about hypnotizing yourself into believing in yourself, getting some work done, then unhypnotizing yourself and going over the material coldly' (Lamott, 1995, p. 114).

And Lamott also recounts how, when a close family member was diagnosed with terminal cancer, she became 'desperate for books that talked about cancer in a way that would both illuminate the experience and make me laugh' (Lamott, 1995, p. 187). It was at this point that I saw that Lamott and Silvia, seemingly at opposite ends of the spectrum, both demonstrate a lively respect for the power of humour. Maybe a sense of humour should be added to the transferable skills that graduates should have. How to teach that is a worthwhile challenge!

Writing as … Metaphors for Loving Writing

Claire Aitchison

Doctoral scholars, their supervisors and academics in general, all have intimate relations with writing. It's our everyday world. Like any intimate relationship, this liaison has its ups and downs: there are times of love and hate, joy and bitterness, times when we resent writing and other times when it brings us comfort and delight. Who hasn't

known what it's like to fight and wrangle with writing late at night, exhausted, and wishing to cut the ties and run away forever?!

In this post I use metaphors to explore some of my relationships with writing.

Writing as Trance

Photo by Hulki-Okan-Tabak on 'Unsplash'

Writing can put me into a trance-like state so that I am totally unaware of the rest of the world. When I am deep in writing I am in an altered frame of mind, detached from time and space. My physical presence is irrelevant—I don't feel hunger, I don't realise that I haven't moved for hours on end. Whole days can go by unnoticed as I am completely absorbed, as if under a hypnotic spell. In these times, writing is the master and my attachment is singular, complete and involuntary. While I love *Writing as trance* I am not sure it is wholly healthy, certainly not for extended periods.

Writing as Meditation

When writing is meditative, it is mindfulness in the extreme. Unlike *Writing as trance*, this relationship is more intentional and controlled. I am managing this relationship. It feels healthy. Like *Writing as trance*, I get into the zone, and am all-consumed. I give writing my full attention, but it is my friend rather than my master; I can enter and leave at any time. After spending time in this writing space I feel calm and positive. Like mindfulness meditation, this relationship benefits from regular practice, and the more I do it, the better it gets.

Writing as Escape

Sometimes writing is my ticket of leave from the drudgery and disappointments of work and life. Much of our daily writing is perfunctory: administrative, managerial and functional. Academic life should, but rarely does, allow much time for the kind of self-directed writing that characterises doctoral study. But even there, sometimes, one is tempted to avoid the challenging writing that beckons. When writing is an escape, it is intentionally short-lived, perhaps even a tad illicit in the pleasure it brings. Like

a small holiday in the country, a nap on the couch, or a day at the beach—or the wickedness of taking a 'sickie' on the spur of the moment—this relationship with writing is exciting and revitalizing.
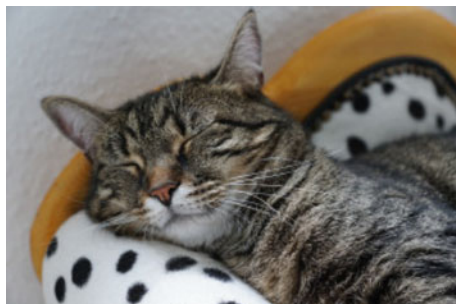
Photo: 'Tigerie' from Pixabay (CC licence)

Writing as Therapy

Writing as therapy is healing; it is a special time for me. It is private and unhurried, a close, often transformational relationship through which I learn about myself as much as my subject. While *Writing as therapy* can be writing that gets published, in its origins, it is not for an audience; it is for self and for meaning-making. This relationship is cathartic—free and unfettered, unpredictable. Sometimes this relationship can go to dark places, but when it is truly therapeutic it returns to wellness, even after despondency.

Writing as Creativity

This is an energising relationship, full of spark and invention. It is perhaps my favourite relationship with writing. It is one of the most important (if not elusive) writing relationships for doctoral researchers, and yet it isn't encouraged often enough for fear that it may wreak havoc, threaten supervisors and scare off examiners. *Writing as creativity* needs to be handled with care—when this relationship is working well, it is extremely powerful and rewarding, but unfettered, it can lead one astray. However, *Writing as creativity* isn't always readily available; sometimes it hides away, stubbornly refusing to come and play, instead leaving me alone with a blank page fearful that the relationship is over for good. The prolonged absence of *Writing as creativity* can be scary.

Photo: 'Painter' from Pixabay (CC licence)

Writing as Solace

This relationship is easy-going, wholesome and soothing. It is my friend and restorative comforter. Like putting on an old pair of shoes or warm coat, one can go a long way with *Writing as solace*. This relationship is built on familiarity, old habits drive it: the cup of tea, the trusted tools of the craft; the computer, desk, pen and paper that work together in perfect and practised harmony.

Metaphors about writing proliferate because writers enjoy the pleasure of testing out ideas in abstract ways in order to understand complex notions and connections. I recommend Ted Hughes' beautiful poem 'The Thought Fox' (1957) about the struggle with writing and the intensity of experience.

Writing Pleasure: Space and People

Susan Carter

Nine people faced a small task: to try to find pleasure in academic writing. They could write somewhere stylish, glitzy or interesting that they had never tried writing in before, or write in the same space as others, i.e., do a write-on-site aka pomodoro aka shut up and write. But the mission was to be writing pleasure-seekers. Their feedback was illuminating.

Sally pointed out that pleasure is an attitude, as well as an adjective that she hadn't readily linked with academic writing. The thought of sullying the café space, a place that for her is firmly social, went against all logic. But she recognised that she liked to write on campus because the desk space there was her own, unlike the writing places at home in a space shared with partner and teenage daughters. She used a timer to set a rhythm of regular stops and found that the breaks meant being able to go on for longer.

Kat worked on a couch in a public place and noticed that a zone of silence descended. She found she *could* block off distraction around her if necessary. Iris went to a deliberately glamorous location, a café in a hotel. She said she regularly looks for somewhere unusual to write as a stimulus and had never written there before. When she arrived mid-afternoon, the café was pretty quiet. She set a stop watch and did nothing in the break except people-watch. And Brenda chose an intimate café with little break-out booths, finding a comfortable one that put her in the winter sun.

Tui was travelling at the time, so her new environment was on the 29th floor of a hotel with city views. She had expected to find it hard to write there, saying she is easily distracted and the magnificent view over the city was alluring, but found the pattern of writing solidly for a chunk of time, then taking a stretch by the window worked: she did get more writing done than she usually does when away from home.

Firmly anchored at home, Lana wrote till midnight beside a son who was having troubling getting to sleep, sitting on the bed next to him with her laptop on her knees. Often the responsibilities of parenting along with a full-time job have restricted her time to write, and she was used to working late into the night. Yet she found that sitting on the bed in the calm of her own research writing somehow made her academic writing more comfortable, homely.

Home was good for Barry, too, who found being away from work (and having access to coffee, cheese and crackers) was calming—he could settle down and write. Coffee is assumed to be crucial in Inger Mewburn's 'shut up and write' way of working, along with food for the added sense of comfort.

Kevin established a new routine for the week: writing for an hour each morning straight after going to the gym. He found linking the physicality of the gym with thinking stimulating: his brain seemed to respond to motion, and then he was also glad to sit down at the computer.

Caroline had found that routinely fencing off time to write at the same time each week (Wednesday morning) meant that she made the most of that time. She also had a breakthrough in that, because she teaches mainly in digital media, working at the computer makes her edgily aware of teaching demands. So her most productive research writing medium was pen and paper, with her thoughts later transcribed into Word. She was aware of the need for what Murray (2013) calls 'disengagement.'

Usually disengagement is a pejorative term in teaching and learning: the rhetoric at universities is all about student engagement. But Murray's disengagement is empowering when it comes to writing—for many research writers, this is exactly what is needed in order to do the thinking that research writing demands. There was general agreement that shifting the place of writing allowed disengagement from the distractions (often other chores to be done) that familiar space offers. This more readily allows reengagement with writing, and intense focus on it.

There are two benefits to making writing a special occasion, then. It lets you detach from all the other demands, and it makes the habit of research writing something special.

References

Aitchison, C., & Lee, A. (2006). Research writing: Problems and pedagogies. *Teaching in Higher Education, 11*(3), 265–278.

Aitchison, C., & Mowbray, S. (2013). Doctoral women: Managing emotions, managing doctoral studies. *Teaching in Higher Education, 18*(8), 859–870. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2013.827642.

Boice, R. (1987). A program for facilitating scholarly writing. *Higher Education Research and Development, 6*(1), 9–20.

Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day: A guide to starting, revising, and finishing your doctoral thesis*. New York, NY: Henry Holt.

Brause, R. (2000). *Writing your doctoral dissertation: Invisible rules for success*. London, UK: Falmer.

Carter, S. (2012). Original knowledge, gender and the word's mythology: voicing the doctorate. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, *11*(4), 406–417.

Curry, M. C., & Lillis, T. (2013). *A scholar's guide to getting published in English: Critical choices and practical strategies*. Toronto, ON: Multilingual Matters.

Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing without teachers*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Flaherty, A. W. (2015). *The midnight disease: The drive to write, writer's block and the creative block*. Boston, MA: HoughtonMifflin.

Hughes, T. (1957). The thought fox. In *The hawk in the rain*. London: Faber & Faber.

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2006). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Kearns, H., & Gardiner, M. (2012). *The seven habits of highly successful PhD students*. Glenelg North, SA: Thinkwell.

Kearns, H., Gardiner, M., & Marshall, K. (2008). Innovation in PhD completion: The hardy shall succeed (and be happy!). *Higher Education Research & Development, 27*(1), 77–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360701658781.

Kumar, M., & Kumar, V. (2009). Recursion and noticing in written feedback. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 12*(1), 94–99.

Lamott, A. (1995). *Bird by bird: Some instructions for writing and life*. New York, NY: Anchor.

Lee, A., & Boud, D. (2003). Writing groups, change and academic identity: Research development as local practice. *Studies in Higher Education, 28*(2), 187–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/0307507032000058109.

Leonard, D., Becker, R., & Coate, K. (2005). To prove myself at the highest level: The benefits of doctoral study. *Higher Education Research and Development, 24*(2), 135–149.

Mewburn, I. (2011). Shut up and write! The Thesis Whisperer blog. Retrieved June 14, from https://thesiswhisperer.com/2011/06/14/shut-up-and-write/.

Murray, R. (2002). *How to write a thesis*. Maidenhead, UK: McGraw Hill/Open University Press.

Murray, R. (2011). *How to write a thesis* (3rd ed.). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.

Murray, R. (2013). 'It's not a hobby': Reconceptualizing the place of writing in academic work. *Higher Education, 66*(1), 79–91.

Murray, R. (2014). Doctoral students create new spaces to write. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory* (pp. 94–109). London, UK: Routledge.

Murray, R., & Newton, M. (2009). Writing retreat as structured intervention: margin or mainstream? *Higher Education Research & Development, 28*(5), 541–553.

Nietzsche, F. (1998). *Twilight of the idols, or, how to philosophize with the hammer* (D. Large, Trans.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Original published 1888.

O'Connor, P., & Petch, M. (2012). Merleau-Ponty, writing groups and the possibility of space. In L. Clughen & C. Hardy (Eds.), *Writing in the disciplines: Building supportive cultures for student writing in UK higher education* (pp. 75–97). Bingley, UK: Emerald.

Oppezzo, M., & Schwartz, D. L. (2014). Give your ideas some legs: The positive effect of walking on creative thinking. *Journal of Experimental Psychology. Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 40*(4), 1142–1152. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036577.

Paré, A. (2010). Slow the presses: Concerns about premature publication. In C. Aitchison, B. Kamler, & A. Lee (Eds.), *Publishing pedagogies for the doctorate and beyond* (pp. 30–46). London, UK: Routledge.

Paré, A. (2011). Speaking of writing: Supervisory feedback and the dissertation. In L. McAlpine & C. Amundsen (Eds.), *Doctoral education: Research-based strategies for doctoral students, supervisors and administrators* (pp. 59–74). New York, NY: Springer.

Silvia, P. (2010). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: APA Life Tools.

Sword, H. (2016). 'Write every day!': A mantra dismantled. *International Journal for Academic Development, 21*(4), 312–322. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2016.1210153.

Sword, H. (2017). *Air and light and time and space: How successful academics write*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Watkins, M. (2011). *Discipline and learn: Bodies, pedagogy and writing*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publications.

Zerubavel, E. (1999). *The clockwork muse: A practical guide to writing theses*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Chapter 4
Crafting Writing: Clarity, Style and Voice

Skilled researchers develop their craft as writers beyond compliance with grammar. Their tools of trade include precision in word choice, logic in structure, clarity of style, and manipulation of syntax for accurately placed emphasis. We make the case that it is worthwhile for doctoral writers to work at acquiring 'artisanal habits' (Sword, 2017), the practices of a sharp-eyed research writer honing control over language. Doctoral writers should be encouraged to 'notice' the mechanics of language as they read (Kumar & Kumar, 2009). Attention to becoming and being a research writer continues in this chapter with its overarching themes of clarity, style and voice.

Clarity from Clean Simplicity

Balancing Simplicity and Complexity in Doctoral Writing

Cally Guerin

Many years ago I wrote a Ph.D. thesis that used French psychoanalytic and postmodern theory. It may have been the translation of the texts, but I found it necessary to read, and re-read, and re-read again before I even began to understand the concepts, let alone learn how to work with them. Part of my difficulty was the texts' cultural preference for long, convoluted sentence structures; another part was the slow process of becoming familiar with a new vocabulary.

However, it took many years before I recognised that sometimes when I couldn't understand a piece of writing, the problem lay in the writing rather than with me.

There are plenty of jokes about how obscure academic writing can be. There's the *Philosophy and Literature* journal's Bad Writing Contest from the 1990s, and Pinker's (2014) diatribe on how and why academic writing stinks. As Thomson (2015) points out, this kind of writing is an easy target. Given these attitudes, how should we best advise doctoral candidates to strike the right balance in their writing?

I encourage students to keep the sentences simple and straightforward—being clear and easily understood are not actually bad things. This can sometimes be even more important when English isn't the author's first language, especially if there is an inclination to translate from a first language that privileges very complex structures for formal writing. Relatively short sentences allow the author to control the subject, verb and object so that readers can follow who is doing what to whom.

The trouble with simple sentence structure is that it becomes possible for the writing to appear rather naïve—not at doctoral level. One way to ramp it up to a more appropriate level is to use more complex vocabulary within those simple sentence structures. For example, instead of 'Participants were asked to answer the questions', it might be better to write: 'Participants were invited to respond to the questionnaire'. Subject, verb and object are all firmly in place, but the language is a little less rudimentary.

Care is needed to ensure that word choice doesn't tip the balance towards the equally irritating practice of using language that sounds pompous and overblown. It is always important to be wary of bloated jargon and overuse of abstract nouns, but simple sentences can effectively communicate complex ideas through more sophisticated vocabulary.

Statements in doctoral writing sometimes require numerous caveats to ensure accuracy and clarity of purpose; anxious acknowledgements of all the limitations in order to head off potential criticisms can lead to very long and complex sentence structures with many clauses and sub-clauses. Even these situations can be much easier to comprehend when the sentences are shortened. Although some disciplines still don't seem to approve of dot-point lists, for many this is a very good way to deal with a number of points that need clarification.

Writing for different audiences can be a very useful way of learning how to manipulate sentence structure and vocabulary. Considering the requirements of non-specialist audiences can help move away from the kinds of constructions that obscure meaning; instead, efforts to show how the research is relevant and useful force the author to clear out anything unnecessary to the central message. This is one of the reasons I like the Three Minute Thesis Competition—it's such a good way to help researchers think about *communication* as their main purpose. Blogging for a general audience can also help to focus on straightforward explanations of complex ideas.

Take Your Time—Or Get to the Point?

Cally Guerin

I've read lots of interesting papers written by doctoral students and colleagues lately, as well as reviewing journal articles. As I work through the various pieces of writing and line them up against each other, the styles used in different genres are clearly evident. This is especially noticeable when a paper doesn't quite produce what one would expect of that genre. One of the challenges for any author working across

a range of genres is adapting one's own style to suit the current writing task. In particular, I've been noticing a tension between the defensive detail of a thesis, and the brisk pace of the journal article that needs to get to the point much more quickly and efficiently.

I find I'm drawn to the style of writing that takes its time to unpack each point of the argument in detail. But I'm torn between that and wanting to get to the main point quickly—like everyone else, I've got a lot of reading to do. If the idea can be expressed adequately in 5 words, then why use 15 to make the same point? And too often, it seems that those extra 10 words are padding formed from empty jargon that poses as 'intellectual' but doesn't really say much at all.

I think the ability to write in different genres (thesis, journal article, book chapter) is one of the difficult challenges facing doctoral students, who are expected to understand the differences of genre in quite nuanced ways in order to pitch their work to different audiences and different outlets. I'm very much in favour of the thesis by publication, and advocate that format most of the time. For those who plan to work in careers that require publication in academic journals, there are great benefits in learning how to write articles, and then negotiate the reviewing and publishing process. Most will only write a thesis once, but will need to know how to write articles repeatedly during their research careers.

But just lately I've noticed a sneaking feeling forming deep beneath my general conviction that thesis by publication is mostly helpful. I've been wondering what might be lost along the way if the traditional thesis format is abandoned. Where else does one have licence to follow through on the fine detail of intellectual thought, to expound at length on a complex theory, or to work through the digressions and tangents that surround the core ideas?

Perhaps this all points to the strengths of a Ph.D. thesis format that allows for a combination of published papers and the more conventional framing chapters (sometimes referred to as a 'thesis with publications' or 'hybrid'—see Jackson 2013; Sharmini, Spronken-Smith, Golding & Harland, 2015). Here the big introductory, context-setting chapter allows for more extensive philosophising on the topic. That's the place to take up the more leisurely style of careful unpacking of big ideas. But the shorter, neater, more concise representation of the findings can be found in the article-length chapters forming the middle of the thesis.

This preference for different kinds of writing might also mark a tension between scientific and humanities writing. There's obviously a place for the beautifully crafted sentence in science writing—and certainly, poetry can find a place in science—but it doesn't always have to take a lot of words to get there.

Sword's Exercises for Doctoral Style

Susan Carter

To what extent should those of us who support doctoral writing aim to help candidates to write succinctly, clearly and with a control that makes reading smooth and even pleasurable? I puzzle over that, aware of what a marathon writing task the thesis presents, how emotionally challenging doctoral writing can be, how life can throw study off-centre and what extraordinary diligence is required to learn English as an additional language to the level of fluency and sophistication required at doctoral level. Might it demoralize doctoral writers to include tips about further authorial skill along with feedback on content, structure, and ideas?

My own inclination is towards teaching for style because I believe that enhanced writing skill is a huge benefit, but I check with each doctoral student that they also prefer this. I seek consent.

So, what is stylish writing? Helen Sword surveyed over 100 guides on academic writing and came up with six points that they agreed on (Sword, 2012, pp. 26–27):

- Clarity, Coherence, Concision: Strive to produce sentences that are clear, coherent and concise…the 'three C's' are mentioned in some form in most of the style guides…
- Short or Mixed-Length Sentences: Keep sentences short and simple, or vary your sentences by alternating longer sentences with shorter ones
- Plain English: avoid ornate, pompous, Latinate or waffly prose
- Precision: Avoid vagueness and imprecision
- Active Verbs: Avoid passive verb constructions or use them sparingly; active verbs should predominate
- Telling a Story: Create a compelling narrative.

Three exercises from Sword could be offered to doctoral students who want a route to stylish academic writing.

Voice and Audience

Thinking about voice, write down the names of five real people. They should be:

1. A top expert in your field, one you'd like to impress
2. A close colleague in your discipline who you would trust to give you honest feedback
3. An academic friend from outside your discipline
4. An advanced undergraduate from your discipline
5. An intelligent non-academic friend or relative.

Then read a passage of your writing aloud to imagine each person's response. Revise the writing so that each one would understand you, stay interested, and want to read on (adapted from Sword, 2012, pp. 46–47).

Possible Agents Governing Verbs

Then 'make sure that at least one sentence per paragraph includes a concrete noun, or human entity as its subject, immediately followed by an active verb. Some examples are "Merleau-Ponty argues…"; "Students believe…"; "International banks compete…"'. Sword makes the case too that, because abstract nouns are hard for readers to envision, 'Where possible, explain abstract concepts using concrete examples' (Sword, 2012, p. 61).

Modelling on Exemplars

Find an author whose work you find really like to read. Then look closely and analytically at how the writing achieves this. What strategies could you adopt in your own writing (Sword, 2012, p. 85)? How are paragraphs organised so that readers follow through the logic of an argument being steadily built? Once the grammatical bones of a good article are traced, it becomes possible to model structure on the well-written exemplar.

Personal Style and Communication

A Question of Language Competence or Writing Style?

Cally Guerin

Recently, a student came to me in tears, distraught at what she felt was a very unfair assessment of her writing ability after her supervisor had decided her English was not up to scratch. She is from an Asian background, although born and educated in Australia. While English might not be her first language, she is certainly not using English as an Additional Language (EAL). Our universities have lots of 'Generation 1.5' Ph.D. students like her who work and think in more than one language.

This young woman is typical of many: a reasonably competent writer with room for improvement—which one might say of at least 90% of Ph.D. students. Many students can write grammatically correct sentences (at least most of the time), can more or less communicate their ideas, but don't produce particularly elegant prose. This student's writing fell into this category.

How can students respond to supervisors who seem to be very harsh on their writing, imposing their own personal preferences and calling it 'an English language issue'? Most students are sharply aware of the power supervisors have over them; it can be frustrating to feel you have to impersonate your supervisor's style. How do supervisors judge ethically when to insist that writing needs revision, and when to back off and accept that it is not their own writing and doesn't need to be in their voice? And where should thesis examiners draw the line concerning style, voice and accuracy? (Or, for that matter, journal reviewers who seem to have very specific ideas about what is 'correct'.) Is it necessary to set the highest standards right from the start? Could that be too discouraging for students, or does it prepare them for what

lies ahead in the academic world? Where does reasonable academic rigour end and pettiness—that could even be construed as racism—begin?

My own experience working as an academic editor has encouraged me to think carefully about the difference between something that is incorrect, and something that is simply a matter of style. I think that supervisors have a responsibility to help students learn the specific writing conventions of their individual disciplines, and that certain vocabulary can have vastly different connotations in particular areas. Nevertheless, it's also important to notice in doctoral writing what is being achieved, what is a surface issue and what is genuinely problematic.

Importantly, feedback needs to be specific to be useful. To label all writing issues as 'English language problems' seems to me to be particularly unhelpful in developing writing skills for doctoral students. Many students take time to learn the disciplinary vocabulary of a new field and the accompanying conventions of research communication in their area. The language of the discipline itself can be very foreign for researchers grappling with the details of unfamiliar sub-disciplines, regardless of their own language background. Acquiring academic literacy often requires specific training at all levels of education.

Writing as Social Negotiation

Susan Carter

Writing is a social practice. We might labour over clunky writing with rage at how long it takes, or grieve at the mutilation we perform on our prose when we admit something's irrelevant. This laborious work is a courtesy to our significant other, the reader. It is important. Being courteous, following social expectations, has to be done because writing is social.

We grow up aware of social expectation. All those rituals that we know about and usually conform to unthinkingly as adults—who to speak to formally, who, informally, how far we can take humour with different audiences—gain us the benefit of fitting in comfortably. It keeps those around us comfortable too. Same principle goes with thesis writing. With writing, our guest, the reader, is a person. They have needs.

Recently a friend wrote to apologise for a very minor sin of omission with the excuse that she had been in an agony of house-cleaning before hosting dinner guests. Applying this little domestic homily to doctoral writing almost works. The last touches to the doctorate, in the last four months or so, should be to ensure the comfort and interest of the reader as a guest.

Clutter should be tidy enough for your reader's ease of access. Clear the access route. You do not want a heap of barely relevant detail at the start of your thesis. The introduction should be a well-lit attractive foyer, inviting.

Where does a reader enter a thesis? Examiners usually look at the abstract, then skim the Introduction, Discussion and Conclusion before beginning in earnest: these

parts should be good. One experienced examiner I know first checks the reference list at the back for dates. 'Nothing since 2012 is likely to be a case of revision,' he said. Avoid being too retro for comfort.

A clear statement of the motivating problem/question/hypothesis will arouse reader interest, too, so that they are looking forward to the reading ahead. A reader who smiles over their first skim through is likely to be a sympathetic reader. Then starts the examiner's burning need to tick off that the regulations for a doctorate have been met. A clear statement of the original contribution to knowledge or understanding helps. They also want evidence of critical analysis of literature; clearly explained methods; and a good framework tying literature, methodology and findings together. The word 'evidence' here means some sentences explaining these things set out where they will be clearly seen.

Perhaps this is where the analogy of the dinner guest/tidy house works best. Candidates do need to take care about grammar, punctuation, referencing, consistency and a zillion other small housework details before submitting, which usually means leaving about three to six months for this revision. What is even more important is highlighting what matters: the generic requirements of the thesis. These keep the examiner readers comfortable. Good hosting as author will help make for well-behaved reader guests. Keep them happy so they leave the social negotiation of thesis examination with the satisfaction of signing off positively.

Personalising the Thesis: Incentive to Writing It?

Susan Carter

Thesis authors often stamp their identity on their theses. Perhaps such personal marking—think dog and territory—helps with the more stodgy writing of the thesis body. When we find a way to mark our academic work with our own style, it is more fun to produce.

One example of personal marking is the epigraph that might open each chapter, a strong quotation that inflects the author's attitude to the topic. Lockhart's (1997) Ph.D. in International Business covers export systems in the context of 'land-based values.' His opening chapter, 'Motivation, Research Approach, and Problem Statement,' begins with the epigraph, Oscar Wilde's, 'It is a pure unadulterated country life. They get up early because they have so much to do and they go to bed early because they have so little to think about' (Lockhart, 1997, p. 1). This quotation obliquely ties economics to the rural versus urban, local versus international aspects of New Zealand history that underpin his topic. Another of Lockhart's chapters uses the well-known Pink Floyd exhortation to eat your greens if you want your pudding; again, the quotation is apt for the chapter's topic.

Lockhart's epigraphs establish that business is a social and culturally embedded practice. His thesis was recommended as a good one, suitable for use as a model

of a well-written thesis. My hunch is that those epigraphs gave the author as much pleasure as its subsequent readers, including its examiners.

Sometimes epigraphs are taken from classical times, for example, a thesis on health in an aging population might use Cicero's 'Active exercise, therefore, and temperance can preserve some part of one's former strength even in old age' as a prefix to its introduction. The effect of going classical is to place the research study in a lineage that goes back over centuries, showing a long-standing preoccupation with the same problems and solutions, and an authorial connection with those landmark figures who have shaped Western thought.

The aesthetic dimension added to the thesis should be taken seriously. It gives pleasure to writers and readers when thesis writing is personalised. It isn't new to note that the personal is the political; the pleasure of thesis style also implies a politics through what is personal and personality-imbued.

At a time when education discourse laments how commercial, neoliberal and audit-cultured the university is becoming, it's unsurprising that we enjoy opportunities for generating new knowledge that reflect the identity of the human creator. My experience tells me that when writers find their own distinctive style, voice and character, it 'enhances productivity.' For me, though, this isn't so much about faster product. It is more about writing's construction of academic identities that are pleasurable to inhabit and to know.

Where's This Going? Metadiscourse for Readers and Writers

Claire Aitchison

We've all heard good teachers and orators lay out what they're going to cover in their talk. It usually happens early on, and when done well, it is unobtrusive and incredibly useful to help us 'get' what they are going to talk about. Depending on the situation, they may remind listeners of what was covered previously (where they're coming from), of the scope and nature of their current talk, and how they're going to proceed (where they're going). This bit of talk acts as a launching pad. It gives us a moment to collect ourselves mentally and it reduces cognitive load because we don't have to second-guess where things are heading. As an audience member, I appreciate this early orientation because I want to know upfront how my time is going to be spent.

Linguists call this chatter 'metadiscourse'—that is, talk about the talk, or 'discourse about discourse' (Feak & Swales, 2009, p. 38). Generally this discourse is empty of content—although it may include a position or argument statement.

Metadiscourse features a lot in academic writing—and especially in thesis writing. Generally speaking, the longer the manuscript, the greater the amount of metadiscourse. Feak and Swales (2009) say that expository texts have more of it than narrative texts. Metadiscourse is most commonly found at the beginning and end of chapters and as a segué between different parts within chapters. Metadiscourse is a feature of a *reader-friendly* text (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007).

Not surprisingly, there's a fair bit of metadiscourse in the average dissertation or thesis, although some disciplines favour it more than others. Hyland (1998) describes variations across disciplines. In my own experience, I've seen more in theses that are heavily argument driven, and less in the pure sciences and humanities.

Evans and Gruba (2002) outline a useful structure for the beginnings of chapters: that is the three moves of (1) backward reflection to the previous chapter; (2) statement of what's in the current chapter; and (3) foreshadowing what follows. The rendition of these 'rhetorical moves' will vary—they might appear as three distinct paragraphs, or be combined in one paragraph, or even in one sentence.

Here are some examples of sentence structures or 'skeletons', as Kamler and Thomson (2014) call them, that may be located at the beginnings or endings of chapters or between segments of a text.

Current orientation	*The focus of this chapter is …* *This chapter reviews the literature on …, beginning with an* *overview of the key disciplinary influences…*
Backwards orientation	*This chapter follows from a detailed report of the findings that …* *The previous chapter provided an historical review of the* *evolution of these models. To recap, the main …*
Future orientation	*Having established the central argument, the next chapter …* *… and thus, the next chapter explores the key themes …*
Combination orientations	*This chapter analyses the environmental drivers first identified in* *Chap. 4. It begins by …, and then …, thereby establishing the* *context for a more thorough discussion in Chap. 7.* *Following from the discussion of key findings in Chap. 5, this* *chapter lays the ground for the resultant recommendations* *presented in the final chapter*

Isn't Metadiscourse Just Plain Boring?

Some readers object to this kind of directional voice, finding it intrusive and simplistic, even insulting. Certainly, if it is formulaic and repetitive, recurring at regular intervals when it simply isn't necessary, it can become tedious.

Using Metadiscourse as a Writing Tool

As a writer myself, though, and as a writing teacher, I make frequent use of metadiscourse. My early drafts often have lots of metadiscourse signalling for me what it is (I think) I'm doing. Later, I remove most of this writing.

When working with others, I often ask them to include explicit metadiscursive text between new sections of writing because this forces writers to clearly articulate their intentions for any particular section—and how these relate to what has come before, and what will follow. Sometimes, together, we read only the metadiscourse or sentence skeletons to gauge the logic and rhetorical integrity of the writing. Removing the 'content' in this way can reveal the strength of the structure as articulated in this 'discourse about the discourse'.

A final note: There are some excellent resources on thesis writing from the fields of applied linguistics and ESL written for those who have English as a second language: Evans and Gruba (2002), Feak and Swales (2009), Hyland (1998), Paltridge and Starfield (2007), and Thomson and Kamler (2013). Supervisors are not always aware of these resources and of their applicability for all kinds of writers—irrespective of language backgrounds. After all, arguably academic English is just another foreign language.

Issues of Word Choice

Precision with Word Choice in Doctoral Writing

Susan Carter

In the latest doctoral writing group, we blitzed words that were the cause of inaccuracy, often because the tone they added was too informal. This post gives our list of treacherous words. Many other words might be tricky, but in this group, we identified the following.

Firstly, '*very*' probably does not have a place in a thesis, whereas '*significant*' works well. *Myriad* is often another overstatement. My *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (SOED) says that a myriad is ten thousand, and can also mean countless numbers, hordes. So whenever I read that there are myriads of challenges, I replace 'myriads' with '*many*.' Wild overstatement is acceptable in many circles, those inhabited by people who like to shriek 'OMG!' often, and declare that they would *die* rather than revise their chapter again. However, the academic community tends not to be like that and can be disapproving.

Another word that I have commented on in two different writers' work is '*usage*.' SOED spells out that usage means 'habitual or customary practices or procedure'. Now, arguably when you use a theory or method you could claim that your *use* is habitual, but just as arguably it is not because use in one research project is not customary. Quite simply, 'The use of X theory/method is justified by…' is stronger than 'The usage of X theory/methods….'

I recommend not using '*proper*' for methods or theory: 'I needed to find the proper methods'. It is true that SOED lists one meaning as '*suitable*, *appropriate*, *fitting*,' but that is in meaning 9. Other meanings include 'owned' (meaning 1), belonging or relating to distinctly or exclusively' (meaning 2); 'genuine, true…normal' (meaning 5).

One student gave a few more words to beware of. She wrote to me later:

I think the use of '*all*' as in 'Interactivity is a shared point of all social learning theories' can also be a good example. '*Many*' or '*quite possibly all*' offer defence positions. More examples can include the use of '*always*', '*never*', '*the only example*'.

I agree with her. Defence options include '*frequently*,' '*seldom*' and '*a rare example*.'

It is sensible to avoid superlatives for the same reason. A writer may believe that something is the earliest of its kind; an examiner may know of a similar thing that is earlier. The safe bet is to write 'an early example of X' rather than 'the earliest example of X.'

Another person said that she is 'learning to use understatement', and that made me realise that accuracy needs to be emphasised. Inaccurate *under*statement leaves the writer open for challenge too. This was endorsed when I read that 'The University of Auckland is one of the biggest in New Zealand'. Actually, the University of Auckland is by far the biggest in terms of student numbers, so in that case, 'one of the biggest' is not accurate. You could build a bigger list of words that might be stated too emphatically to be defensible. Mostly, candidates should be encouraged to stay accurate and scholarly.

Saying 'Says' in Research Writing

Susan Carter

Academics tend to agree that, all else being equal, a simple word is better than a pedantic one. There's one curious exception: we avoid saying 'says' in academic writing. Careful choice of 'says' words shows critical evaluation of the literature—it is the literature that usually does the saying in research writing.

I once heard a doctoral student say that their supervisor told them to unerringly use 'suggests.' The student believed it was a discipline preference relating to an objective voice—I think it was simply bad advice. For all disciplines need to show critical analysis: 'suggests' is simply the wrong word in some cases. Encouraging students to think about the degrees of difference in what those 'says' words convey is one way to explicitly show them how to demonstrate critical analysis.

'Suggests' is neutral, a tad on the tentative side. A suggestion doesn't stridently take a stance. So although 'suggests' seems harmless, it won't be the most accurate word if the author actually was really emphatic. If an examiner wants sound evidence of critical interpretation, 'suggests' won't always give that.

Listing 'says' words shows more clearly the nuances of meaning between them. 'Says' words can be collected up by individuals or as a group exercise. Then those of use in similar situations can be put together. This includes, for example, when an author

- is tentative or explorative;
- endorses someone else;
- disagrees with someone else;
- picks something apart to show better how it works;
- pulls things together in new ways; or

- takes things further.

At the tentative end of the spectrum sit 'explores,' 'speculates,' 'suggests,' 'proposes,' 'finds,' and 'shows.' Then 'describes,' 'clarifies,' explains' or 'unpacks' are there for when authors make things clearer. They may 'theorise,' 'refine,' or calibrate,' or, more forcefully, 'assert,' 'endorse,' 'demonstrate,' 'affirm.' An author may 'emphasise', or even actually 'argue.'

When an author wants to say that those they are citing came across something really very new, the cited author can be said to 'discover' or 'find'. Sometimes headway is made by clearing aside misconceptions, when an author can be said to 'doubt,' 'refute,' 'rebuff,' 'challenge,' 'dispute,' 'disprove,' or, more graphically, 'explode the myth/misconception/belief.' Or they may take someone else's lead further, as when they 'add,' 'expand,' 'develop,' or 'take further.' Sometimes they 'synthesise' by pulling different discourses together.

When a research writer says an author 'reveals,' 'illuminates,' 'dissects,' 'explicates,' 'develops,' or 'anatomises,' they are signalling that they found that work helpful and learned from it. They are endorsing the cited author and aligning their own work. My highest praise for a cited author is to say that they 'anatomise,' because it conjures up the cutting open to show how things work inside. Rembrandt's Dr. Tulp with his solemn anatomy lesson springs to mind.

Widening Vocabulary in Academic Writing? Or Wider Reader Access?

Susan Carter

Here is a sticky dilemma for thesis writers: do you develop a wider vocabulary so that your academic prose gains precision and richness, or do you keep your vocabulary tightly reined in so that it is easy for all to read? This is a no-brainer for me: I very much like using interesting words. I come out of English literature studies, and now in Higher Education I sometimes still enjoy using words with evocative histories. I feel that building a quirky stock-in-trade lexicon lets me texture my prose voice.

Another academic colleague discussing her publication work in progress recently had to pare back her lexicon because the journal felt readers whose first language is not English would find her wide word range too hard. Fair enough, she thought; it is an international journal.

This thought stumps me with a real problem. Equal access is great. Those who produce academic writing in a language other than their mother-tongue are valiant and add so much by widening academic discourses for those locked in the English they were born into. I want to be considerate of these adventurous readers who manoeuvre through wider linguistic terrain. But considerately constrained vocabulary raises the spectre of the English language being clipped too thin.

Partly, theoretical constructs govern. Those who strive for objectivity bat aside individuation of language. But word choice is also about the academic identity under construction in every act of thesis-writing.

I know I am heading towards the rogue end of the spectrum in my own keenness for little-used but intriguing words. I almost expect to be reprimanded by reviewers and made to trim my sails.

Somewhere, though, there must be happy medium, even if it is always a balancing act.

Politics of Pronouns

Knowing When to Use 'I' in Research Writing: Cold-Calling Knowledge Claims

Claire Aitchison

The use of the first-person pronoun in academic writing has had a chequered history. When I first taught undergraduates about academic writing over 20 years ago, we claimed that academic writing was 'formal and objective' and therefore the use of 'I' was frowned upon. Truly scientific research, and research writing, was to be 'objective': perceived as unbiased, unemotional and independently factual. The idea had its origins in nineteenth-century endeavours for seeking 'natural truths' untainted by humans. It was based on a perception of the external world as an object for study quite separate and removed from the researcher. This view has been widely criticised: such objectivity is an impossibility, or as Haraway (1988) put it, an illusion, 'a god trick'.

Charles Darwin, the naturalist, didn't seem to have had a problem with 'I'. In *The Origin of the Species* (1873), he uses the first-person pronoun liberally throughout, starting from his second sentence. I love his prose; it is easy to read, engaging and very personal while also thoughtful, considered, persuasive and credible. We know what he thinks and why, as evidenced by this small section:

> As far as I am able to judge, after long attending to the subject, the conditions of life appear to act in two ways, — directly on the whole organisation or on certain parts alone and indirectly by affecting the reproductive system. With respect to the direct action, we must bear in mind that in every case, as Professor Weismann has lately insisted, and as I have incidentally shown in my work on 'Variation under Domestication,' there are two factors: namely, the nature of the organism and the nature of the conditions. (1873, p. 1)

These days 'I' has made a comeback—even in the 'hard' sciences. However, acceptability doesn't necessarily translate into stylish use. Whether or not to use 'I' raises issues of voice, authority and knowing *in relationship* to a particular knowledge community. The successful use of 'I' involves more than simply prefixing an author to one's view or experience.

'I' statements are more common in certain types of research and in particular locations in the research documentation. Participant research, personal narrative or reflective texts will, of necessity, include many 'I' statements since the role of the researcher needs to be unambiguous. In a thesis, 'I' can often be found in an account of the methods undertaken in the conduct of data gathering and analysis, e.g., 'I interviewed 25 people', 'I used NVivo in the coding process'.

'I' statements are also likely to be found when arguing a position, as may occur in the literature review when the author wants to emphasise their particular position. They often occur in the Discussion of findings and in Conclusions where the researcher is making claims for significance, e.g., 'Therefore I have demonstrated …'. These claim statement uses of 'I' are the most difficult to execute successfully, because they involve careful use of hedging and boosting and adroit contextual awareness.

Research writing involves manipulating the voices of many players: mixing and presenting the author's own views with the views of others into an already existing and on-going conversation. Graff and Birkenstein (2014) have successfully captured the nature of this intertextual dialogue by the phrase '*They say, I say*'. This conversational construct is a fabulous device for entering the conversation—but doesn't always mean 'I' must be used to convey this position.

It's Not All About You!

'I' can be overused. Excessive use of 'I' can give the impression that the work is overburdened by personal opinion. Sometimes 'I' is unnecessary and inappropriate. If something is commonly accepted or widely known by the reading audience, to use the construction 'I argue that …' is redundant at best, or at worst can give the impression of ignorance. For example, doctoral education scholarship has long recognised that the student–supervisor relationship changes over time, so to claim 'I argue that the relationship between students and supervisors changes during candidature' would be inappropriate. This is an argument already won. In this case, far from strengthening the authority of the author, an 'I' statement may undermine the author, positioning him/her as an unknowing 'outsider'. In each case, knowledge of the disciplinary community/reading audience will influence the author's decision.

An 'I' statement works well to foreground and differentiate one's position from others as, for example, in this statement: 'I understand reflective practice as…' or 'I take up the notion of culture in order to…'. These two statements work because they profess a *relational* position in a space already occupied by others. The 'I' marks a point of difference within a given context in recognition of an ongoing debate while also constructing the researcher's identity as a knowledgeable insider.

It takes time to become proficient at navigating and balancing different voices and to know when and how to pitch one's own voice into the fray with authority and confidence. Used judiciously, 'I' can be the perfect mechanism for achieving this.

On the other hand, inappropriate 'I' statements are like cold calls—they are decontextualized, mostly unwelcome and unsuccessful. To simply claim a position isn't authorial—a claim needs to relate to existing knowledge, connect to appropriate evidence and be argued rhetorically. It sure is tricky!

Student/Supervisor Difference with Writing Choices Courtesy of the Generic 'He'

Susan Carter

Use of the generic 'he' is an example of a writing choice with the potential to irritate readers. A recent writing tips post asked whether it is erroneous to use 'they' in the singular—and surveyed what readers thought. I'm amongst those who see a generic 'he' as implicitly sexist, and the singular 'they' is often how I avoid the generic 'he'. So I might write 'A thesis writer who neglects the thesis framework risks difficulty during examination. They may find that they have a hefty revision ahead.' A majority of the posts' respondents agreed with my choice about 'they' for gender bias avoidance, but not all.

I can tell you why I choose 'they' as the best avoidance option. 'He or she' or 's/he' seem a tad clunky to me, and too evidently self-conscious. Then sometimes I don't want to pluralise the whole sentence as a way out ('thesis writers…they') because I want to conjure up that single figure at the computer. If I have a quotation with a generic 'he', which I regard as sexist, I sometimes add '[sic]' in the case of fairly recent writers (in which case their choice is made knowingly—and it's one I don't agree with). I'm also willing to restate all that in good formal academic prose if a gun was at my head—or if I was submitting a doctoral thesis to a critical reader, or something similar.

However, some academics are more irritated when the plural pronoun disagrees with the singular person. This raises the question of how students and academics handle writing's negotiation around choice.

Thesis writers sometimes need to have the theoretical baggage of specific words pointed out to them. And I do mean spelt right out, not just by suggesting a change without the reason. Often it is only when someone tells us that we realise we are in a minefield.

How should supervisors and academic developers handle students who choose words differently from them? Sometimes doctoral students choose to do stylistic things differently from their supervisors or advisors because they have different values and tastes. I have seen students grappling with the fact that other academics work the way that they want to, but their supervisor leans in a different direction. Leans insistently.

I suggest if the choice has theoretical implications, the student might produce writing explaining their choice in good epistemological academic language. It can give them a firmer platform to diplomatically suggest that they have a valid take on the point in question. Or finding it hard to write their defence of choice might persuade them they are wrong.

Putting the explanations for choice in the introduction is an excellent practice: persuasion aimed at a supervisor usually holds good for an examiner. It's a formal demonstration of disciplinary and interdisciplinary savvy. It pre-empts examiner irritation, given that most academics have preferences.

In all instances, people who I respect for their other values make word choices I wouldn't, and I go on respecting them. Even the crustiest of us maybe need to concede that academia has room for more than only people who are exactly like us.

Who Produces Academic Writing: 'I', 'the Researcher', 'This Study', 'This Thesis'…?

Susan Carter

Choosing terms for the agent in academic writing can be tricky for novices. 'I argue that…' could also be 'this thesis argues that…' or 'the researcher argues that…' Doctoral students must decide what nomenclature is best for their research projects.

Some writing shies away from admitting there is an author. Historically, empirical science disciplines sought objectivity; to do so, they veiled human agency with passive constructions, e.g., 'It was found that'. Textual masking of agency signalled a positivist epistemology.

By disappearing the people from the text, the matter of the research itself is emphasised, since, in theory, anyone could duplicate the study, and a measure of objectivity is established. Thus, the use of 'I' would be almost misleading for empirical study.

However, in common speech, we use the passive less often than we use the active; its most common use is when we don't know who did something or wish to avoid naming them for social reasons: 'my lunch has been taken from the fridge' means that I am not accusing anyone in particular.

We also use it when the topic of our focus is the object of an active sentence: 'these people have been invaded in their homeland' or 'she was given a bunch of flowers.' Then we need not name the doer because they are not important for the point we want to make: the focus is on the object of the main verb not the doer of it.

And yet, this convention is undergoing change. I propose it is softening, as my data showed in Carter (2008), when no doctoral examiner ($n = 23$) from any discipline was averse to the use of 'I' in a thesis. And I believe that it should soften purely in the interest of readability. The active verbs common of speech are easier to unpack.

Another option for agency is for the writer to refer to herself in the third person as the 'author' or the 'researcher'. I'm not sure of the epistemology behind this convention but it seems to me like a fusion of social science constructivism and hard science positivism. There are people, but they are part of the matter of the study, and the author thus distances herself as thesis writer from herself as researcher.

When I am examining or reviewing, I dislike the convention of an author writing about herself in the third person because it causes textual ambiguity. Commonly in the discussion, the research of the thesis project is compared with findings from other literature. More than once, I have had to read three times to figure out whether 'the researcher found' refers to the researchers of the last-mentioned piece of literature or the author-candidate.

An option that allows for active verb construction and readability while keeping people out of the way is to allow the thesis, the chapter, or the findings to speak. 'This chapter' can review, analyse, or theoretically position the project. 'This thesis' may even argue. It is oddly anthropomorphic but does accord with the hope that a thesis ought to be clear and easy to read. My preferences are not necessarily constructivist but emerge quite simply from respect for readable academic writing.

Grammar and Punctuation

Grammar for Research Writing: Nouns and Verbs

Susan Carter

Doctoral theses are long. Writers want their readers to persevere and to follow closely. So the writing needs to be clear. Terms may be so vague that readers disengage. Exact concrete options beat broad abstracts hands down. Generally, the more a reader can see in their mind's eye what you mean, the more closely they follow you. One route to best possible precision is to think about the function of nouns and the function of verbs. Different grammatical functions mean different implications for verbal and nominal abstract terms.

Nouns are substantive. They have presence. But they can't do anything without verbs. Grammatically, nouns are static. Verbs lack substance, but they get nouns up and running. Without nouns, verbs are just an electric current without a light bulb. They exert their own presence only by animating nouns. In a research topic that is bogged down in abstract terms, a writer might need to labour at precision. That nouns and verbs have different grammatical implications means that they bring their own influence to abstract, complex or theoretical ideas.

Often we begin thinking about research and thesis with the nouns. A mind-map is usually of nouns. Then you get into structure when you bring on the verbs that drive and connect, driving the nouns into contributing to an argument, the thesis. You are likely to begin by feeling at the start of a doctorate that the substance matters most and realize at the end of it that it is the drive of ideas through the substance of your thesis that actually gives you the thesis.

If you are plagued by the bunches of abstract nouns in your topic, or if you are a style fanatic, you will find Helen Sword's work (2007, 2009) useful. Try Sword's YouTube video, Beware of Nominalizations (aka Zombie Nouns), on mutant verbs gone nounwards. When she moves on to prepositions, you know you really are in the presence of a grammatician with tenacity.

Comma, Stop

Cally Guerin

It comes as a great surprise to me that other people don't always find punctuation as fascinating as I do. In fact, it turns out that the vast majority of my students find it frankly boring and tedious, despite my enthusiastic offers to devote a two-hour workshop to exploring the wonderful world of commas. I admit that I'm definitely not a serious scholar of punctuation, but I do like talking and thinking about it (and suspect that some of my colleagues deliberately include punctuation errors in documents simply to give me the pleasure of correcting them).

The continuing evolution of English means that conventions keep changing. While it's not useful to be too pedantic about punctuation, there are lots of situations where a misplaced or missing comma can confuse the reader. The critical placement of the comma in the title of Truss's (2003) *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* plays with the image of a panda wielding a shotgun: removing that comma changes 'shoots' from a verb to a noun. While not an academic text, Truss's very readable and entertaining exploration of punctuation is much more approachable than some other texts on punctuation that I've tried to wade through.

One of the most unhelpful pieces of advice I've received about punctuation is to read the text aloud and pop in a comma wherever I need to pause for breath. This might work for very simple sentence structures, but is really not useful for doctoral writing, where noun phrases are often very long. By the time the subject has been announced (the 'thing' the sentence is about), I often need to take a breath and gather my composure before continuing. An example of a long noun phrase would be 'The ongoing and contested nature of the simple squiggle known as the comma…'.

By contrast, one of the most useful rules about commas that I've been lucky enough to learn early is that a subject must *never* be separated from its verb by a comma. In the above example, we must leap straight to the verb: 'The ongoing and contested nature of the simple squiggle known as the comma is a source of great consternation to many academic writers'. Sure, I can't say out loud the whole sentence without taking a breath, but readers will get confused about how the parts fit together if I slot a comma in before 'is'.

When sentences get more complex, it's possible to insert extra information in between two commas: 'The ongoing and contested nature of the simple, although alarmingly complex, squiggle known as the comma is…' And don't forget that those dependent clauses also need a comma when introducing the main part of the sentence: 'Although they are alarmingly complex, commas can be tamed by even the most timid of writers'.

There are many more erudite scholars than me who can help writers work out the correct punctuation for their sentences. One book worth exploring is *Punc Rocks* (Buxton, Carter, & Sturm, 2011). The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University has very straightforward, useful materials available for free.

For doctoral writers, the main focus must always be on ensuring clarity for the reader. While extremely complex sentence structures might look scholarly to some, most readers will be more interested in following the argument than trying to track the subject of a sentence through a dense array of punctuation marks. Directness and simplicity can go a long way in communicating complex ideas.

A Second Helping of Commas, Anyone?

Susan Carter

I share Cally's fascination for punctuation: my workshop focussing solely on the comma is *three* hours long. (I hasten to add that this is partly because we also talk about style and voice.) Cally covers the point that you must not separate a subject from its verb, even when that sentence subject is one of those giant mutant nouns to which academic writing is prey, made up of the noun word with a whole heap of adjectival stuff before and after it. I'm running over that point again because I agree with Cally that it is invaluable to doctoral writers when they get to the proofing stage to check that verbs in long sentences are not separated from their nouns.

Essential or Non-essential
Often decisions about using a comma will be based on whether additional information in a sentence is essential or not. Non-essential words, phrases and clauses can be omitted without altering the meaning of the sentence. Judge what is essential by which words need to cluster together to make one meaning.

Never separate words from their essential meaning-cluster, that is, essential to the grammar or the meaning, with commas. For example, it is wrong to write 'Boys, who learned ballet, were found to be better soccer players,' because 'boys who learn ballet' is one single idea.

We begin clauses with the word 'that' when the content is essential: 'The data that showed anomalies has been destroyed' (other data wasn't necessarily destroyed). So the rule is that 'that' clauses don't have a comma before them. 'Which' clauses, in contrast, are used for non-essential material and it helps readers to always have a comma before them. 'The data, which took five years to accumulate, were destroyed' (all the data were destroyed).

If you insert non-essential detail into the middle of a sentence and use bracketing commas, you must have two (just as you need two brackets). You can often get away with none but not one.

Never Use Commas that Disrupt the Logic of Grammar
1. Never separate a noun from the verb it governs, even when the noun has adjectival stuff round it that makes it fairly long (as in that giant mutant noun example above). E.g., it is wrong to write 'The evidence that came from a longitudinal study involving 52 first-in-the-family graduates and how their careers developed, was surprising.' That sentence cannot take a comma.

2. Never put a comma between a verb and its object. It is wrong to write 'The rat ate, the poison' or 'The chemical was then heated, to 200 degrees Fahrenheit.'

In general, there is a tendency in academic English to leave commas out when they are optional. If in doubt, it is safer to leave them out than risk breaking up a meaning-cluster or disrupting grammatical logic.

When to Use Commas

Use a comma to differentiate items in lists. Note that some pairs are regarded as a single idea and the comma will come after the second item, e.g., 'Guests choose from eggs and bacon, filled croissants, and cereal with fruit and yoghurt' (they have three options). If that list were more elaborate, semicolons to separate items and commas within items would help readers to visually see what is going on: 'Guests choose from eggs and bacon, with toast; filled croissants, with a range of filling options; and cereal with fruit and yoghurt.'

Put a comma after any introductory material before a main clause, especially if it is more than a few words long. This makes for easier reading, especially when the introductory material is long, e.g., 'While she was analysing comments about scrum experience from her All Black interviews, scrum rules were changed.'

Personally, I'm never sure why there is such interest in the Oxford comma, that comma before the penultimate item. It does raise the point that there are different practices between British and American writing, particularly around the punctuation at the end of quotations. For those of us outside these places, consistency is the main rule.

Voice

'Insider Persona' in Voice: Practical Suggestions for Doctoral Writers

Susan Carter

One outcome of the successful doctorate is a fully-fledged researcher who has been accepted as an insider into their research community. How can doctoral students demonstrate through their writing that they are insiders? Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) found that reviewers of 441 submitted conference abstracts had four criteria for acceptance or rejection. One of these was the sense that the author projected 'an insider persona'. Reviewers liked abstracts whose authors accurately portrayed relevant literature, used the right terminology and sounded as though they would deliver a publishable paper. Thesis writers want the same in what they submit: a thesis should seem publishable, and is stronger when the writing has confidence.

Here are some quite simple practical tips for gaining a sense of authority by writing more clearly.

Tip 1: Clear, succinct writing keeps readers engaged as well as happy.
All readers, including examiners, grow disgruntled when they feel they must wade knee deep through a quagmire of prose to extract its meaning. It is really worthwhile revising writing carefully after a 'final' draft with the purpose of simplifying it by cutting it back. Here is an example.

1. The research team initiated an approach that would allow them to utilize known facts from literature at the same time as they employed constructivist theory as the lens to interpret what they found in the literature.
2. The research team applied constructivist theory to facts from literature.
3. The research team interpreted facts in literature through a constructivist theory lens.

The sentence in Point 1 is grammatically correct, but cluttered. Point 2 simplifies it. Then Point 3 focuses more accurately by changing 'applied…theory' to 'interpreted literature.' The change tells the reader that theory was not simply applied as an academic exercise but for the purpose of interpreting literature—the most important action was interpretation. That shows astute analysis too.

Tip 2: Spend time choosing the most precise words throughout.
When words are too broad and general, the reader loses traction on exactly what is intended.

- Replace broad general nouns with the most precise specific noun. For example, 'education' ought not vary in meaning. If a thesis covers classroom practice, cognitive processing, national or institutional systems and social interactions within teaching and learning, different terms should be used consistently. Using one word, education, for each different aspect will lose the reader in a fog of vagueness. Consider whether words or noun phrases are too broad and fine tune for accuracy.
- Sharpen up verbs: replace neutral verbs with accurate verbs. e.g., 'X *affects* Y' might be X undermines/problematises/weakens, or complicates, or improves/enhances, or…? Authors will trim prose where using an accurate verb saves writing another sentence to say what the neutral one meant, but most importantly, there's a better sense of an author who is in full control.

Tip 3: Apply simple sentence structure to more complex sentences.
Make use of syntactical rules to get clarity by applying the principles governing how simple sentences work to complex sentences.

- The most important 'character' (can be a thing, chemical, etc. but is the prime agent) in the sentence is in the grammatical subject place.
- The most significant action of the sentence is in the main verb position.
- They are as close together as possible.

Gopen and Swan (1990) demonstrate this succinctly and clearly.
Two more tiny tiplets:

Tiplet 1

Remove words expressing insecurity about whether the aims have been met. So, 'This section aims to describe historical events leading up to the phenomena' should be simply, 'This section describes historical events…'. Words like 'tried, hoped, attempted to' should also be removed if they merely express anxiety, and used only in the rare case where there is description of a change of methods: 'we tried this, and when it didn't work, we chose this other way of working.'

Tiplet 2

When complex statements are expressed in the negative, readers are obliged to do a double-take to understand them. Compare the following—and I confess that I wrote the first sentence before realising just how awful it is to read.

1. The mind cannot cope so comfortably with either the fragmented presentation of information that free floating independent sentences provide, nor the seamless flow of unbroken information that long prose passages provide, as it can with ideas packaged into paragraph-size chunks.
2. The mind copes more comfortably with ideas packaged into paragraph-size chunks than with either the fragmented presentation of information that free-floating independent sentences provide, or with the seamless flow of unbroken information that long prose passages provide.

Personally, I enjoy tinkering with the mechanics of language with the aim of clarity. The tips above are approaches that I routinely use in my own revision of writing.

Authorial Voice, or 'Putting on the Ritz'

Cally Guerin

Doctoral students are often told they 'must find their own voice' in their writing, and they must explain the literature 'in their own words'. Even if the literature they are reading is beautifully expressed, they can't just copy it: they must find another way of explaining the same ideas. But—and it's a big but—they must summarise in a way that is recognisable to others in their discipline. Their work needs to match the expectations of their disciplinary community (for example, they need to demonstrate that they can use the 'correct' structures, the 'correct' citation conventions, the 'correct' vocabulary, the 'correct' genres and forms) (Eira, 2005). Confusingly, they must 'be original, but not too original' (Picard & Guerin, 2011).

I'm fascinated by the slippery concept of 'voice'. It seems to me that everyone talks about voice as if they know what it means, but if you ask them 'So, how do I demonstrate my voice in writing?', they usually look a little shifty and change the subject.

One way of thinking about voice is to notice how we are required to adopt a particular identity or persona for a given writing situation. Bowden (1999) helpfully explains:

> as a metaphor, [voice] has to do with feeling-hearing-sensing a person behind the written words, even if that person is just a persona created for a particular text or a certain reading. (pp. 97–98)

In a sense, then, authors act out an identity in their writing.

Hirvela and Belcher (2001) use Ede's (1992) concept of the 'situational voice', exploring the ways in which writers adopt difference voices for different texts and purposes, rather like they might put on different outfits for different occasions. So, a writer might wear fairly casual clothing—jeans and T-shirt—for an informal seminar in their own department, but choose a smart suit to present the keynote at an international conference. The levels of formality in clothing echo the levels of formality in the language that is used. By contrast, if an academic turned up to a seminar in a ball gown, others are likely to feel that s/he had got the situation extremely wrong—just as using entirely inappropriate language might also be read as not understanding the expected discourse of a particular writing situation. (Proviso: the ball gown might be gorgeous and excite enthusiastic responses from others—I'm not suggesting it is necessarily a bad thing to wear fabulous outfits and maybe there should be more experimentation in these matters…)

But there's a further catch—scholars use the language and authorial voices that others have used before them. In being original, but not too original, doctoral writers select their outfits from the second-hand rack (Ivaniĉ & Camps, 2001), recycling language and voices that demonstrate they know how to fit in with the discourse of a particular discipline.

So how and where do we see 'voice' in writing? The most useful explanations I've been able to find are from Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) and Zhao and Llosa (2008). They identify the following voice markers in language:

1. assertiveness—hedging language, intensifiers;
2. self-identification—pronoun use, active voice;
3. reiteration of central point—frequency and explicitness of presentation of central ideas; and
4. authorial presence and autonomy of thought—presentation of alternative viewpoints.

Alongside these, I've used the very helpful list of examples that Paltridge and Starfield (2007) provide, describing some of these concepts in slightly different terms (e.g., 'boosters' in place of 'intensifiers'). They also point out 'attitude markers' and 'engagement markers', which further unpack the idea of how voice appears in the text.

I've argued elsewhere (Guerin & Green, 2012) that the process of developing a greater sense of confidence and authority in the textual persona is a threshold concept for doctoral candidates. Working out which language elements can/should be recycled—which items of clothing are available from the second-hand rack—is

part of this learning. A longer discussion of this topic is available in Guerin and Picard (2012) 'Try it on: voice, concordancing and text-matching in doctoral writing'.

Voice and Emphasis in Doctoral Writing

Susan Carter

Here's a speculation: too much writerly focus on discipline convention sometimes muffles the value of the argument and the authorial voice. I'm prompted by two separate experiences, both wrapped around giving feedback on writing. First, Bert, a longstanding personal friend who is also currently a doctoral student. Because I know Bert well, I know that he is passionate about inclusive teaching, and I could see that his authentic concern with getting at-risk students safely through their first year at university would have been the foundation for his Ph.D. topic. He was struggling with writing, stuck, getting hammered by his supervisors, and I became an informal mentor.

What I noticed straight way as I read was that he avoided making statements about his own belief: there was no sense of a live author with a set of pedagogical values evident in his discussion section. In Education, there needed to be, and even more so in this case. As a friend, I felt indignant that Bert's commitment to what he saw as academic style (objective, muted in tone) was betraying who he was, a caring teacher—and one, at this point, under pressure to wrap up his Ph.D.

Then another colleague doing her doctorate showed me two sections of her writing. One was written on the basis of an initial review of literature. The other was written on the basis of her own ideas. The ideas-prompted one was much more logical in its flow, more animated and convincing, with a stronger sense that she was an experienced, trustworthy author.

Comparison made me wonder whether maybe it is sounder to begin from the spark of ideas and feed literature references into the prose than it is to privilege the literature as the starting point.

I suspect that most academics start with an idea rather than literature, and it may be a point of difference between experienced research writers and those who are new to the task—new to the extensive literature search and daunted by academic conventions. Of course, initially candidates need to read extensively to check there is a gap in knowledge to be filled, and to tentatively write about what they read, but once writing starts in earnest, I believe that prose driven by ideas is usually stronger.

When candidates step up to research writing at a higher level than they have experienced before, it can seem daunting trying to meet discipline conventions and reader expectations. But, certainly in some disciplines, a good legend above the desk might be '*Trust yourself: Your research value lies more in your ability to think and connect than in your ability to hobble prose to academic conventions.*'

Voicing Writing by Talking: Exploring the Link Between Body and Text

Susan Carter

This post picks over some of the purposes of having doctoral students read their work aloud. Most of us who support doctoral students with writing will repeat this handy bit of revision advice: 'read the sentence out loud and you'll hear when it is too long, or when the syntax is a bit skewed.' Reading aloud will bring to light what's going wrong and helps revision.

Another 'talking fix' entails students talking through their research while someone writes down what they hear and asks questions when they don't understand. Fairly commonly, students miss what is important in their writing, but find it when they are explaining to another human who probes them. Authors expect that readers will see what's important without them needing actual sentences spelling it out, whereas readers often don't.

We can advise, 'remember your audience's needs', but with the talking fix, the audience (think 'reader') has become real. The researcher is no longer groping round in thickets of big words but is back helping another human to grab hold of what matters. Usually, then, as a supervisor I'll ask students to read their writing aloud for the reasons of enabling authorial clarity and to foster thinking by asking questions when I suspect that there is more to be said. But in this post, I also want to speculate on the relationship between voice and identity.

The term 'voice' is used for the sense of authorial individuality captured in written prose. It is often hard to achieve, because on one hand the writer must show they are aware of genre and discipline expectations, and on the other, that they have engaged with any contentions in their field and positioned themselves defensibly in relation to them.

Claire Aitchison uses voice recognition software that writes what you say, capturing an embodied and voiced version of thoughts. Claire finds that she likes the spoken-aloud version of her own writing better than the one produced by her fingers on the keyboard. There's something going on with that. Perhaps she sounds more like herself, like the Claire who talks in other situations, and in quite different roles (observing many different genres). Maybe talking aloud serves another purpose: staying truer to the self that you are holistically, both in and out of academia.

Friends and family outside of academia don't hear us talking in abstract theory. Talking also lets you hear when you are using theory in a way that is true or untrue to the ordinary talk of your background. For some of us, this alignment factor feels important, and/or it may be important because we are writing from a theoretical position, as a woman using feminist theory, say, or an indigenous author using post-colonial theory for the purpose of 'decolonising' (Smith, 1999) or as a scholar from working class origins.

I was mature when I wrote my Ph.D., with life and work behind me that gave me a self who was known by friends, neighbours, previous work mates and family.

I wanted to become an academic, but I didn't want to sound pompous. Ok, there is nothing 'natural' about written text, so that the idea of an authentic voice is naïve, but the textual construct of academic persona, I felt, should be bear some recognition of the embodied writer.

In my case, I couldn't chase after the feminist theory that attracted me to the extent that it wasn't true to who I was, in this case, happily married to a bloke. I do remember reading one of my sentences aloud and recognizing I just could not use it. It was a well-written, theoretically interesting academic sentence, but I would feel an idiot reading it to my mates. My own life as I had lived it wasn't predicated on theory.

The sentence had to go, and I had to find a way to be sharp in academic terms, but within the scope of who I was as a whole person. This tangle with theory and voice induced one of those little identity crises that accompanies transformative learning. So I'm suggesting here another use for asking doctoral students to read their writing aloud. It can be empowering for doctoral writers who want to build an authorial voice that speaks their holistic self into being within academia.

Editing and Plagiarism: Meeting Expectations

The Examiner-Perspective Lens for Doctoral Editing

Susan Carter

For those doctoral candidates whose examination process includes an oral defence or viva, preparation for facing the examiners is a crucial part of completing the Ph.D. But the defence work should be done *before* submission. Vernon Trafford and Shosh Leshem research doctoral examiners and examinations. When I placed their work in the *writing* section of my book on Developing Generic Doctoral Support (Carter & Laurs, 2014), they worried I had made a mistake. However, I deliberately put them there because their research findings are so useful at the writing stage.

One of Trafford and Leshem's earlier articles suggests that it is easy to guess the kind of questions you will get in the viva because the same clusters of issues underpin all examinations (Trafford & Leshem, 2002, pp. 7–11). Their breakdown of predictable questions looks like a checklist against which doctoral writers can audit their work before submitting the thesis to ensure they defend their choices in writing.

Here I have clipped their work back to just what seems applicable to all doctoral research, regardless of epistemology or methodology—this is just a sample, and may inspire you to follow up their work. Some predictable examiner questions from Trafford and Leshem (2002, pp. 7–11) suggest defensive writing in the thesis before submission:

Cluster 1 Opening Questions
Why did you choose this topic for your doctoral study?

Cluster 2 Conceptualisation
What led you to select these models of…?
What are the theoretical components of your framework?
How did concepts assist you to visualize and explain what you intended to investigate?
How did you use your conceptual framework to design your research and analyse your findings?

Cluster 3 Research Design
How did you arrive at your research design?
What other forms of research did you consider?
How would you explain your research approach?
What is the link between your conceptual framework and your choice of methodology and how would you defend that methodology?

Cluster 4 Research Methodology
How would you justify your choice of methodology?
Please explain your methodology to us.
What choices of research approach did you consider as you planned your research?

Cluster 5 Research Methods
How do your methods relate to your conceptual framework?
Why did you choose to use those methods of data collection?
What other methods did you consider and why were they rejected?

Cluster 7 Conceptual Conclusions
How did you arrive at your conceptual conclusions?
What are your conceptual conclusions?
Were you disappointed with your conclusions?
How do your conclusions relate to your conceptual framework?

Cluster 9 Contribution
What is your contribution to knowledge?
How important are your findings and to whom?
How do your main conclusions link to the work of [other famous scholars]?
The absence of evidence is not support for what you are saying and neither is it confirmation of the opposite view. So how do you explain your research outcomes?

Some of these questions are invitations to doctoral students to spell out things that they do actually know, but might not have articulated in the thesis. The list above could be a great help for checking everything is covered before the thesis goes over the counter to be sent to these questioning examiners.

Who Needs an Editor Anyway?

Cally Guerin

The role of professional editors in doctoral theses came in for a lively discussion at the 2012 Plagiarism Advice conference in the UK. I was taken aback by the surprise expressed by my UK counterparts that such a thing could be possible, even perfectly respectable, in Australia. It made me reflect (yet again!) on what best serves the candidate and the academy in this respect.

The Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDOGs) and the Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) in Australia agreed on a set of guidelines for professional editing of theses in 2001. These have since been updated to take into account current digital technologies in order to allow editors to use track changes on theses. The details are available on their website.

Some Myths About Doctoral Writing and Editing

1. *Editing is mostly for international students who use English as an Additional Language* (*EAL*). Of course, for those students who are struggling with English grammar and sentence structure, an editor can tidy up their writing to ensure that the reader is not distracted by surface details of expression. Research by Mullins and Kiley (2002) and Carter (2008) into the examination of theses has shown that carefully proofed, polished documents are received well by examiners. Many people find it hard to notice errors in their own work, so this is an advantage for all students, not just EAL students.
2. *Ph.D. students are already good writers*. We know that some Ph.D. students have not previously written long documents. Achieving high grades in exams focusing on multiple choice and short answer questions as an undergraduate requires very different skills from presenting a sustained argument over the course of a whole thesis. Even for those presenting a thesis by publication with a series of journal-length papers, the expectations of this level of writing can be somewhat mysterious. And some students are comfortable communicating through formulae or diagrams, but struggle when it comes to writing prose.
3. *Supervisors know how to help students develop their writing skills over the course of candidature*. Certainly, some supervisors have an excellent understanding of how to teach writing, but others 'correct' their students' writing without being able to articulate the grammatical or stylistic principles underlying the changes. Students can happily accept those changes, but do not necessarily learn to be better writers without direct instruction about why the supervisors' suggestions are better than their own first attempt. Certainly some students will improve their own writing when working this way, but others need rather more. Lots of students and supervisors also tell me that supervisors simply don't have time to focus on writing development for individual students.

But How Much Editing Is too Much?

The concerns expressed by my colleagues at the conference seemed to stem from anxiety that the editor might intervene in the writing too much, so that it was no longer the student's own work. This is where the Guidelines mentioned above can be very helpful. The appropriate level of intervention is clearly spelt out there in relation to copyediting (clarity of expression, grammar, spelling, punctuation) and proofreading (checking for consistency, ensuring everything is complete, including accuracy in references). Professional editors should not comment on substance and structure, which is the domain of the supervisors and the students themselves. The details of what is included under each of these headings can be found in the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, which can be found on the website of the Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd).

How Are We to Understand Plagiarism in Doctoral Writing?

Claire Aitchison

According to a headline article in *Times Higher Education* (Jump, 2013), we could be forgiven for thinking there is a 'plague' of cheating and plagiarism involving all levels of authority and scholarship, including doctoral study. Putting aside the media thirst for scandal and the fact that some accusations may be politically motivated, stories of plagiarism and cheating in the attainment of Ph.D. qualifications occur remarkably frequently. But how widespread is doctoral plagiarism in reality? And how should we act/react as supervisors who value genuine scholarship, rigour and truthfulness in research and research writing? What are the losses from cheating and plagiarism, and who are the victims?

Plagiarism is a high voltage word—it conflates numerous historical, cultural, linguistic and behavioural properties into *one big sin*. To be accused of plagiarism in any country or context is a big deal that can carry severe penalties. For individuals, personal and professional fallout is inevitable, irrespective of the facts (which may explain why these stories attract so much attention in the volatile world of politics). There is also reputational damage to the institution. Ph.D.s attained by unscrupulous means undermine the value of a doctorate for everyone involved in scholarly work and research.

Is It Getting Worse?

The impetus for this post was threefold: another spate of media accusations of Ph.D. plagiarism by politicians, a discussion with a colleague overseas about institutional capacity-building regarding the avoidance of Ph.D. plagiarism, and a presentation of preliminary findings from an Australian study into contract cheating.

Reporting on this study, Bretag et al. (2018) suggest incidences of plagiarism and cheating are increasing because of a 'perfect storm' of concurrent influences:

- Massification, internationalisation, and diversification

- Digital disruption, changing social norms/values
- Pressure to perform: metrics, measurement
- Precarious job markets, casualisation
- Corruption in wider society
- Employability focus, learning seen as 'transaction'.

These are precisely the factors we have been identifying as drivers for the changing doctorate and as key pressure points for doctoral writers and researchers.

Clear-cut intentional cheating such as outsourcing the writing of the thesis is widely recognised as unacceptable; however, what about smaller incursions and everyday failings such as misjudging the boundary between common knowledge and knowledge with ownership issues?

Plagiarism That Isn't a Headline Story

I am certain that most everyday plagiarism occurs out of ignorance or oversight or through sloppy, unscholarly practices where due care is relinquished under pressure. Every day we work with language, reading, writing and talking about ideas so that they become part of our own thinking. I suspect many a writer would acknowledge that somewhere, somehow, they have likely failed to fully or correctly attribute everything they have ever written. It is a kind of low-level anxiety we all carry. Small acts of indiscretion, hurried writing and poor practices are part of the human condition of authoring—yet if experienced writers can err *despite* knowledge of what should be done, then how much harder it is for novice writers? And what of those situations when ignorance plays a role?

The vast majority of doctoral students wish to excel as researchers and scholars. Few set out to intentionally cheat. However, in the same way that we don't expect doctoral students to begin their journey as fully formed writers, we cannot presume a mastery of integrity practices early on.

High profile cases of plagiarism and unethical practices in research are major concerns for institutions. Universities are increasingly taking a more proactive role to alert doctoral students of the dangers of plagiarism, but, in my experience, few go further than warning against cheating behaviours. Much responsibility for overseeing the development of appropriate practices continues to default to the supervisor. And yet how many of us feel well equipped to ensure our students develop practices and attitudes that hedge against inadvertent plagiarism?

It takes time to become adroit at avoiding plagiarism, integrating and citing the work of others into one's own contribution. Many candidates truly struggle to develop strong scholarly practices that mitigate plagiarism, especially when they come from disciplines that aren't heavily text-based or where individuals have had restricted experiences in higher education research. If one has to write an 80,000–100,000 word document in a foreign language, the difficulties are further exacerbated.

When supervisors don't regard writing support as their responsibility and institutions are poorly resourced to provide support, doctoral scholars can be left without guidance and help. Helping students develop robust and routine practices that protect them against accusations of plagiarism is important work for those of us who work with student writers.

When I did my Ph.D., anti-plagiarism software was relatively new and it was mostly seen as an undergraduate anti-cheating tool. These days, students and supervisors are well aware of the advantages of incorporating these tools into their routine practices for self-checking. That is certainly one useful strategy.

Recycling Old Papers and Self-plagiarism—Is It a Sin?

Claire Aitchison

A student contacted me yesterday to ask my advice on the sticky question of self-plagiarism. She (let's call her Cat) was preparing a conference paper, and, like all of us, being time-poor was seeking efficient ways to put her paper together.

Cat wanted to know if it was okay for her to re-use writing that she had put together for an earlier conference. In that earlier conference paper she had written about the same research project. For this forthcoming conference, she had a new slant and a different audience. Cat had never published that previous paper but felt some degree of unease about what was acceptable practice *vis-à-vis* reproducing segments of it for this new conference. How much could she reuse from that earlier paper? Could she reproduce the format and the content but simply change the words? Could she keep some or all of the words? The findings would be the same no matter how the words were changed. Is there an acceptable proportion of verbatim reproduction that is permissible? Is the essence about what's acceptable to do with the words or about the ideas being reproduced?

Her query raises some important questions, familiar to doctoral scholars and academics alike. Certainly I am not able to point to a rulebook or a set of universally accepted guidelines. I know there are different views—even within disciplines within the same institution. I know it's not easy to get guidance from within the academy itself. Try asking your own supervisors, or Grad Schools, about self-plagiarism. Try asking your publishers.

My concern is not so much about breaking publisher contracts, or transgressing disciplinary norms or in-house practices; I'm more interested in how we understand and practise 'good scholarship'.

In a perfect world we'd all start with a blank page and write beautiful, pristine work on each and every occasion. Certainly I recall as a doctoral student and novice scholar starting every piece of writing anew and being appalled if I found an established scholar had reworked the same ideas in a second publication. Now I'm not so critical—I see the blurring of the boundaries, the way that ideas evolve in small increments rather than in leaps and bounds of unmitigated 'newness'. Einstein moments are rare. The everyday work of our writing is more often pedestrian; it can be slow—even repetitive and circular.

But somewhere there comes a crossing of boundaries. I know as a reader, and as a writer, the displeasure and discomfort of rehashed work that offers nothing new. The line isn't clear. It isn't easy to tie down—it's not simply a matter of saying

'you'll be safe if you only reproduce 20%', or 'it's a different audience or purpose, so it's fine'—although I do think proportion, audience and purpose are central to the discussion.

Is self-plagiarism a mortal sin, is it unethical—or simply sloppy and lazy? Is it an inevitable by-product of our 'push to publish' academic environment? Are there cultural and/or disciplinary dimensions we've not countenanced? These are questions that challenge academics and offer scope for future research.

References

Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. N. (1995). *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: Cognition, culture, power*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bowden, D. (1999). *The mythology of voice*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Bretag, T., Harper, R., Burton, M., Ellis, C., Newton, P., Rozenberg, P., et al. (2018). Contract cheating: A survey of Australian university students. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1–20.

Buxton, J., Carter, S., & Sturm, S. (2011). *Punc rocks: Foundation stones for precise punctuation* (2nd ed.). Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson Education.

Carter, S. (2008). Examining the doctoral thesis: A discussion. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 45*(4), 365–374. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290802377208.

Carter, S., & Laurs, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Developing generic support for doctoral students: Practice and pedagogy*. London, UK: Routledge.

Darwin, C. (1873). *The origin of the species.* Retrieved from https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Origin_of_Species_(1872).

Ede, L. (1992). *Work in progress: A guide to writing and revising* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Eira, C. (2005, December). *Obligatory intertextuality and proscribed plagiarism*. Paper presented at the 2nd Asia-Pacific Educational Integrity Conference, Newcastle, Australia.

Evans, D., & Gruba, P. (2002). *How to write a better thesis* (2nd ed.). Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press.

Feak, C. B., & Swales, J. M. (2009). *Telling a research story: Writing the literature review* (Vol. 2 of the revised and expanded edition of *English in today's research world*). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Gopen, G. G., & Swan, J. A. (1990). The science of scientific writing. *American Scientist, 78*(6), 550–558.

Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2014). *'They say / I say': The moves that matter in academic writing*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Guerin, C., & Green, I. (2012). Voice as a threshold concept in doctoral writing. In M. Kiley (Ed.), *Narratives of transition: Perspectives of research leaders, educators & postgraduates* (pp. 197–198). Retrieved from http://www.qpr.edu.au/Proceedings/QPR_Proceedings_2012.pdf.

Guerin, C., & Picard, M. (2012). Try it on: Voice, concordancing and text-matching in doctoral writing. *International Journal of Educational Integrity, 8*(2), 34–45.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies, 14*(3), 575–599. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.

Helms-Park, R., & Stapleton, P. (2003). Questioning the importance of individualized voice in undergraduate L2 argumentative writing: An empirical study with pedagogical implications. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 12*(3), 245–265.

Hirvela, A., & Belcher, D. (2001). Coming back to voice: The multiple voices and identities of mature multilingual writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(1), 83–106.

Hyland, K. (1998). Persuasion and context: The pragmatics of academic metadiscourse. *Journal of Pragmatics, 30*(4), 437–455.

Ivaniĉ, R., & Camps, D. (2001). I am how I sound: Voice as self-representation in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(1), 3–33.

Jackson, D. (2013). Completing a PhD by publication: A review of Australian policy and implications for practice. *Higher Education Research and Development, 32*(3), 355–368.

Jump, P. (2013, May 16). A plague of plagiarism at the heart of politics: Germany and Eastern Europe rocked by string of high-profile cases within their governments. *Times Higher Education*.

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2014). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision* (2nd ed.). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Kumar, M., & Kumar, V. (2009). Recursion and noticing in written feedback. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 12*(1), 94–99.

Lockhart, J. C. (1997). *Towards a theory of the configuration and management of export-dependent land-based value systems: The case of New Zealand.* Doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland, New Zealand. Retrieved from https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/2229.

Mullins, G., & Kiley, M. (2002). 'It's a PhD, not a Nobel Prize': How experienced examiners assess research theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 27*(4), 369–386. https://doi.org/10.1080/0307507022000011507.

Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London, UK: Routledge.

Picard, M., & Guerin, C. (2011). 'Be original, but not too original': Developing academic voice through innovative use of text-matching and concordancing software. In C. Nygaard, N. Courtney, & C. Holtham (Eds.), *Beyond transmission: Innovations in university teaching* (pp. 221–234). Farringdon, UK: Libri.

Pinker, S. (2014, September 26). Why academics stink at writing. *The Chronicle of Higher Education: The Chronicle Review*. Retrieved from http://stevenpinker.com/files/pinker/files/why_academics_stink_at_writing.pdf.

Sharmini, S., Spronken-Smith, R., Golding, C., & Harland, T. (2015). Assessing the doctoral thesis when it includes publication. *Assessment and Evaluation, in Higher Education, 40*(1), 89–102.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. New York, NY: Zed Books.

Sword, H. (2007). *The writer's diet*. Auckland, NZ: Pearson Education NZ.

Sword, H. (2009). Writing higher education differently: A manifesto on style. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*(3), 319–336.

Sword, H. (2012). *Stylish academic writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sword, H. (2017). *Air and light and time and space: How successful academics write*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Thomson, P. (2015). Bad academic writing—An easy target. Retrieved from https://patthomson.net/2015/12/14/bad-ademic-writing-an-easy-target/.

Thomson, P., & Kamler, B. (2013). *Writing for peer reviewed journals: Strategies for getting published*. London, UK: Routledge.

Trafford, V., & Leshem, S. (2002). Starting at the end to undertake doctoral research: Predictable questions as stepping stones. *Higher Education Review, 34*(4), 43–61.

Truss, L. (2003). *Eats, shoots & leaves: The zero tolerance approach to punctuation*. London, UK: Profile Books.

Zhao, C. G., & Llosa, L. (2008). Voice in high-stakes L1 academic writing assessment: Implications for L2 writing instruction. *Assessing Writing, 13*(3), 153–170.

Chapter 5
Writing the Thesis

The independent researcher, with sophisticated writing skills and need for a career, is one outcome of the doctorate. The text itself, the thesis, is another. This chapter swings focus onto that textual artefact, still concerned with the human experience of producing it, but aware that, for most candidates, the doctoral period of their life is dominated by the research and the writing of the thesis. That document itself takes centre stage.

The production of a doctoral thesis is usually the largest writing project its author has ever attempted. It is the first attempt at a task that, like running a marathon, will require discipline, management, social support, and will change the writer substantially. At the same time, the thesis is a sum of its parts; many workshops for doctoral candidates focus on some specific aspect of the thesis. This is because there are implicit expectations about what each part should accomplish to convince the reader that this is indeed a doctoral study. We avoid being baldly instrumental in this chapter, because experience persuades us that fulfilling generic expectations takes more than a paint-by-numbers approach. Nonetheless, there are helpful pointers. This chapter moves from general advice about the larger thesis project, through posts on specific parts or required moves of the thesis, to consideration of what examination requires of writing.

General Advice: Impact, Early Choices, Ethics, and Narrative

'Impact' Is Important for Published Researchers, But What Does It Mean for Doctoral Writers?

Claire Aitchison

These days there is an increasing expectation that research has 'impact'. The impact agenda has particular resonance in a world where research funding is increasingly constrained and universities compete for influence and reputation in order to attract funding. Impact also connects to quality and accountability.

Impact is sometimes narrowly conceived of as countable measures of the uptake of research (i.e., publications, citations and grants), but it also includes less easily quantifiable things like influence on practice, resultant applications, the generation of new ideas and outcomes, and longer-term subtle change. This perspective relates to ideas about the public good and the public intellectual—in other words, it is about being connected to, and giving back to, society.

But How Does this Impact Agenda Affect Doctoral Research and Writing?
Firstly, considerations of 'impact' can constrain or influence **the choice of doctoral research** topic. For example, an aspiring doctoral candidate may have a personal passion or interest in floral art—but is this alone worthy of four years of public funding? If, however, their research concerns the re-imagination of the cultural aesthetic, an exploration of commercial value, or the preservation of endangered flora for floristry, the potential impact becomes clear because the benefit of the research is clear.

A key task of a doctoral thesis has always been to identify the purpose and the significance of the study. When we consider impact, this becomes even more important: potential impact not only justifies the choice of research project; it also validates the chances of **lasting influence or 'contribution'**.

Research impact counted through scholarly publications and citations is an 'end-of' activity, occurring after publications are in the public domain. If doctoral researchers are able to publish during candidature they can complement claims of potential impact with evidence. A shift to demonstrating impact during candidature may contribute further to the **rise in doctoral student publishing** and may result in research dissemination being reconsidered not simply as an end-of activity, but, rather, an organic part of the doctoral writing process across candidature.

Concerns for impact may necessitate **different practices during candidature** regarding dissemination and profile-building for the doctoral student. Because scholarly publication is notoriously slow, doctoral students (and academics more generally) are using social media platforms to build learning networks, and to discuss and disseminate their research.

It seems to me that doctoral writers who aim for impact need to undertake careful positioning work within traditional 'big book' theses, as well as develop strong

digital communication skills. The expectation for social accountability, or relevance, requires a rhetorical balancing act on the part of the writer, who needs to satisfy sometimes quite different conceptions of 'relevance' and 'doctoralness'.

For the thesis writer, purpose, significance, contribution and relevance are all part of ***the narrative of impact***. It is not always easy to produce this kind of writing. Stylistically it ***can feel awkward and self-promotional*** if done poorly. To maintain a credible and authoritative stance, claims for significance arising from findings need to be tempered in strength against the evidence (sample size, statistical relevance and so on) and in light of a (social) value. Claims for impact will be largely propositional and may be complemented by evidence where it already exists.

Traditionally, doctoral writers establish the rationale and justification for their research primarily in relation to a gap in the literature. In grant writing, we see that the justification for the research turns not so much on a detailed account of what we don't know (as evidenced by the gap in the scholarly literature), but rather on the impact of this absence of knowledge in relation to something of importance. Thus a grant writer is appealing for financial support not simply because the discipline is interested in finding out something, but because that knowledge has implications/applications that will benefit society in some way. A grant writer knows that if they cannily connect their research to a bigger agenda—especially if that coincides with a national priority or one identified by the granting body—their chances of success increase significantly.

A doctoral writer does not always have such ***clarity about the audience and purpose*** to help frame this kind of rhetorical performance. Oftentimes they are 'writing blind', knowing with confidence that the gap in the literature identifies a worthwhile study, and *imagining* the relevance to a setting such as a school, farm or industry. Connecting the research to 'what matters' requires the writer to be connected to an industry or social community outside the academy. In other words, the doctoral writer needs to convince their examiner that this project is worthwhile in a way that goes beyond academic curiosity.

There are ***key places in a traditional thesis*** where this work needs to occur. The abstract should highlight the importance of the work—and if there is already strong evidence of impact, this can be referred to directly. The Introduction traditionally gives the rationale for the research (based on a research problem demonstrated to be of some importance). Then, in arguing the significance, the writer needs to provide a measured outline of possible areas of influence or application. If there is already evidence of how others have found value in the work (such as citations, media acknowledgements, Twitter feeds), then these can be cited. It can be useful to find opportunities to self-cite in the Introduction to establish the profile of the research and researcher early on. (But not all disciplines approve of this practice—so don't over-do it!) The Conclusion should also re-affirm impact and summarise key examples because this is where contribution is generally given most credence.

Impact is founded on the idea that the research project will have some kind of life, value and influence beyond and outside of itself. This is a worthwhile aspiration—so, early on, plan for it, and practise writing about it.

Research Writing Outside the Box

Susan Carter

It is exhilarating to come across research that pushes the boundaries. Human ingenuity is alive, fresh and daring in such work. I say 'daring' because, in every boundary-stretching instance I know of, there are always some risks and costs. 'Pioneer' is something of a cliché, but researchers who step into the unknown are pioneers in the most red-blooded, riskiest sense.

I want to use three examples of pioneering theses.

Example 1: One prompt for this post is the tale of the comic book thesis by Nick Sousanis, *Unflattening: A visual-verbal inquiry into learning in many dimensions*. It's worth reading. Firstly, anyone working with theory is likely to be wowed by how cleverly theory is shown visually in comic strip format; this is a staggeringly stylish and advanced representation. Secondly, the article describing it spells out some of the tensions involved in doctoral innovation that I am thinking about here in relation to doctoral writing.

Example 2: At my own institution, one of my favourite theses is Poulsen's (2009) *Another Way with Words: Language as Twentieth-century Art Practice*. Structured like a medieval commonplace or day book, it has 26 chapters, one for each letter of the alphabet. Each chapter-heading word is theoretical: as with a commonplace book, what looks simple is designed as a pleasurably deep-level exegesis. It is an exquisite demonstration of expertise.

Example 3: In New Zealand, I'm aware of two theses on the use of Māori language in education. One is written in English. One is, unusually and excitingly, written in Māori, in *te reo*. Because New Zealand education is governed by the Treaty of Waitangi, we have an option to use Māori language in many situations, including in education; using it is a decision bristling with political positionality.

If you choose to walk the political talk and talk in *te reo*, the reality is that your audience shrinks immediately. Other indigenous scholars won't have access to your ideas—not all Māori can understand *te reo*. On the up-side, your leadership within your own community may be firmly established, and you may be able to drive real changes to how New Zealanders perceive education.

My instinctive reaction to pioneers is to applaud. Innovators are heroic figures. They make the world a more promisingly complex, puzzlingly rich place as they engineer rules, and change configurations. I join others who suggest that examiners need to be open to frameworks other than those they already know and use, and welcoming of people who expand the boxes we work within.

I worry, though, whether candidates will be strong enough to survive the risks of pioneering. Sometimes it is hard to find examiners who will be as flexible as the work itself. After graduation, will institutions welcome the new graduate or appoint someone a little more central, a little less risky? Does the student have the psychological stamina to forge a new path forward? And, perhaps most importantly,

are their writing skills sophisticated enough for the execution of stunningly innovative ideas? If not, I recommend a less ambitious approach in the interest of survival.

Defending Research Choices in Doctoral Writing: Getting the Defence Habit at the Start of the Research

Susan Carter

Thesis writing is aimed at a primary reader: the examiner, a creature from the back of the psychological cave. Examiners are much feared because they are, by definition, testy readers, menacingly powerful. The research thesis is thus the most defensive academic writing we produce, more defensive than undergraduate work or articles.

Johnston (1997) sensibly points out that 'Examiners require all of the normal forms of assistance which should be provided to any reader' (p. 345). Additionally, examiners often work in the evenings in short bursts, and may need just a little more guidance, despite being experts by definition. Doctoral writing should steer them towards signing off the thesis as completed.

Reading research on examiners' needs is good before submission, even better if it's quite early on in the doctorate. Useful questions to imagine examiners asking include:

- Why did you choose that particular problem? Why did you not study this other problem instead?
- What exactly were you trying to find out? I'm unclear about the meaning of your problem statement.
- You have reviewed the important literature, but I fail to see what use you make of your review. Can you clarify for me what you learned from the review of literature?
- When you reviewed the literature, why did you decide to review that particular area of study?
- Why did you choose that particular method? Why did you not instead use this other method?
- Can you clarify for me how the particular method you chose relates directly to the problem you have chosen to study?

(Glatthorn, 1998, pp. 186–188)

Addressing these questions somewhere in the first year of the doctorate when decisions are being made boosts word count—good for confidence level and keeps supervisor happy—and establishes the mindset of defending choices in writing. Careful defence also shows that the writer knows about the thesis genre—it gives the look of someone who is already an insider.

And examiners will want to see that:

- the rationale for the study is clearly explicated;
- the appropriateness of the researcher conducting this study is made clear;

- clear and succinct hypotheses or questions are derived from/revealed by the literature review;
- the rationale of the general approach is closely argued, giving a reasoned case for rejecting other possible approaches;
- a justification of the research design is presented, taking account of potential advantages and limitations;
- the research techniques are argued as being theoretically and practically relevant to the research problem; reasons are given for rejection of possible alternatives, rationale provided for amendments to standard tests and procedures or for detailed design of innovative techniques.

(Tinkler & Jackson, 2004, pp. 114–116)

Another good source of examiner questions or focus is found in Trafford and Leshem (2002), who analyse what examiners want to tick off as satisfactory, and come up with 10 'clusters' of questions round different generic doctoral aspects: e.g., research design, conceptualisation, methodology, methods, etc. Thesis writers may need to disengage attention to research in the early stages to patiently defend decisions as they are making them.

Keeping the Public Out: No-Go Areas in Your Thesis

Claire Aitchison

Earlier this month when I was running some workshops for doctoral students in the Northern Territory of Australia, a conversation ensued about no-go areas in the thesis.

Photo: Claire Aitchison

In thesis writing, as in life, we are wise to keep certain things to ourselves. Some things that happen in doctoral research are best not shared. For example, don't mention how you forgot to turn on the tape recorder at the focus group interview…

Let me quickly make it clear that I am not advocating unethical practices like hiding bad results or manipulating data or findings, or withholding relevant information from participants. It is absolutely imperative to conform to ethical standards of research and be as open and transparent as possible.

But in writing the thesis, one constantly needs to make decisions about what to include and exclude. Various institutional, disciplinary and ethical practices—and personal preferences—impact our decision-making about what goes into, or stays out of, the thesis.

For example, how much do we need to tell about the twists and turns of the research journey? It's not always clear. I worked with a student who sought to measure the impact of a certain leaf-chewing insect on a eucalypt forest. For many and convoluted reasons to do with access to a specific machine in the laboratory, she ended up changing her research, instead investigating the impact of the insect droppings on soil structures. She could have told this story from a variety of vantage points—not the least of which would have been her anger and frustration! What appeared in her thesis, however, was a very authoritative statement about the need for the study she did. Another scholar working with an indigenous community also had to make significant and unexpected changes to her research. She recognised that she was not at liberty to relate any aspect of what had brought about this substantial change, even though it had required her to abort three years of data collection and reconfigure her entire project. Her choice to keep the public out of this part of the story was the right ethical decision.

It's unlikely any doctoral thesis will include a review of *all* the relevant literature. Generally, it's only after many iterations that we get clarity about what can stay and what must go. If it's not fit for purpose, then it shouldn't be in the thesis.

Reporting on the pilot study can also present a dilemma. In my own doctoral research I did a small test-run to check the veracity of my interview questions and my recruitment processes. It was a useful activity for me—but it wasn't a particularly important part of the research and I never reported on it, nor did I use the data that I collected in the process. On the other hand, I've known of situations where the pilot study, although conceived of simply as a mechanism to test a research method, itself became an important source of data. In such cases, should the researcher describe how it started out as one thing and changed to another? Could they abandon the term 'pilot study' and include that original investigation as one of the data sets?

Sometimes there is uncertainty about inclusions in appendices. Some scientific studies require lengthy appendices (detailing protocols and calibration specifications, for example). In the social sciences and humanities there is often less need—but again, it depends. I know of a couple of studies using photovoice as a method, but only one thesis had an appendix with participants' photos. For most social research, it would be rare to provide participant interview transcripts in the appendices—on the other hand, it's likely in applied linguistics.

When deciding whether or not something needs to go into the thesis, I am reminded of something my kids say: 'I'll tell you if you need to know'. This could be equally good advice for thesis writers.

Thesis Writing: Process and Package

Susan Carter

I've been thinking about the divide between doing research and packaging it up into a thesis. On one side, there's all the thinking, sense of inadequacy and panic that goes into the research work, and on the other there's the calm emotional-suppression of the doctoral thesis's formal academic writing. The thesis contains all the baggage of the literature review, methodology, theory, with aspects of research that entailed roller-coaster emotional highs and lows, all packaged up together in pristine neatness. At the stage when the work is done and the drafts are in, you need to cross that divide.

Kevin Sowerby, an Engineering academic at my university, told the story of a friend who had travelled the same route as Michael Palin, of Monty Python fame, but also now known for his travelogue TV docos. Sowerby's friend noticed when he later saw the TV film that people and places were often presented a little out of sequence. He realized that production loyalty was not to exact detail of the journey's order, but to what would enhance the viewer's pleasure. Aesthetic values were overriding those of detailed factuality. And he decided that this was good thing. The end product *was* more interesting. It was not false—you could say 'As we approached this village we noticed…' and it was still true even if the shot that followed was filmed during the eighth approach to the village as they came and went. The effect was that what seemed significant and unique was emphasised. Kevin was pointing out that this is true of the thesis: emphasising what is significant is more important than faithfully following the trajectory of your research progress.

A second comparison is the art of packaging. Imagine that you have changed jobs. You are no longer production manager. You have moved into packaging and marketing. You can ditch all those anxieties about meeting deadlines, pumping output up, and making sure that the machinery runs properly. Now your task is only to envision the product consumer and what they will buy. Doctoral writing can been seen as packaging and promoting doctoral wares so that they sell.

The Importance of Narrative

Cally Guerin

It seems that everywhere I look, people are becoming more and more focused on narrative in academic and research writing. Whether it is an application for a research

grant, a research report or a teaching award application, the constant refrain is: 'Try to tell more of a *story* about this'. It is particularly common to be encouraged to write literature reviews—and even entire theses—as if they are a 'story'.

What is this about? I suspect that the writer needs to interpret and join up the bare facts of the case, not just present that information and wait for the reader to infer what it all means. Perhaps narrativising is also a way of engaging the reader with some kind of emotional tug—the story can attract readers' attention and make them care about the topic.

So, if we want to write research with more of a story, it is useful to consider the various elements of conventional storytelling in order to see how they could be harnessed.

To start with, stories require a ***setting***, so it is necessary to describe the context for the research. To some extent, the setting can be a way of putting parameters around the project, pointing to the specifics of the context that are relevant for the rest of the research.

Characters might refer to the main players as the researchers, or might refer to the study population. The characters involved in a study do not always mean people, of course—it could be a gene or a building material under investigation, or a set of policy documents that are being examined.

Plot is where structure starts to emerge. The stages of plot can help draw the reader into wanting to know 'and then what happened?', inviting them to see how this story evolves. Readers need to start with an *orientation* to the original topic to be explored and a sense of the current state of affairs. Next, the *complication* can be described—what is it that we need to find out more about? What is the problem/gap to be explored? And eventually (importantly for reader satisfaction), a plot requires resolution—what were the findings or outcome of the research, and how does this change our knowledge of the world?

Storytelling also takes into account ***content and form***. For research writers, this refers to collecting and collating the relevant information and ensuring details (and resulting conclusions) are accurate. That content must be expressed in a form that meets reader expectations, which will always depend on disciplinary expectations.

Once we know ***who*** did it, ***what*** happens, ***when*** and ***where*** it occurred, narrative also demands that we can see the relationship between different elements; readers need to understand why this bit comes before that section, and how those parts inform each other. The ***why*** is important here just as it is in other stories—why did this happen and why is it important or interesting?

The ***storyboarding*** approach can be helpful for choosing what order things should go in. One way of storyboarding is to use PowerPoint to plan the writing. One slide for each idea or paragraph provides a graphic split between the chunks of content, and they are easily moved around using the 'slide sorter' view. The thesis story may then be seen with different plot scenarios, helping the writer to choose the right story line according to where the significant parts of the content are, and what order will make them most accessible to the reader.

The Developing Thesis Proposal: Questions to Launch Doctoral Writing

Susan Carter

A potential doctoral candidate choosing their topic might ask themselves: "'What are the subjects that interest me—that I want to make sense of?" "Who do I want to talk to about these subjects?" And "What can I bring to the conversation?"' (Kempe, 2005, p. 2). These are three pertinent questions that Anne Sigismund Huff (cited in Kempe, 2005) sees as initiating research direction. From there, though, it is rarely that simple.

Crotty (1998, p. 1) notes that 'methods and methodologies…may appear more as a maze than as pathways to orderly research'. Indeed. As students read more, more possibilities become evident. The complexities suggest many potential pathways. Choices at the outset are hard because so much is unknown.

Yet the doctorate is constrained by time and budget. The first year of enrolment at our institution is provisional, and by the end of it, the student needs to have produced a full thesis proposal of about 10,000 words. Considerable emotional tension can occur when uncertainty delays writing. The choices are significant; it seems unwise to make them hastily, and yet, as weeks slide into months, students (and supervisors) can feel increasingly anxious if they have produced little writing in the face of this 10,000-word requirement. Strategies that help students get writing done early, and often, can go a long way to reducing the debilitation of rising anxiety.

Here is a set of questions that one student found helpful to prompt early writing. The questions are a subset that were intended to help her to find the answers to Crotty's essential questions, begin writing her proposal, and escape from anxiety. She thought about the questions ahead of our meeting; during the meeting I typed notes while she talked through her responses to each question.

- What was your original motivating idea for your doctorate? Was there a problem you wanted to investigate in order to make it better?
- What has been added to this idea as you have been reading, reflecting and talking?
- Has anything been cut back? If so, what, and for what reason?
- Who will be helped by your research findings and in what way? What might be the original contribution and who could benefit from it?
- What sort of research do you most like doing, or expect that you would like to do?
- Where is it easiest for you to gather data? (Some international students plan a trip home, whereas others can't afford it.)
- What work would you most like to do when you graduate? Where would you like to work, for whom, and doing what?
- We've talked about several methods. List the positives and negative of each, what benefits it would give you and what problems it might cause.

The exercise reminded me of how crucial *questions* are at the start of the doctorate. If supervisors and students work through many questions, discussion around what

questions need to be asked will begin the talk that enables the full proposal to be defensively written.

Structure: Issues of Design

Scoping: Bean-Counting as a Step to Thesis Writing?

Susan Carter

An academic friend declared that it was absurd for students to ask how many references were needed in a thesis, as though you tallied these up quantitatively. 'How long is a piece of string?' was her standard response. I don't agree; measuring out that string quantitatively gives another way to think quite deeply about thesis writing.

This insight was triggered when I'd organised a panel of academics for a workshop on thesis writing and a doctoral student asked them how many references were needed in the Works Cited list. He had over 1000—was this too many? And a professor from Engineering almost instantly replied, 'Yes, it is too many. You need about 200.' I was startled—tallying numbers seemed at odds with the requirement for critical evaluation and analysis. Yet I could see that 1000 references *would* signal a lack of the critical evaluation needed to choose wisely.

Getting a sense of 'how many' helps judge how the research fits into what is expected in the thesis. If there is a general convention that a thesis in this discipline cites around 200 items, knowing this begins to scope what might be excluded. You *must* decide on your inclusion criteria and adhere to them.

So I suggest thesis writers try taking a bean-counter approach to the task of scoping the thesis, beyond the number of references. How many words in total are desirable? How many chapters are needed? About how long will the Introduction and Conclusion be? How detailed will the description of methodology need to be, and then, if methods are to be contextualised within a methodology, how long is that likely to take? How important is theory, and how many words will its discussion consume?

In New Zealand and Australia, usually the thesis may not exceed 100,000 words, with an unspoken assumption that around 80,000 words suffices for an average thesis written primarily in prose (rather than coding or formula). At the start of a doctorate, thinking about the practical realities of research can develop in tandem with thinking about the thesis, the textual artefact. Thinking through the length factor might help to ensure delivery of the right length of string.

Limitation can do more than render things doable in creating small chunks: it can also give traction to the whole cognitive process of deciding what will and won't be included. It compels thought towards the importance of each section in relation to the other sections, moving towards a structural overview and thus understanding of the work as a whole.

What's the Formula for Writing a Thesis?

Cally Guerin

Sometimes it seems that doctoral students attend workshops on thesis writing seeking a nice, neat formula to follow. The primary question they want answered is: 'What's correct?' Given all their other pressures on them—to finish on time, to be original, to get research published, etc., etc.—it's easy to understand the desire for a simple, straightforward set of rules to follow that will please examiners and journal editors alike. Part of the writing teacher's job seems to be letting them down softly and helping them realise that it can never be that simple. The route to thesis submission always demands complicated decision-making along the way; even more challenging, the environment in which those submissions occur is changing rapidly in unpredictable ways.

There is some comfort for those seeking these kinds of formulaic answers, however, in the traditional IMRAD structure of scientific articles: Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, and Discussion. Unfortunately, this neat acronym neglects to mention the Abstract and Reference sections. And then, the apparently neat separation between different sections turns out to be rather messier for many researchers—is it okay to include some discussion in the Materials and Methods to explain why a non-standard procedure was adopted? Is there always a clear cut-off between Results and Analysis/Discussion if I'm reporting on qualitative research that has already been analysed in order to create some broad organising themes? For useful strategies to work through such complex issues, try Carter, Kelly, and Brailsford's (2012) *Structuring Your Research Thesis.*

Also very popular amongst those looking for instruction is the 'moves' or CaRS (Create a Research Space) approach developed by Swales and Feak (1994, 2004). This model illuminates the reasoning behind Introductions in research and includes three main moves or positionings: establish a research territory (and make a case for why it matters); establish a niche (and point out a gap in the field); and occupy that niche (by explaining what this new research will add to the field). These moves or opening gambits work very well as a means to engage readers and demonstrate the value of the research. This approach has been picked up and developed further since (see, for example, Cargill & O'Connor, 2009; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007).

The structures mentioned above provide very useful guidance for novice writers, but a thesis requires much more nuanced negotiation of the conventions of the discipline. In relation to this, Anne Freadman, doyenne of genre theory, pointed out at the Writing Research Across Borders (WRAB) conference that writers need to conform to the 'generic form' only *sufficiently* for readers to recognise where their work fits in with the conventions and expectations of genre—they do not need to slavishly imitate or repeat that genre. The real achievement is for doctoral writers to find a balance between what they want to say and the conventions of their discipline. This is always a matter of judgment and can't be dictated by adherence to strict rules.

Research Storylines: Moving Beyond Mills and Boon

Claire Aitchison

At a writing retreat this week I was reminded again of the importance of finding the right storyline. Of course there is the **generic Research Storyline** that goes like this:

> There is a research problem –> the extant literature shows –> the research gap is –> the research aimed to investigate –> the methodology/method used –> the findings/results showed.

This storyline foregrounds the research itself. The style and terminology create a sense of objectivity and the storyteller is invisible. It is the logic of empirical experimental research design as demonstrated in the IMRAD structure (see post above) of most scientific papers. **The long arm of the scientific method** infuses so much of our academic writing that this structural storyline is applicable across multiple disciplines and kinds of studies. It's **the Mills and Boon of academic research writing**.

A good storyteller will manipulate the template to suit their needs. For example, one student sought help saying that, even though she'd covered all the necessary components, her supervisor said the thesis was disjointed and she'd been told to make links between the sections. As we talked about practitioner-research as a methodology, it became clear the story could (indeed, *needed* to) be personal, and thus we worked through where and how she, as practitioner-researcher, would become the link across the thesis. As both narrator and protagonist she would use the first person to tell her researcher journey—and her story unfolded thus:

> There was a problem/issue in my workplace that worried me (the Research Problem) –> some things were already known about it (the Literature) –> but there are some things we don't know (the Gap) –> I set out to address the unknown (Research Aim) –> this is what I did (Methodology/ Methods) –> this is what I found (Results/ Findings) –> and this is what it means for my work (Implications).

It's the same storyline, but told differently. Very often empirical research involves this kind of **'grand narrative'** or overarching storyline within which smaller sub-stories can sit. Examples of **offspring stories** may include the story of doing the fieldwork, the story of the literature, or one part of the literature. There are stories within stories and authors must decide how to tell them.

But identifying the right story isn't always so straightforward.

Zeiger (2000) says the natural storyline for an experimental hypothesis or research testing paper is chronological. In this kind of story, the account of the experiment flows like a recipe that first itemises the ingredients and then describes, step by step, the processes for mixing and baking.

When I'm working with scholars who are 'stuck'—perhaps they have lost track of where they are going, they've wandered off on a tangent or become bogged down—helping them to identify a single, robust storyline can be a breakthrough. Having a clear grand narrative makes it easier to locate subsequent sections or papers in relation

to the main story, something that's a particular challenge for those undertaking a thesis by series of publications.

Many texts on doctoral writing refer to the importance of telling a story—but, of course, this requires having the right storyline in the first place!

Insecure in a Good Way: Thesis Structure Changes Over Time

Susan Carter

Sometimes feeling insecure about thesis writing is a simply an uncomfortable symptom of increasing understanding of the topic. The example here is the experience of designing a thesis structure, but there may be other times when insecurity, despair even, has to be read as a sign that you are right on track. You are just getting wiser.

It's disconcertingly counterintuitive.

The example: At many institutions, there is an assumption that, by the end of the first year, thesis structure is more or less nailed in place. However, with colleagues Frances Kelly and Marion Blumenstein, I researched doctoral students ($n = 92$) to learn more. What was unexpected was that when we correlated time-through-the-doctorate and Likert-scale levels of uncertainty about structure, we found that the further through the doctorate individuals were, the *less sure* they felt about their thesis structure.

In almost every discipline, some doctoral students find the rigidity of that structure does not serve the complexity of their topic well. And this realisation, which may come a year or two in, is bothersome. Candidates become torn by anxiety: if they are too creative, examiners may not recognise their work as a legitimate thesis. But they may feel increasingly unwilling to stay on the well-trod path.

My two-hour workshop on structuring a thesis sets off from the IMRAD model— if that never-fail recipe will work, it should be taken up gratefully and followed. Students who want to finish as quickly as possible find IMRAD as a recognisable, short, safe route. But IMRAD is also a check-list for thesis writers who don't use it; they will still need to do the work of these sections somewhere and somehow within their theses. And make sure the expected generic moves are visible. From there we work through a raft of possible ways to think about structure.

Our project suggests that initial structure plans aren't final, nor should they be; they are contingent, and enable forward movement. As students gradually come to understand their topic, they may need to reorganise their plan—and they may have to live with the reality that doctoral writing is always a compromised negotiation. At the time, this feels like disillusionment, but it is also the learning of research skills. And possibly of wisdom that translates elsewhere.

Leave It in or Delete It? Dilemmas in Writing the Research Story

Cally Guerin

Increasingly, I remind students that a thesis doesn't have to report on every single thought the researcher has had for the past three or four (or more) years of candidature. Sure, it is valuable to include descriptions of null responses or negative results from experiments—this is certainly interesting and helpful for other researchers in the area, sometimes closing off possible paths that are now known to be unfruitful. It can also be very useful to report on problems that arose during the project which changed the direction of the research. Such insights can demonstrate critical thinking on the part of the candidate who encountered problems and also found innovative solutions.

What gets left out is sometimes as important as what is in the thesis, however. Not everything that has been read needs to be included in the literature review; indeed, critical thinking is demonstrated in part by being discerning, rather than offering up a grab-bag of all that vaguely touches on an area. Staying focused on one central line of argument, maintaining a strong sense of direction and not going off onto irrelevant tangents, makes for good research writing, as does the capacity to delete sentences that, however beautifully written, move off in a different direction. Likewise, a scholar must choose what is usefully included in the final telling of the story of the thesis.

I use the word *story* deliberately to imply that this is one version of events that has been carefully constructed and crafted to present a coherent account of the research process. I like Rudestam and Newton's (2001) description of a well-written thesis containing many of the elements of detective fiction: a mystery in terms of a research question that requires answering; clues that take the form of data collection; the elimination of incorrect answers or red herrings encountered along the way. The thesis doesn't necessarily have to follow the chronology of events as experienced by the researcher—readers need a coherent story about those events that adheres to its own internal logic in order to understand the value and integrity of the research itself.

Perhaps this is as good a place as any to make a plug for the thesis by publication. This form is often rather leaner than traditional format theses. It offers one way to help students stay focused on what is interesting and useful to the reader. Writing with the audience of journal reviewers in mind can be a valuable aid towards being a little more objective about one's own writing; having a strict word or page limit can also focus the mind on what really needs to be included. Using the format of a journal article encourages researchers to home in on what's new and important, and to recognise what is assumed knowledge at this level.

The Bones of the Thesis: Structure and Articulation

Susan Carter

I was talking to a chap who'd just graduated from a Master's with strong grades. He said, 'Sometimes I got my best marks when I was really busy and didn't have enough time. When you're too busy, you'd just try to figure out the bare bones of what they wanted. Actually, that seems to be what matters.' With a big project like a doctoral thesis, noticing what matters becomes harder because there is so much detail to attend to with painstaking care.

Yet examiners who need to tick off that each of the generic requirements has been met are really looking for 'what matters.' A thesis with good bones usually stands out as strong once finished. Figuring out the bone structure gives a writer advantages at many stages of the thesis. Usually a full thesis proposal produced in the first year will have a skeleton outline. The more specific such an outline is, the easier to begin the writing project.

During the writing of the whole thesis, shifting from detail to the bare bones of thesis structure gives psychological relief as a way of shuffling forward with a large writing project. Moving back and forth between structure and detail helps with the sheer tedium involved in a large project. Then, before submission, it's a good idea to take an x-ray view of the thesis. At the end, the *articulation* of the skeleton becomes crucial because it does much of the work that allows the examiner to identify the criteria for a Ph.D. That word, articulation, is apt: it applies to both talk and to movement. 'Articulate' is the word I use for absolute precision with a theoretical or novel idea that is still slightly nebulous.

Then the articulation of the skeleton gives movement to the mass of flesh: the talk of a thesis, the flesh of content, needs to *make moves* too. The metaphor of a skeleton with articulation could be taken a bit further into the joinery hooking those bones together. Ensuring that every section of the thesis is framed within the main argument, the context of the problem, what is known, what unknown, the theory, the methodology and why the research matters somehow assures examiners that this is a coherent entity that makes a sufficiently substantial contribution. Successful articulation of those good bones (what really matters) ensures that the research contribution is valuable and interesting.

Turning Facts into a Doctoral Story: The Essence of a Good Doctorate

Susan Carter

Recently, three experiences collided for me: having a co-authored article rejected; examining a thesis; and giving feedback on a literature review. They brought home

how essential it is in the world of doctoral writing to turn facts, even sophisticated original facts, into a story. As I circled round each chore on my list, I saw how problematic it is when the storyline is lost within thickets of academic writing.

I learnt this as a doctoral candidate when my colleague Margaret Reeves complained about academics being suckers for plain old-fashioned stories—she lamented that academics do not perform the sophistication you might hope for in a post-modern era. Instead, they favour a homely, familiar storyline. Most will not recognise a valuable contribution without it.

Margaret's lament was in conjunction with Ian Watt being credited as the historian who first tracked the rise of the novel: Margaret knew that several scholars had rolled the same facts together, but it was Ian who turned it into a story, with the novel as the main character. Margaret has written on this, asking: 'Why is it, then, that *Rise of the Novel* has had a much greater impact on our understanding of the conditions enabling the novel's growth than any of these earlier literary histories?' (Reeves, 2000, p. 32). Her answer is that Watt's version drew out *a story* that readers could follow.

So how can doctoral writers be encouraged to make use of what Reeves calls 'an Enlightenment narrative of uninterrupted progress' and what I usually describe as something like the simple structure of most stories for small children?

This post describes an exercise with a doctoral writer who was having trouble turning lists of facts into a story. I gave her some scattered, random words around the theme of 'flowers'. Then I asked for all the words to be ordered as a story. Working together, talking rather than writing, we realised that different stories could be built from these words. I suspect this might be good as a writing workshop exercise. Each story-maker could be given two sheets with the same words and asked to make two different stories. The stories we made could be seen as different arguments, demonstrating why you must have a connecting story: it is the story's progress that builds an argument in doctoral writing.

I'm speculating that maintaining a *thesis* in the written thesis in the simplest of terms means turning it into a story, with the same kind of structure as the ones we read to children: characters (in a thesis these are usually things not animals or people), what happens to them, and then a conclusion.

I've pondered upon the different plots of doctoral stories (Carter et al., 2012, pp. 58–63) while thinking about thesis structuring work. Possible structures are: bildungsromans, that is, stories of maturation; quests; journey narratives; loss and recuperation stories; tragedies or romances in which 'characters' are put together with happy results. Another workshop might be what kind of story is your research thesis…

Here are the words I presented printed like this on a page, in several copies, and then we circled and numbered them, and talked the stories through to each other.

lily   wedding   flower   plant   petal   rose
colour   daisy   paintings   funeral   scent
chrysanthemum   symbolism   miniature rose   wild flowers
bridal bouquet   edible flowers   climbing rose   beauty
deep red   patterns of petals   flower arrangements   art
cauliflower   religious interpretations   soft white   rhizomes
vines   bees   flycatchers   tiny flowers

A similar exercise could be devised for individual doctoral writers or as a group workshop.

Argument and Contribution

Structure as a Booster for the Argument

Susan Carter

Although structure can be revised through ordinary workerly diligence, its effect works at a deeper level, showing authority and conveying purpose. How's that achieved?

Ann tells of her experience a thesis writer: 'I visualized the hard-bound thesis, complete with my name on the spine, as being an "argument" from beginning to end. I designed every chapter to have a punch-line, which would contribute one major argument in support of a holistic contention' (Carter et al., 2012, p. 56). Her envisioning ahead of doing (a helpful strategy in itself) shows she was aware of the need for structure to hold the argument in place right through the thesis.

Each chapter can be framed with an Introduction and Conclusion that deliberately takes the holistic argument forward. Often this will be installed only towards the end of the thesis writing process, when the overarching argument becomes clear. But a sentence written early on that says what this chapter needs to contribute to the thesis can also act as an anchor to hold the author to the chapter's purpose. Knowing the precise purpose of the chapter can guide the cutting back to delete what is not relevant.

A firm line of argument can be held in place by the use of subtitles and what Elizabeth Rankin calls 'echo links' (Rankin, 2001, p. 30), clusters of words embedded within the thesis rather than in subtitles that assure the reader the themes within the argument are woven consistently throughout. White (2011, p. 132) gives examples of what he calls 'preview, overview and recall':

> The following analysis is presented in two stages. In the first the current perspectives on…are evaluated. The second is a critical evaluation of….In this chapter the reason for….has been discussed. In the next section, this discussion will be elaborated by…

His example of recall is 'back in the introduction'. In a recent writing class, a nice example of recall was found when we looked at Introductions and Conclusions in articles chosen for their strength: the Conclusion began, 'To return to our research question….' Linkages like this can be installed during the final revision process, when one sweep through the entire thing could seek to install linkages.

This post emphasises that structure should relate to the argument and purpose of the thesis. The conventional headings of Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Findings, Discussion and Conclusion do this to some extent: they signal covertly that this written work describes an authentic bit of research contextualised within its discourse and following acceptable methods in its epistemology. But the reader wants to know what the original contribution to knowledge is, that is, what new argument is offered. I recommend that thesis writers deliberately make use of structure to clearly show the argument their research allows them to make.

A Good Argument: The Thesis of the Thesis

Susan Carter

The *thinking done through writing* is perhaps the most powerful route to developing a good argument. Yet often it is only once the whole project is completed that the author is able to defend what the findings of the project mean. This means just before submission they need to calibrate what is usually called an 'argument'.

A good argument, then,

- expresses the single most significant contribution;
- goes beyond facts to what they mean in practice and to theory;
- avoids being dogmatic/didactic;
- is critical and not just a description of the research project;
- aims to persuade based on logic and evidence (not just a statement of fact); and
- is more significant than claiming that something needs more study (or funding).

It can be difficult to decide which aspect of a novel contribution is really the strongest. Sometimes it is possible to interpret data from different perspectives. It can be hard to choose the most significant story that comprises a thesis's thesis.

Some of us are led to a research topic because we have an existing, didactic position on the topic. We all bring our life's experience to research, and then we acquire academic approaches, theory, and discipline epistemologies. Despite initial motivation towards the topic, though, researchers must keep an open mind to what findings show. It can be that the thesis argument changes from the original argument intended by a candidate. It may even happen that the final argument has a similar structure to a detective thriller: 'All the evidence for what produces B points to fact C, and yet analysis of M and N shows that C is a red herring: it is really Z that influences B.'

It can take time to fully process findings, too. Although my kindly examiners allowed me to fly through the Ph.D. examination, I achieved my best iteration of the argument inherent in my doctorate in a book chapter that came out 10 years after graduation (Carter, 2011). Doctoral candidates can take comfort in the fact that the thesis argument of their thesis may not necessarily be the final one emerging from the doctoral project. But, meantime, before submission, they may welcome prompts to help them articulate the argument more clearly and defensibly.

A doctoral writer might self-audit by writing the argument statement in a format that begins: 'This thesis argues/proposes that…' and then goes through the statement checking the following:

- is every word accurate?
- can I stand by this and live by it as a researcher?
- what sort of challenge to my argument might come from my research field? Can I refute it?
- is the most important noun in the subject position of the main clause?
- is the main verb accurate?
- is the tone right, not more dogmatic or confrontational nor more understated than what I really want to say?

It's also sensible to consider the precision of that verb defining whether the thesis 'argues' or 'proposes'. The final statement from the research could 'suggest', 'advise', 'question', 'raise questions about', or it could 'insist', 'redefine', 'highlight', 'expose'. There are many options, and it is satisfying to find the most defensible.

And I remember being nervous before submission that I did not actually have a thesis in my thesis until my supervisor firmly assured me that I did—that sort of self-doubt may be common, so talking it through with doctoral candidates can help them feel more sure that they really are researchers who have an argument to stand by.

Done All That Work—But Has This Thesis Really Got Anything to Say? Strategies to Regain Perspective on Research Contribution

Claire Aitchison

What have I got to say? This is one doctoral terror moment: the fear that perhaps there isn't anything of worth to show for all the years of work. I've never met a student who hasn't experienced this kind of self-doubt—in part fuelled by exhaustion during the final stages, and in part an almost natural outcome of being too close, too fully immersed in the project to be able to objectively assess the merits of the work. However, it is essential that researchers make such judgements accurately since convention demands that the thesis clearly identifies the contribution and significance of the research.

Over the years I've collected a few strategies for helping students gain the perspective needed to make objective judgements and locate this appropriately in their texts. I've drawn on the work of Paltridge and Starfield (2007) for evidence-based accounts of structure and moves within theses; Kamler and Thomson (2014) for writer identity and positioning; Graff and Birkenstein (2014) for activities that help scholars engage in critical academic conversations; and the wonderful Patricia Goodson (2016) for stimulating thinking and writing.

Harnessing the Advantages of Objectivity and Distance …

Even though I am, by first inclination, a qualitative researcher who loves detail and nuance, it is easy to get lost and overwhelmed in too much detail. One strategy to overcome this is to **use tables, grids and figures**, which force simplification. Reducing things in this way requires distance, so that I crystallise my thinking, identify key points and thus see how the parts interrelate as a working whole. This strategy of stepping away from the narrative to condense work into tables is a great antidote to my own tendency for expansive writing.

I **use a metaphor** that I first read in Swales and Feak (2000) to describe this process. Imagine you've been walking in a forest for some months examining the vegetation and have developed an expert, detailed knowledge of the individual trees, bushes and undergrowth vegetation. Down amongst the trees you have a close-up, comprehensive—but narrow—perspective. But in addition, another perspective is required, one that can be achieved only by moving out of the forest up onto a hill overlooking the entire valley. From there it is possible to see the big picture: how the trees congregate near the waterways, where shrubs sit in relationship to other vegetation, where the tall trees stand, the shades and nuances of the whole landscape and their connections to each other. From this distance one is able to make 'high pass' judgements about relationships and interdependencies—to overview the whole territory informed by an intimate knowledge of the detail.

I love this metaphor and use it often, for example, to explain to students how we need to situate work in the literature, or make overview statements about a body of literature or to help us identify claims for significance. But how does one climb up to the top of the mountain to get that objectivity?

Writing About Findings

When working with scholars who need clarity around findings I use this staged activity:

1. On a separate piece of paper, brainstorm what you know now that you didn't before you collected and analysed your data.
2. Order/reorder this list from most important to least important, making sub-sets as necessary.
3. Take the most important three or four findings and complete this table:

   (a) list each finding down the left-hand column, and, working across the rows;
   (b) list the evidence for the finding (e.g., statistical significance, or thematic consistency);

(c) identify how strong that evidence is (strong, medium, purely contextual, weak and so on); and

(d) identify how relevant or important this finding is, to whom/for what purpose?

(a) Finding	(b) Evidence	(c) Strength of evidence (strong, weak…etc.)	(d) Relevance/Importance (high/medium/low—to whom?)
1.			
2.			
3.			

As a tool to double-check hunches and impressions from the data, this grid helps objectivity: it builds confidence about claims. Especially for qualitative research, this strategy forces researchers to think and strategise more clearly. For example, sometimes the strength of evidence doesn't match what is known to be important (from reading or experience in the field); when the information is laid out in this way, it may show the need to return to the data or the literature to investigate this mismatch. It helps deeper consideration about whether the relationship is causal, coincidental, contextual or general.

Connecting Findings to the Literature

I also find tables useful as a systematic approach to building connections between findings and the literature. Here is an example:

1. list key findings down the left-hand column;
2. for each item, ask: 'Who else has had something to say about this?' and brainstorm answers; then,
3. as appropriate, complete rows b–d.

(a) My key findings	(b) Other relevant studies (similar findings)	(c) Other relevant studies (different findings)	(d) The connection … (making sense of your findings *vis-à-vis* the literature)
1.			
2.			
3.			

Answering the 'So What?!'

And tables can be useful for answering the 'So what?' question:

1. Review your findings and list the main ones down the left-hand column (try to stick to only two to four items to help crystalise thinking).
2. Answer 'So what?' and brainstorm answers against each of the four columns to prompt new thinking (you may wish to add/modify these prompts according to your research).

(a) Key finding	(b) *So What? …* for practice	(c) *So What? …* for theory	(e) *So What? …* for policy	(d) *So What? …* for future research
1.				
2.				
3.				

Take-Home Message, or 'What Was All That About?'

Cally Guerin

It's old and well-worn advice, but worth repeating at regular intervals: make sure you know what the key message is for any given piece of writing. Surprisingly often, at the end of a conference presentation you are left wondering what the main point was meant to be. The same is true of an early draft of a chapter or article. Now, I'm not immune from this myself, and admit to having left audiences somewhat confused more than once in the past.

I think that this confusion about the central meaning of research comes largely from being bogged down in the complexities of data analysis, where vast amounts of information need to be processed and organised. Doctoral writers have often collected piles of data, can be overwhelmed by the sheer mass, and perhaps don't want to leave anything out: every detail seems precious.

But, as Mullins and Kiley (2002) demonstrate, one of the most damaging responses a thesis can evoke in examiners is confusion about the main message the research has established. Holbrook, Bourke, Fairbairn, and Lovat (2007) make a similar point in relation to literature reviews, highlighting that doctoral examiners are looking for the synthesis of ideas into a coherent argument. At various levels of the thesis, then,

it is crucial to be absolutely clear about the central point. Luckily, there are a couple of tried and tested ways to focus thinking about the key argument or central idea.

One useful technique is to make sure that the Introduction to the paper matches the Conclusion. Although this seems obvious, the trick is to avoid repetition but, at the same time, make it easy for the reader to see that the task the writer set out to do has been accomplished, and that the point of the whole exercise is clear. For long-term projects, the main message can shift in emphasis over time as the data are analysed in more detail; hence the value in revisiting Introduction and Conclusion synchronicity at the end of the writing process.

Another effective exercise is to ask participants to write, in one sentence, the main idea they want to get across for the particular piece of writing they are currently producing. Many find explicit articulation quite difficult, but most usually get there in the end. It sounds simple, but is often overlooked as part of the writing process when the focus tends to be on elaborating the discussion rather than being clear about the start and end points. However, when the work really has been fully digested, it is possible to state the take-home message very clearly.

Theory, Critical Thinking and Data Analysis

Choosing the Right Theory Is Like Op-shopping

Claire Aitchison

The analogy that choosing theory is like op-shopping came up years ago in a writing circle and it has stayed with me ever since. I shall elaborate. In Australia, 'op shops' or 'opportunity shops' are charity shops that sell second-hand clothes. Not everyone likes op shopping. Some people prefer wholly new outfits; others make their own gear. In general, however, op shops are a great place to get affordable stuff. But you have to choose carefully. Not everything there is good value … in fact, some op shops carry a lot of junk. Nevertheless, for the discerning shopper, they represent a good option: there is a wide range ready to try on. There are all sorts, sizes, shapes and designs. Op shops don't subscribe to particular brands or labels. You can discover well-known, familiar labels, even exclusive labels, but also obscure and un-branded items. And because op shops are affordable, if you change your mind, it doesn't matter too much—you simply give it back to be recycled again. The item has value, but not to you.

Occasionally you come across something that's almost new, seems hardly to have been taken out of the cupboard before finding itself in the op shop seeking a new owner. One wonders why it has been rejected. Perhaps when the buyer brought it, and later after trying it on at home, found it just wasn't right for them after all. Maybe it didn't match anything else in the wardrobe, or was simply not needed.

Some items are so well used that they look a bit tired and tatty. However, they may still have some value, for example, when worn with the right accessories?

An op shop allows you to try on outfits endlessly—to mix and match across styles and eras, to experiment and test out unusual combinations, to dig out long-forgotten fashions.

I spoke with my doctoral student today and she was having trouble with theory. After initially browsing freely, she'd narrowed the field to Bourdieu and Foucault. But she was hesitating, saying that 'everybody uses Bourdieu' and she wanted something new.

I thought of the op shop and suggested she think about how theories might work together—that she try choosing one for the main outfit and see how the second theorist could complement that. We talked about her purpose—what did she want from theories/theorists; where could she go with them? How did she imagine they could work together to achieve her objectives? But mostly we agreed the answer would come from *trying on the theories* by actually writing the story of the data and then seeing where, if, and how those theories would apply. Perhaps she might be surprised to find they fit well—or perhaps she'll return them to the rack and keep looking a while longer.

Postscript: In keeping with the idea that everything new is old, Cally Guerin drew my attention to this and its reference to the idea that student writers 'try on' different voices in the process of becoming authorial.

What Does It Mean to 'Theorise' Research?

Cally Guerin

Researchers, and especially those working on doctorates, are advised that their work needs to be more than mere description; they must also 'theorise' their work. Many are unsure about what this really means, especially when instructed to 'theorise your practice', so here is my attempt to try and define it.

Doctoral writers generally need to tie their research to existing, well-established theories, for example, feminist theory, attachment theory, social constructivist theory. Such theories act as a lens through which the research is perceived, and often determine the focus of the research.

But, on another level, writers are also required to 'theorise' their findings. This second kind of 'theorising' demands stepping away from the mass of details for a big-picture view of data that reveals its broader meanings.

Attempts to theorise can result in the production of typologies or frameworks, models or patterns, analogies or metaphors. Such high-order thinking is very challenging for most of us—and can also be the most rewarding part of research. It allows for creativity in interpretation, for intuitive thinking, and even a degree of conjecture.

There are three main ways to theorise empirical results: deduction, induction and abduction. It can be helpful to think about how these processes align with research design early in the project.

Deduction works ***from*** (*de* = from) the general to the specific. One way to think about this is as a path that moves in the direction of rule –> case –> result. You begin with the general theory/rule/principle and apply it to a specific case, the context or topic of the doctoral project. The theory might say that, in situation A, B will necessarily result. The researcher gathers data from the specific case and then sees whether or not the general theory holds true. Another way of describing this 'top down' approach is to start with a general rule or hypothesis, examine the evidence of a particular case and reach a reliable conclusion. This approach is good for research that starts with a hypothesis to be tested and causality established.

Induction works in the opposite direction, from the specific ***to*** (in = to) the general. This time we move in the direction of case –> result –> rule. This time the data show that A leads to B which can be explained by this theory or rule. This 'bottom up' process starts with small details or observations, then works up through related issues to establish the general rule or explanation. Such generalising from specific events or cases thus allows prediction of likely outcomes in future, or in similar situations. This approach is good for research aimed at exploring new phenomena or new perspectives on phenomena.

Abduction occurs when a probable conclusion can be taken ***away*** (*ab* = away) from limited information. The process here moves in the direction of result –> rule –> case. Given result B, could this rule/theory explain it? Test against case A to see if it stands. Here we start with the result observed, guess or hypothesise a theory that might explain it, then test that theory against the case. This approach can be helpful when surprising data are observed. Often this is a matter of asking *why* certain results have appeared, a process which sometimes requires creative and intuitive thinking. Importantly, the conclusions of abduction are tentative, based on the most likely explanation, so hedging language is necessary: 'it seems probable that…' or 'it may be…'.

Swedberg (2012) offers the following advice when it comes to making sense of data and attempting to theorise:

> What one observes is typically often covered, but not completely so, by some existing concept. In this situation it is important not to dismiss the difference, and to squeeze one's observations into some existing category. Instead one should zoom in on the difference, magnify it, and explore if the phenomenon does not merit a new name or at least a new description or definition. (p. 18)

This strikes me as a wonderfully liberating way to approach the data and free up the creative and critical thinking that results in 'theorising'.

Demonstrating Critical Analysis: A Paint-by-Numbers Approach

Susan Carter

In my experience of working across-campus with doctoral students, those who flounder at examination generally have the same failing: a lack of awareness of the generic expectations of a thesis. Their writing shows (1) inadequate linkage between problem or research question, literature, methods and findings; and (2) evident ignorance of the framework expected of a thesis.

A paint-by-numbers approach may help students who struggle with the abstract language of genre, linkage, and framework, let alone epistemology. Question, literature, methods and findings must be linked not just in the author's mind but in clear explicit sentences so that a reader can quickly see connections. An audit before submission could include a check of the following:

- The description of the background fits what the study actually found—rewrite if things have shifted and the background now required is slightly different.
- The research question captures the essence of what the study actually finds—if it doesn't, it should be rewritten so that it does.
- The methods section relates to the research question—sentences should explain how.
- Any method discussed and not used has a sentence explaining why it is discussed at all—if there is no reason, it should be removed.
- Theories discussed in the literature review are applied in analysis and discussion.
- Findings are compared with findings from literature—differences and possible reasons are discussed.
- The overall balance of literature, methodology, findings and discussion is appropriate (e.g., about the right % of the thesis is devoted to literature review, methodology, etc., for the discipline).

Behind this apparently simplistic approach sit the issues of epistemology and discipline expectations, and the network of theories about how new knowledge is constructed and accepted by academic communities. But not all students find talk of epistemology the fastest route to seeing what they need to do in writing. Some who do good research and make valuable contributions may not find that explanations of high theory expressed in Latinate terms helped them with writing their thesis.

In the current environment of shorter times to completion, it is sensible to use straightforward routes to successful thesis writing. That does not include the supervisor writing for the student, but can include pragmatic suggestions that might save students from another longish block of revisions after examination. And I suspect that even a paint-by-numbers approach may provide a learning route to appreciating that you always write in a socially restrained situation and for a critical audience, and that meeting expectations matters.

Swamped by Data? Time to Take Control and Manage All that Information

Cally Guerin

In conversations with Ph.D. candidates, I am reminded of how difficult it can be to manage all that data generated by empirical research. It's great when dozens of people are willing to be interviewed for your project; when you receive a 90% response rate to the survey; the chance timing of your fieldwork generates much more material than expected; or serendipity in the laboratory leads to a vast increase in usable results. It's a gift to have so much material to work with; yet, it's easy to feel swamped by all that data and wonder how on earth you will find your way around them, let alone analyse and write about them. The storage and management of data is a key aspect of any research project, and finding ways to do this effectively sets up researchers for writing about it later on.

The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) has lots to say about the management of research data. Section 2 specifies that research data and primary materials must be retained for at least five years after any publication resulting from that data, but this may be much longer if the data apply to clinical trials or have heritage value. All data must be stored in a secure location. If the research generates very large files, or is particularly sensitive in terms of confidentiality, intellectual property or potential commercialisation, it may be necessary to make special arrangements. However, for many doctoral writers, 'secure storage' just means a password-protected file on their university computer, backed up on the university's server. If the research involves other kinds of artefacts or material objects, again, a locked cabinet in a locked university office is often enough. The data also need to be in a 'safe' place, not at risk of damage from flooding, for example (I could tell you about what happens when the basement holding all the central computing facilities meets a burst water pipe…). Reliable record-keeping goes hand in hand with storage concerns. Record-keeping might seem boringly pedantic at the time, but can be invaluable later on to ensure easy accessibility and enable the researcher to describe how the data were collected, organised and stored.

The process of saving data and putting it into various folders begins the first level of analysis. Choices at this stage about categories to employ and how to assign items to the folders will later inform how that data and the relationships between various items are perceived; the names of those folders and subfolders may even become the headings and subheadings of chapters and sections. Of course, it's possible to change the categories as familiarity with the material develops.

One of the important messages here seems to be 'use long and informative names for files'—a year or two later it can be hard to remember what that cryptic notation means… and it's not only important for the current project: the origins and labelling of data can also be crucial if other researchers later use that data for further research.

Lots of universities have helpful templates to create an ordered, sensible approach to the task of managing data. You can find examples on the Australian National Data

Services (www.ands.org.au) website. Just as ethics applications force researchers to think through what they want to do and why, these templates ensure careful consideration of what information is likely to be gathered and how it can be organised in order to be retrieved when the time comes to analyse and write about it. Templates usually include sections covering things like the forms of data to be collected; considerations about file naming conventions and version control; ownership of data; durability of storage forms; access rights; and retention and sharing of data. A systematic process at the early stages will make the writing much more straightforward later.

What to Do with 'Leftover' Data?

Cally Guerin

On winding up a research project recently, I got to thinking about the ideas and data that didn't make it into final publications or conference presentations. After collecting survey responses and focus group transcripts, we looked over the findings and divided it into publishable chunks. Then for each paper we took the data that were relevant to that topic, analysed it thoroughly, and decided what the main argument could be—that is, what is the new knowledge gained from that part of the research? But there are still a few intriguing bits and pieces of data left over. That brought home to me how often doctoral writers are faced with ideas and data that don't quite fit into the scope of the doctorate. To avoid feeling that work is 'wasted,' it is helpful to think about how those leftovers might be used. Sometimes these leftover items of data stay in the researcher's mind, hinting that there is more to be said about the topic, niggling away in the background and refusing to be put aside.

I firmly believe that there is a place for the intuitive hunch in research, the idea that attracts attention even when it is not fully worked out, the idea that seems to be left over from the main project. I have taken to heart Maggie MacLure's advice in this regard. She writes about data that 'glow', by which she means 'some detail—a fieldnote fragment or video image—[that] starts to glimmer, gathering our attention' (MacLure, 2010, p. 282). MacLure provides us with an example of how she works with such data in 'The Wonder of Data' (2013).

These glowing data points tell us something interesting, but maybe not in relation to the current research project. Or perhaps the glowing data stand out from what's already been said, not contradicting the main argument, but moving off on another tangent. It might be something really interesting, even though it does not fit logically alongside the central point of the thesis or articles that make it to the light of day.

When writing for the 'DoctoralWriting' blog, I often find myself exploring ideas that start out tiny, and maybe grow into a blog, and occasionally continue to blossom into a full-sized research project. For doctoral candidates, publishing one's work through blogs is not always straightforward and should be approached cautiously. But perhaps a similar process of writing up short pieces that might later be revisited

can be a useful practice. This procedure has the advantage of saving left-over data, of encouraging ongoing writing habits.

Perhaps the possibility of confronting leftover data is more common in qualitative research, for example, where interview participants might expand on related ideas that are not quite directly on the main topic of the formal interview questions. I remind students that nothing is ever wasted in the work they do towards their doctorate, and suggest that they keep any extra ideas that don't seem to fit into the main thesis in a separate file for the future.

Specific Parts of the Thesis

Writing the Acknowledgements: The Etiquette of Thanking

Susan Carter

Acknowledgements pages show the essence of the thesis author and their experience. If you look through a dozen or so at a time, you will hear the screams, the manic laughter, and catch the sombre tragedy and awe and agony that underpins the doctoral lifespan.

Acknowledgements are non-consequential in that they are not really evaluated, unlike the rest of the prose students have laboured over. Some acknowledgement pages give away the secret of their authors' difficulty with formal prose, and it doesn't matter—by the time anyone reads them, the author has been found acceptable. But acknowledgements do matter because, in amongst the celebration, the right people need to be thanked in the right way.

Acknowledgement pages vary considerably. Most thank funders, supervisors, close colleagues and family. Possibly supportive friends. This means it is effectively a snub if someone important is not thanked.

Typically the structure moves from thanking the most formal support to the least formal, as detailed above—funders, supervisors, other academics, colleagues, and finally family. This makes sense according to the logic of incremental progression because the informal thanks to family are often the most heartfelt. Close family members are often the people who gave the most (although some supervisors are likely to feel this is not true).

It is important that a student acknowledges the formal carefully, though: any person or institution that has contributed funding to the project, other researchers who have been involved in the research, institutions that have aided the research in some way. They should also acknowledge proofreaders and editors—that is a requirement at the University of Auckland where I work, and a good one in terms of honesty about authorship. Such formal thanks are usually in the first paragraph or two.

Yet acknowledgements are a space owned by the author: I have seen people thank their dog for sitting at their feet for hundreds of hours, the cat for its companionable choice of the thesis draft as the spot for a nap, and God for creating a magnificent universe available to be studied.

It is possible to thank people for specific help throughout the thesis, too. I like doing this, because it cheers me up to remember the kind, wise colleagues who have helped me along with my thinking. If footnotes are used, the work can be done there, for example, by stating: 'I am indebted to xxx for several discussions that helped me to focus this section'. Without footnotes, provision of a 'Name, personal conversation, date' reference does the same work. Students may choose to namedrop in these internal thanks too: if a big name in the field gave feedback after a conference paper or in conversation, acknowledgements strengthen the student's academic insider status.

Acknowledgements vary in length, and the effect of a very long acknowledgement—I have seen a nine-pager—is to dilute the thanks. I have also seen one that simply lists five names, which was blunt, but powerful.

So it is good to start an Acknowledgements draft within six months of submission, and revise it for the full satisfaction of a job well done on graduation, with all dues paid. The usual structuring principles apply: those who gave most should be given the most thanks. Supervisors will know the sad truth if the cat gets more lines than they do.

Thanks are best when concrete. I really like thanks to supervisors that carry a sense of who they were in the drama, like 'My supervisor, who kept a sense of humour when I had lost mine'; 'my supervisor, whose maddening attention to detail drove me to finally learn to punctuate prose'; or 'my supervisor, whose selfless time and care were sometimes all that kept me going'. A precisely worded acknowledgement is like a perfectly chosen gift. It fits. It matches.

Most supervisors tend not to give advice on acknowledgements, because they expect to be thanked, so it feels pre-emptive. Perhaps acknowledgements are a place where academic advisors with expertise in rhetoric could give objective advice on tone and balance.

Writing a Thesis Abstract that Will Impress a Potential Examiner

Claire Aitchison

When the thesis becomes available to the public, apart from the title, the Abstract is the most widely read. But way before then, the Abstract needs to win over the target examiner.

Perhaps because the doctoral Abstract is so often written in a hurry when candidates and supervisors are immersed in the final stages, exhausted and in a rush to

towards examination, inadequate attention is paid to this small, but crucial, piece of writing.

Imagine receiving an invitation to examine a doctoral thesis. The email, probably a standard grad school template, is likely to begin by buttering you up with some generic comments about your reputation or expertise. It might include official forms with examination criteria, instructions and procedures. It's likely to remind you of the requirement to work to a timeframe—and of the (very) small financial reward for undertaking the task. It will be accompanied by the thesis Abstract. So, if you were that potential examiner, what would you like from the Abstract to help you decide whether or not you want to take on the task?

I'll wager that you want pretty immediate clarity concerning what the thesis is about: what the research was aiming to do, what literature, methods and theories were employed, and what were the outcomes or the findings. Having said that, if you are an expert in the field, you'll also want to know what is special or unique about this research that would encourage you to read yet more on a topic that you are already so familiar with.

Most of the advice books indicate that the ***content*** of the Abstract should include, at a minimum, topic, literature, method, findings. In most cases, the study will be explained by giving a clear (and early) statement of the issue or problem under investigation, the literature that was brought to the investigation, how the research was undertaken and what was found (including the significance of these findings). Some disciplines and/or kinds of studies may require different levels of detail or additional information, such as the central argument (common in cultural studies, for example), and/or the theoretical framework. Besides the content outlined above, the Abstract should make clear what kind of thesis it is, for example, by indicating if the thesis has a non-traditional structure, a special use of voice, presentation, or structure such as an exegesis or a series of papers.

At the sentence level, some Abstracts refer to ***the research***, while others reference the thesis (***or dissertation***) ***itself***. This distinction will likely impact the choice of verb ***tense***. For example, descriptions of the research may use the simple past tense (*The research showed that…*), whereas commentary on the thesis is likely to use present simple tense (*This thesis explores…*).

Some disciplines favour longer Abstracts up to two pages in ***length***; however, in my opinion, a short Abstract is preferable. The judicious use of ***keywords***, disciplinary or ideological 'markers', will help provide short-cut clues to the kind of research it is, and make the thesis searchable. But at the same time it's important to be as accessible as possible: well-structured paragraphs with topic sentences should break the text into clear segments. As with any Abstract, focussed, precise writing is the way to go. Ideally, sentences will be dense with detail and relatively sparse in 'padding' (i.e., adjectives and adverbs).

Time markers and ***location-specific indicators*** are worthy of special care. For example, state that the study took place 'during 2019' rather than 'recently'. A Ph.D. is an international qualification, so local identifiers rarely work: it is preferable to replace 'Western suburbs' with 'fringe suburbs with lower socio-economic status'.

The process of writing the Abstract can help candidate and supervisor identify the ***strengths*** and 'sales points' of the study. An Abstract should play to these. For example, if the researcher has developed a new way of doing something, or modified an existing method or approach, then indicate this along with other significant 'findings'.

Irrespective of the discipline or kind of study, the Abstract should give ample attention to the findings; up to 60% of the Abstract can be devoted to presenting findings *and* their ***significance***. This segment can be especially difficult to write because it requires a particular kind of authorial voice and confidence that sometimes is only just developing in the very final stages of candidature.

It's the old adage that first impressions stick. A well-written, well-structured Abstract provides a sense of the researcher and the research. If the Abstract is neat and crisp, comprehensive and well written, if it provides the essential elements that enable one to make a judgment about the thesis, then, hopefully, a potential examiner is already starting to engage with the task.

How Long Is a Thesis Introduction? Changing Thesis Structures

Cally Guerin

One of my doctoral writing workshop exercises compares real theses to the generic advice on writing theses. Participants bring along theses that are regarded by supervisors and examiners as examples of good research and writing. The process is designed partly to encourage Ph.D. students to have a clearer picture in their own minds of the end-product they are working towards, and partly to provide ways of articulating standard structures. Increasingly, I find that the theses students bring along don't quite match the standard advice.

The first chapter of a thesis, for example, is usually labelled 'Introduction', but what that means can vary surprisingly in terms of length and what is included. In the past, I've worked with a list of components that could (should?) be included in this opening section:

- background information;
- rationale for research;
- scope of project;
- research questions and aims;
- maybe something about methodology and/or the theoretical framework;
- an outline of chapters.

I suspect that most writing advisers and supervisors have similar lists in their heads. But how and where do these elements actually appear in the thesis? For example, where do they sit in relation to the literature review?

The Introduction elements might all be covered in a relatively short 'mini chapter' of 6–10 pages. This is then followed by a separate, considerably longer chapter that provides a big Literature Review or detailed examination of the context, background or theory underpinning the project.

Alternatively, the Introduction elements might act as brackets for the first chapter. The chapter starts by setting out the problem or issue and providing background context, but then moves into a lengthy, detailed examination of the literature. After this, the chapter returns to details of the specific project that will be reported in the thesis, its questions, aims, methods and finally, chapter outline. That is, 'Introduction' might include a substantial literature review before we know much at all about the specific focus of this particular project.

(Personally, I like the mini-chapter format so that I know up front what this project is about; no need to keep it a mystery for the first 30 pages, in my opinion. This use of a short introductory chapter does not appear to be linked to specific disciplines.)

When I look at successful theses, the elements listed above are not always obviously on show. Sometimes they are disguised behind other language; sometimes they are simply not present. For example, we usually see the chapter outline, but not always; research questions or aims can be hard to identify; theory and methodology may not be very prominent in what is labelled 'Introduction'. While writing a doctoral thesis has never been a 'painting-by-numbers' exercise, it seems that variations on the basic patterns are more and more common. Maybe these variations have always existed within the broader framework of disciplinary expectations. Perhaps the apparent loosening up of examiners' expectations partly relates to the changing nature of the Ph.D., in which the topics and types of Ph.D.s no longer fit neatly into the traditional structures—different kinds of projects demand different forms of writing.

Conventional advice is useful as a reliable guide, but should not be presented as a rulebook. If something else makes sense in a particular context, follow the internal logic of the situation. Maybe we need to let go of some of the traditional advice when updating the next edition of our 'how to write a thesis' manuals.

The Literature Review for Beginners: Writing While Still Uncertain

Susan Carter

Writing about literature can cause confusion and frustration for new Ph.D. candidates. How can they start 'writing a Literature Review' in the first few months of candidature when they are still not sure of what they are really looking for, and may not have finalised the scope and aims of the thesis? It means building a Literature Review without a sure sense of its final, definitive purpose.

Despite this, reviewing the literature is commonly the ***entry point to doctoral writing***. Frequently it is begun early in the first year in order to stake out the research landscape. The main purpose of reading early is to ensure that the project hasn't already been done, and to better understand methods commonly used. At the same time, novice researchers will absorb the jargon and conventions of the discipline, and should be encouraged to do this consciously.

Using some form of referencing software, they should at least summarise what they read so as to remember who said what: writing must accompany reading. The more this early writing includes initial responses, i.e., 'evidence of their critical analysis of literature', the more effort will be saved later.

Having a *purpose* for writing can help candidates unnerved by contingency. Theses ***make generic moves***, each of which needs support from literature. The entry-level doctoral student could begin with a plan of how literature will buttress the final thesis. The idea is to plot out the story that the literature must support.

The Introduction usually establishes a ***problem, limitation, or lack of understanding***. Literature provides evidence that a gap exists in understanding about something that matters, identifies exactly where, and shows the topic's seriousness. That gap is often not clearly defined at the start of the project, especially in non-STEM disciplines. However, whenever the topic problem is mentioned, it can be included in what will eventually become the beginning of the Introduction. Here, the 'best' literature will ***show that the problem really matters***—that will strengthen the thesis's significance.

Then ***methods used*** will be defended with literature. Detail about previous approaches will build the argument for methods used—reporting these from the literature requires looking for other studies' limitations as well as strengths, then writing the story of what seems useful, and what seems less so, to the current project. Having a set of evaluation criteria enables even early reading to be fitted into a coherent plan, described in a way that is likely to be useable. Hart (1998) spells out the kinds of questions that literature ought to answer. Some questions might be:

- Are any definitions useful?
- Is their problem the same as mine?
- Are their methods good?
- What supports my ideas?
- What raises new ideas or disagrees with mine?
- What are the limitations?

Additionally, candidates can look at each publication's prose for ***exemplars***. Does it clearly articulate the problem, and the argument? Is it succinct and convincing? How does it defend methods and articulate a methodology? What vocabulary is used? How does it handle theory? Strong prose structures at the level of paragraph and sentence can be emulated by novice researchers.

If you are in a discipline that uses direct quotation, accumulating useful quotations is useful—and while picking those that express ideas eloquently, notice the syntax for how this is achieved.

It still won't be easy, but the candidate could begin by itemising ***what literature will be needed in each section***—that gives one way to mitigate the panic that some candidates feel when writing about literature while still unsure of their final topic.

Literature Reviews—Trust Yourself!

Cally Guerin

Doctoral students often start out feeling obliged to summarise everything that has ever been written on their subject, and to do so in a politely deferential manner. Yet it is necessary to stand back from all that information and tell a story that puts the student's research right at the centre in the starring role. To explain this, I return again and again to the 'hands on hips' stance that Kamler and Thomson (2014) put forward in a wonderful chapter entitled *Persuading an octopus into a glass: Working with literatures*.

Hands on hips is a great image for the authoritative stance that needs to be taken up in the huge shift from undergraduate to autonomous researcher. It helps to picture oneself undaunted by overwhelming information in the literature and making some judgements about what is important, interesting, valuable and/or topical. With hands on hips it becomes easier to pose questions such as: How would I categorise all this information? What do I think about it all? How do I see those elements linking to other papers, theories and arguments in the field? What have I got to offer that others should listen to? Where is my value-add in all this?

Wisker (2005, p. 93) hits the nail on the head when she says that one purpose of a Literature Review entails *entering into dialogue* with the discipline. It can take a while, though, for postgraduates to believe in themselves as scholars with something useful to say to all those other published researchers around the world who are working in the same field. Yet the expectation is that doctoral writing will speak to the discipline at a global level.

So it's necessary to talk to doctoral students about taking up the hands on hips stance in their Literature Reviews. However, I've also been pushing them to trust their own knowledge of the field much more than they often seem to do—and here I may be on somewhat shakier ground.

I encourage students to stand back from their copious notes and highlighted PDFs, and take control of the overarching story. Then they can start listing the main topics they need to address in the literature review. Doctoral writers can trust themselves to know what the key themes are after all the reading they've done; they will remember the main concepts that must be included; they will recall the ideas that surprised them, shocked them, or opposed what they had previously believed. I really do think that they can trust their own understanding of the field for this part of the process, rather than slavishly patching together summaries of what everyone else has already written about the topic. Of course, it's extremely important to go back and confirm

the precise names, dates and facts to ensure that the information in the Literature Review really is accurate and to acknowledge where ideas originated.

Is it dangerous to encourage students to trust themselves this much as they launch into writing Literature Reviews? Am I going to regret this a little further along the track if they start imagining that they are experts on the topic long before they really know enough? I'd hope that this would be the beginning of establishing a confident, scholarly voice as an author.

Literature Review: Hands on Hips or Smash and Grab?

Susan Carter

The metaphor I use when teaching how to review the literature is home invasion. When you are reading an article, you want to get into it quickly, spot what will be valuable to you, grab it, being careful not to damage it (take the page numbers and reference carefully) and get out fast. You don't want to waste time admiring anything too large to carry off—if you can't make it relevant to your topic, then cut and run with just what will fit. You might note what interests you in case you get a chance to return some other time, but you need to stay alert and get out as fast as possible.

Of course it makes sense to spend time in text that is enjoyable or valuable—it's one of the pleasures of being academic. But I recommend a smash and grab approach because most doctoral students are overwhelmed by *how much* literature is out there.

Many students are reading in a language other than their first language, so the tsunami of what needs to be read is terrifying, sometimes literally sickening. Even when your first language is English, academic writing is pretty challenging to read and digest. It is too seldom pleasurable.

It is common to suggest to doctoral students that when reading they skim, skip, or speed-read first to identify what must (groan) be attentively read cover to cover and possibly re-read. The home invasion metaphor version of sullying into literature cheers me up because it is rowdier and less doggedly systematic than 'skim, skip, speed-read.' Students cheer up with the thought of pillage…you are *not* at the mercy of other authors and can assume Kamler and Thomson's (2014) hands on hips approach. And it captures that muscling in required to psych yourself up as a reviewer of literature who has control.

The metaphor extends: while you are making this grab-and-go, check out the décor. When you find academic writing that is a pleasure to read, often this is because it does something special stylistically. We often learn how to improve our own writing by looking closely at how others achieve eloquence.

When we teach, although it is crucial to explain the various academic requirements and the ways writing demonstrates meeting them, we also suggest ways to make tedious work seem doable. Humour and irreverence help to keep doctoral writing grounded in reality.

Crafting Conclusions—More Than a Summary of Research

Cally Guerin

Working with a student in the final throes of completing his thesis, I was recently reminded about the importance of writing Conclusions. This very challenging part of thesis writing comes at the point when the Ph.D. candidate is often exhausted by the whole process of the research degree, under enormous pressure to meet deadlines, and even heartily sick of the topic.

The concluding chapter of a Ph.D. thesis is often surprisingly short—sometimes no more than 6–10 pages. Perhaps this reflects the exhaustion mentioned above. Yet the Conclusion plays a crucial role for the reader in reflecting back on the entire project. Of course, the thesis 'readers' are the examiners: Mullins and Kiley (2002) make it very clear that it is dangerous if an examiner reaches the end of the thesis and feels unsure what it was all about. The Conclusion needs to make it impossible to miss what this thesis contributes to knowledge in the discipline, explicitly stating and drawing attention to the central message of the whole project.

It can be very helpful to go back to the original aims/objectives/hypotheses outlined in the Introduction to show how each research question set up at the beginning has now been answered. Repeating those initial questions in the Conclusion can make it easy for the reader/examiner to see that the research has indeed achieved what it set out to do. Depending on the disciplinary conventions, presenting the aims or questions as numbered statements or dot points—as a kind of checklist—can highlight that each of these points has been addressed.

In situations where the thesis is presented as a collection of articles, the Conclusion is even more important in its power to bring together a coherent, unified whole. Even though each article/chapter has its own Conclusion (sometimes just the last paragraph of the Discussion section, depending on the intended journal), the Conclusion of the thesis needs to do meta-level work on top of summarising the findings.

This is the moment in every thesis to address the implications of those findings—the 'so what?' question. What does it all mean? Why does it matter? Finally, after all that work, it becomes clear where the whole argument is going to end up.

In the process of reflecting on the overarching meaning of the research, it may be necessary to return to the previous chapters and scrutinise what has been presented there. Sometimes it is necessary to adjust the content or interpretation of earlier work in light of what is known at the end. The emphasis may have shifted for the overall project along the way, rendering some passages of writing redundant or others requiring more prominence.

I particularly like the idea that the thesis needs to end on a strong note. One exercise I do in writing groups is to look at the final sentence in several theses—sometimes a very illuminating insight into the state of mind of the candidates at the end of their projects.

There is a lot of useful advice on Conclusions available in academic writing textbooks. Paltridge and Starfield (2007) have a very useful chapter that I'd recommend

for all doctoral writers (not just those writing in a second language, as the book title suggests). They include some good pointers about identifying the limitations of the research and therefore being wary of how grand the claims can be now that the evidence has been presented throughout the thesis. They also give valuable language tips.

How to Make a Great Conclusion

Claire Aitchison

I love a good Conclusion. There's nothing more satisfying than reading a good paper that finishes strongly, but what a let-down when there is a poor—or non-existent—Conclusion!

We know that most of us read the Abstract, scan the Introduction and then move quickly to the Discussion and Conclusion sections when we read research papers (Feak & Swales, 2011, p. 40). Whether it is a thesis or journal article, the Conclusion is really important, so how can we make sure it's as great as it can be?

I think there are some useful processes that can help ensure a successful Conclusion. Because a Ph.D. thesis is such a long time in the making, it is useful to begin building the Conclusion chapter over months and years—at least from the time data are being collected and analysed. I suggest the following steps.

Build a 'Conclusions Bank'

1. From mid-stage in your Ph.D. make a new file called 'The Conclusions Bank' and throw into it inspirations and 'big ideas' as you construct your thesis. For example, this is the place you can dump insights that come to you during data analysis or when reading the literature, and it's a good place to store chapter leftovers.

Don't worry about organising this information until you have finished all your data chapters and you are ready to begin your Conclusion. It can be an absolute delight to find this treasure trove of ideas as you run out of energy and inspiration towards the end of your candidature.

Within the Conclusions Bank, make a separate section into which you copy and paste each of the Conclusion sections from each of your chapters as you write them. Having these together enables you to better synthesise these parts and see the big picture required to make the 'big claims for significance'. Remember that a key task of a Conclusion is to identify what it is that makes the whole greater than the sum of the parts. It's a big job for a totally blank page and an exhausted mind!

2. At some point toward the end of your writing, remove yourself from your work and freewrite (Elbow, 1998) to these questions:

- *So, what have I found*—and why does it matter?
- *What do I know now, that I didn't know before* (e.g., before I read the literature or before I collected and analysed the data)?
- *Who cares?/Who should care?* (e.g., are these things of value for practitioners, for policy or theory, for improving how we collect or analyse data)?

- *What do I know that no one else knows?* (e.g., things that arise from my unique context or data sets).

The Disappointing Conclusion

As an editor or examiner, one of the most common failings I come across is a Conclusion that looks and reads as if the author has run out of steam. The Conclusion is way too brief, sloppily written—and incredibly disappointing. Some examples include:

- a failure to overview the whole project, perhaps just focusing on one aspect;
- a collection of statements disconnected from the literature;
- 'soap box' announcements or imperatives for action that don't necessarily flow from the evidence presented. For example, chest beating on issues not at all substantiated by the research: 'Thus teachers should blah blah blah…';
- a lazy reiteration (even duplication) of statements from the Abstract or the Introduction;
- a bland re-summarising of the research and/or listing of findings that lacks finesse and nuance;

- a failure to highlight the 'take-home message'—be that the key argument, key finding(s) or implications.

What a Conclusion Should Do

Remember that a Conclusion may be read as a stand-alone item. So it needs to inform the reader of what was done, how and why, what was found, and why it matters. It can be a challenge to reiterate all of this succinctly and without boring repetition; nevertheless, that's the task of the Conclusion.

Conclusions should do some, or all, of the following:

- remind the reader of the research problem and purpose, and how they were addressed;
- briefly summarise what has been covered in the thesis;
- make some kind of holistic assessment/judgement/claim that pertains to the whole project (i.e., more than a descriptive summary);
- assess the value/relevance/ implications of the key findings in light of existing studies and literature;
- 'speak' to the Introduction;
- outline implications of the study (for theory, practice, further research);
- comment on the findings that failed to support or only partially support the hypothesis or research questions directing the study;
- refer to the limitations of the studies that may affect the validity or the generalisability of results;

- make recommendations for further research;
- make claims for new knowledge/contribution to knowledge.

(Adapted from Belcher, 2009; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007; Swales & Feak, 1994.)

How is a Conclusion Organised?

A Conclusion is sometimes described as a mirror image of the Introduction, in that it moves from the particular to the general. There is another sense in which the Discussion and Conclusion section is the reverse of the Introduction: an Introduction contains extended discussions on the previous existing research and literature on the topic, and relatively little on the current research. In the Conclusion section, the new research, positioned against existing knowledge, is the primary focus. In the concluding section, existing literature and previous research is used for confirmation, comparison or contradistinction (Swales, 2004 cited in Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 147).

Every thesis is different and writers need to decide what suits their particular needs, writing style and methodological approach; however, being aware of common patterns and genres can help writers make judicious decisions to suit their own thesis. We know, for example, a Conclusion section in a thesis commonly follows these moves:

- an introductory restatement of research problem, aims and/or research question;
- a summary of findings and limitations;
- practical applications/implications;
- recommendations for further research.

Given that we know that the Abstract, Introduction and Conclusion are often the only parts readers bother with, it is essential that the Conclusion *concludes* the paper in a succinct and punchy fashion. You want it to have authority and impact. You want quotable sentences. So don't leave it too late to try strategies like those suggested so that you can maximise your changes of ending on a high.

My Questions Now: Preparing a Thesis Conclusion

Cally Guerin

The Conclusion is the moment when examiners are assessing whether the whole text has persuaded them that, yes, this thesis makes an original and significant contribution to knowledge and is therefore worth a Ph.D. Yet, as Trafford, Lesham, and Bitzer (2014) point out, a surprising number of theses fail to make a direct statement about the originality of the research and its contribution. While it is still possible to succeed in exhibiting 'doctorateness' without fulfilling the standard requirements, why not make it as easy as possible for examiners to see that the thesis meets the established criteria? The Conclusion needs to state what can be ***deduced or inferred*** from the material presented.

As Wisker puts it in *The Good Supervisor* (2012, pp. 431–432), the Conclusion ought to 'clarify the effects and the importance of what has been found, what it means, why it matters and what might be done with it'. I want to add a series of questions that might be used to think through the significance and implications of the research.

Conclusions can be particularly challenging for students working on a thesis by publication, or a thesis in which each chapter reports on a separate experiment, case study or (as in mixed methods research) approach to the central research question. I devised the following series of questions to guide doctoral writers in thinking through the big picture and reaching conclusions about their research.

- What is the relationship between the various studies? What is the most important idea to come out of Study 1a and out of 1b? And then what is the overall message from all that information and analysis?
- What did Study 2 then add to our understanding?
- What did we learn from Study 3 to add to that?
- Now that we know all of this, what does the world need to know about this topic overall?
- What is new about this thesis? What do we now know that we didn't know when you started?
- Why is it important? And what policy recommendations do you want to make now that you know these new things?
- What excites you about what you have learnt during this research? What was surprising? What do you care about, and what do you want others to understand now?

A structure for thinking through the issues can be helpful, especially when so many doctoral writers are exhausted when they get to the end of their projects (the requirement to write a confident final sentence to leave resonating in the examiner's mind might seem like an impossible task!).

The Last Word in Doctoral Writing: Mechanics of Last Sentence Rhetoric

Susan Carter

In a recent writing class, we gathered the last sentences of journal articles that participants thought were really strong, and analysed why they worked so well. This exercise focuses on the mechanics of language for rhetorical force, something that takes doctoral students into a healthy space as they develop their writing's style and voice.

The last sentence of any article, thesis, chapter has an important role: farewelling readers in a way that is likable and memorable. Readers should leave convinced of the take-home message, and, preferably, impressed enough to cite it.

The group included people from STEM and non-STEM disciplines—we were well aware by this stage that there were disciplinary differences in preferences for academic writing style. Group analysis defined the rhetorical mechanics of what we liked, and why. So what did we like as an inter-disciplinary group?

Short sentences with short words in them were recommended for their power. Rhetorically, they really did have a sense of finality. One last sentence, '*Nothing else seems to be on offer*' (Young & Muller, 2014, p. 63), had a gloomy touch of realism, but also shrewdly suggested that the topic needed more research. We liked the use of a common truism for the final sentence.

'Poised' and 'pursued' drew approval for this last sentence: 'Patient-centred outcomes research is poised to substantially change how clinical questions are asked, how answers are pursued, and how those answers are used' (Frank, Basch & Selby, 2014, p. 1514). The reader liked 'the persuasive and goal-directed tone that would have helped some fairly die-hard 'positivists' see value in stepping out of their comfort zones'. We liked the counter-balance between the instability of being 'poised' and the massiveness of 'to substantially change': a dramatic pivotal moment of consequence makes a good cliff-hanger closure.

Our list of last sentence rhetorical strategies to date, then, coming from a fairly small group, includes:

- punchy, short, pithy;
- evocative vocabulary;
- rhythmic and rap-like;
- cliff-hanger tension;
- pointing to the future.

Within that group, people from all disciplines found this a helpful exercise as they approached building a firm ending to their articles or chapters.

Preparing Your Thesis for Submission: What to Look for When Editing at the Whole-of-Document Level

Cally Guerin

There is a lot of good advice available about editing and proofreading. In Australia, the Institute of Professional Editors has very detailed information about the kinds of details that professional editors look for, including the *Australian standards for editing practice*. This list and the 'Levels of Editing' link provide a really helpful range of elements that should be checked before submitting a work for examination or publication.

While many writers think 'editing' relates to clarity of expression, grammar and punctuation, there is another whole area of thesis editing: the formatting and layout

of the whole document. The unity and consistency at the whole-of-document level might seem less important than all those words explaining the theory, methods, findings and conclusions; however, I think it's essential to recognise that the visual elements of the writing affect the reader. Just as a paragraph break at the wrong moment can create misunderstanding about how the information fits together, so, too, a sub-sub-heading that looks like a sub-heading can result in misinterpretation of the significance of the material. But it's very difficult to notice these issues when reading for sense and clarity, or correcting grammar—it must be undertaken as a separate stage of the editing/proofreading process.

I've been working on a checklist for the details that need to be in place at the level of the whole document.

1. *Completeness*: Are all the necessary parts actually present in the document and in order? For example, are there any missing sections from chapters, and have all appendices been included and accurately numbered? Is this definitely the most recent version of the document? Have all changes have been included and integrated into the document?
2. *Formatting*: Is the layout consistent? Check margins, indents, spacing between paragraphs, spacing after full stops.
3. *Headings and subheadings*: Do they all exactly match the Table of Contents? Is it easy to visually distinguish between levels? Is the font and size consistent across heading levels in different chapters?
4. *References*: Are all the references in the text also in the bibliography, and vice versa? Are they all accurate and complete? (Note that bibliographic software is not unerringly reliable.)
5. *Illustrations/Tables/Graphs*: Is there consistent formatting of captions? Check the font and size as well as the layout. Then check capitalising and abbreviations (e.g., Fig. or Figure) are also consistent. Are captions consistent with any text inside the graphic? Check numbering of tables and figures is in order with no numbers left out. READ the text inside each graphic for accuracy, spelling and grammar (it's amazing how often there are errors inside the tables).
6. *Page numbering*: Is cross-referencing between chapters accurate? Check numbering follows correctly between chapters if working on individual documents.

Of course, working with a template from the beginning can solve some of these issues, but even so, changes and revisions can introduce mistakes over the years of writing a Ph.D. It's worth checking that all is in order: examination is likely to be much less stressful when there is certainty on submission that the formatting is consistent.

Reading Theses to Write a Thesis

Cally Guerin

One of the major challenges of doctoral writing is that a thesis doesn't usually look much like the texts that Ph.D. candidates read. For many students, the first six months or so is spent reading masses of articles, chapters and books. Then they turn their attention to writing a markedly different genre. Even for those writing a thesis by publication, the document submitted for examination includes sections that do not resemble what they have been reading during candidature.
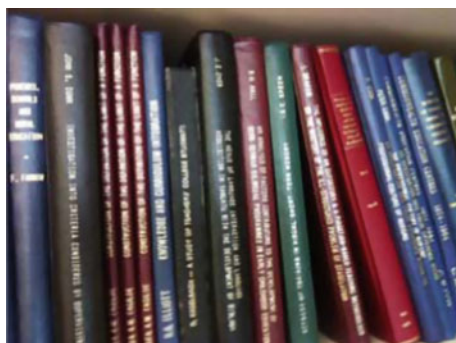
Photo by Cally Guerin

Usually there is much more information about methods in a thesis than is common in the articles published by most disciplines. Some disciplines accommodate the basic science-based IMRAD model (Introduction, Materials and Method, Results, Analysis and Discussion) for the thesis, but this is not relevant everywhere; instead, choices need to be made about the number and order of chapters. Judgements need to be made about what works as a separate chapter compared to what sections are better combined into one chapter—and if combined, how much space or how many words should be allowed for each section? Does the concept of a chapter labelled 'Literature Review' work for this project? Or does literature need to be threaded throughout the thesis where relevant? There is no set number of chapters, and every project will take its own shape.

It can be useful to encourage students to read a few recently examined theses by other candidates in their field. While it is also helpful for students to read their own supervisor's thesis (as is often recommended by supervisors), sometimes they are so old that the options and university regulations for presentation have changed considerably since they were submitted. The questions below can help current students notice various features of theses.

1. Is the Table of Contents formatted to ensure that the story of the research leaps off the page? What makes contents pages easy or hard to read? Is it obvious at a glance where each new chapter begins? How are the levels of subheadings

indicated—with indenting, bold and/or italics? How is capitalisation used? Is there a line of dots leading to the page number?

2. What do individual thesis pages look like? Is the font big enough, are the margins wide enough and the space between lines appropriate? Is there too much or too little white space on the page? Some universities provide a template but many candidates need to develop their own.

3. Is there a separate short Introduction outlining the project before the first big, substantial chapter? Or does the Introduction include much of the Literature Review?

4. Are all chapters the same length? (Hint: they don't have to be—sometimes it makes sense to include a shorter section that stands alone.)

5. What is going on in the Conclusion for the whole thesis? Does it simply summarise what's already been said in the chapters, or is there a whole lot more included here?

6. Is this thesis perfect, or simply good enough to have been awarded the degree?

Reading other people's theses is a very useful strategy to help authors focus on the elements that distinguish a thesis from other genres. After all, it can be very difficult to write something without a clear sense of what the end-product needs to look like in terms of shape and content.

Choosing the Examiner: It's in Everyone's Interests to Get Students Involved

Claire Aitchison

In Australia, as in many other countries, doctoral examination is a 'single blind' peer review process: the examiner is given the name of the candidate whose work they are examining, while the Ph.D. student is blind to who their examiners are, until afterwards—if at all. (Examiners are often given the option to retain their anonymity even after the outcome and examiner reports have been submitted.) While students may never know the identity of their examiners, and each examiner operates without knowledge of the other(s), the supervisor is intimately involved in examiner selection.

Rules and practices around examination vary but, in most cases, it is the supervisor who approaches potential examiners to inquire if they are interested and available to examine a student's work. Generally in that initial inquiry, the supervisor sends the thesis Abstract and an estimation of when the work may be ready for examination. Once potential examiners are locked in, the Grad School then handles the process. There are strict provisions that neither students nor examiners are to make contact with each other, and breaches can derail the whole process.

But just because a student doesn't have direct knowledge of their examiners doesn't mean that they shouldn't be involved in discussions about potential examiners. Selecting the best examiner is in everyone's best interests, and that is why many supervisors actively seek input from their students about examiner preferences.

Getting the Right Examiner

There's plenty of good information that relates to choosing an examiner. Kiley (2009) usefully points to the importance of considering the reputation of the examiner, their knowledge of the topic and 'fit' with the methodology, their capacity to benefit the candidate's career, their examination experience, and knowledge of the type of degree (i.e., professional doctorate, creative practice-led degrees and so on).

Here's a quick round-up of key considerations:

1. Think about how a potential examiner may be helpful for the student's future career. For example, if the student has a strong interest in working in a particular country, research centre or institution, an examiner from such a location could be advantageous.
2. Examiner perspectives may be worth closer attention. For example, consider the benefits and cautions regarding disciplinary expertise versus industry expertise, experience of the genre (e.g., Thesis by Publication) versus disciplinary expertise, novice versus experienced examiners.
3. Identify the strengths of the research and thesis—and play to these in choosing the examiner.
4. Consider the *mix of examiners* that will produce the best coverage of key aspects, such as the field, methodology, industry knowledge and thesis type.
5. Apart from these professional components, consider also examiner personality: 'You don't want a smart Alec' for an examiner! (Kiley, 2009, p. 889—titular).

But what can be done with this information?

A Four-Step Process for Considering Examiners

Here's one process for how a student might take an active role in the process of choosing an examiner.

1. Three to four months out from submission, arrange a special supervision meeting to discuss possible examiners.
2. Prior to the meeting, students should list six to eight possible examiners from most favoured to least—plus any they would not want. Don't neglect the importance of *ruling out unsuitable people* (maybe someone's work is admirable, but they have a reputation for being ruthless, or maybe there's the potential for a conflict of interest). Supervisors should also think about suitable examiners.
3. At the meeting, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the listed individuals for the particular thesis and research to be examined. Such discussions can illustrate the issues at stake and demonstrate how the process works, giving students valuable insights into the academic world.
4. Then it's time to do some homework in preparation for a follow-up meeting.

- Both student and supervisor(s) should (carefully and appropriately) collect 'insider' information on the shortlisted favourites. The academic world is small and highly networked. For example, it can be helpful to know if a potential examiner is reliable, if they have a reputation for being pedantic, or if they are married to a major competitor of your research institute!
- Ask the student to search their whole thesis recording (rather than guessing) every reference to the potential examiner and their work. This activity creates an empirical account of how often, where, and in what ways, citations have occurred in the document. It's not that every examiner needs to see themselves cited; however, it would be curious to choose an examiner that wasn't part of the community of scholars referenced in the thesis. Secondly, the student needs to check that they have correctly interpreted/critiqued/referenced each of these potential examiners and their work. Ask the student to think about how those who have been referenced will feel when they read what's been said about them and others (possibly their friends and colleagues).
- At the second meeting everyone should have the chance to share their home-work and air their views, and hopefully, through discussion, arrive at general agreement on a short list of favourites. In the end, however, it's important to remember that the choice of examiners is the responsibility of the supervisor(s)—and even then, despite their best efforts, a favourite may be unavailable or unsuitable for one reason or another.

Even where institutional guidelines are strict about the examiners' identity remaining confidential, these supervisory practices provide clear benefits. Students are given the chance to critically re-examine their own work from an examiner's perspective and they learn more about the often-occluded practices of the academy. Supervisors get assistance with the difficult task of finding the best match of examiners to suit their student's work.

In spite of the fact that the student will leave these discussions still not knowing who their examiners are, they will have learned by engaging in the process—and no doubt will have contributed to the final decision.

References

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. (2007). Retrieved from https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2007.

Belcher, W. (2009). *Writing your journal article in 12 weeks: A guide to academic publishing success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cargill, M., & O'Connor, P. (2009). *Writing scientific research articles: Strategy and steps*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Carter, S. (2011). Doctorate as genre: Supporting thesis writing across campus. *Higher Education Research and Development, 30*(6), 725–736.

Carter, S., Kelly, F., & Brailsford, I. (2012). *Structuring your research thesis*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundation of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London, UK: Sage Publications.

Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing without teachers*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Feak, C. B., & Swales, J. M. (2011). *Creating contexts: Writing introductions across genres.* Retrieved from https://www.press.umich.edu/elt/compsite/ETRW/9780472034567-commentary.pdf.

Frank, L., Basch, E., & Selby, J. V. (2014). The PCORI perspective on patient-centered outcomes research. *JAMA Network Open, 312*(15), 1513–1514. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2014.11100.

Glatthorn, A. A. (1998). *Writing the winning dissertation: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Goodson, P. (2016). *Becoming an academic writer: 50 exercises for paced, productive, and powerful writing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2014). *'They say / I say': The moves that matter in academic writing*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science imagination*. London: Sage.

Holbrook, A., Bourke, S., Fairbairn, H., & Lovat, T. (2007). Examiner comment on the literature review in PhD theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 32*(3), 337–356.

Johnston, S. (1997). Examining the examiners: An analysis of examiners' reports on doctoral theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 22*(3), 333–347.

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2014). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision* (2nd ed.). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Kempe, S. (2005). A conversation on conversation: A research journey with Professor Anne Sigismund Huff. *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management, 11*(2), 4–12.

Kiley, M. (2009). 'You don't want a smart Alec': Selecting examiners to assess doctoral dissertations. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*(8), 889–903.

MacLure, M. (2010). The offence of theory. *Journal of Education Policy*, *25*(2), 277–286. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930903462316.

MacLure, M. (2013). The wonder of data. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 13*(4), 228–232.

Mullins, G., & Kiley, M. (2002). 'It's a PhD, not a Nobel Prize': How experienced examiners assess research theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 27*(4), 369–386. https://doi.org/10.1080/0307507022000011507.

Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London, UK: Routledge.

Poulsen, A. K. I. (2009). Another way with words: Language as twentieth-century art practice. Doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Rankin, E. (2001). *The work of writing: Insights and strategies for academics and professionals*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Reeves, M. (2000). Telling the tale of the rise of the novel. *Clio: A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History, 30*(1, Fall), 25–49.

Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (1994, 1996, 2004). *Academic writing for graduate students.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. (2000). *English in today's research world: A writing guide*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Swedberg, R. (2012). Theorizing in sociology and social science: To the context of discovery. *Theory and Society, 41*(1), 1–40. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-011-9161-5.

Tinkler, P., & Jackson, C. (2004). *The doctoral examination process: A handbook for students, examiners and supervisors*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Trafford, V., & Leshem, S. (2002). Starting at the end to undertake doctoral research: Predictable questions as stepping stones. *Higher Education Review, 34*(4), 43–61.

Trafford, V., Leshem, S., & Bitzer, E. (2014). Conclusion chapters in doctoral theses: Some international findings. *Higher Education Review, 46*(3), 52–81.

White, B. (2011). *Mapping your thesis: The comprehensive manual of theory and techniques for masters and doctoral research*. London, UK: ACER.

Wisker, G. (2005). *The good supervisor: Supervising postgraduate and undergraduate research for doctoral theses and dissertations*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wisker, G. (2012). *The good supervisor: Supervising postgraduate and undergraduate research for doctoral theses and dissertations* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Macmillan International Higher Education.

Young, M., & Muller, J. (2014). On the powers of powerful knowledge. In E. Rata & B. Barrett (Eds.), *Knowledge and the future of the curriculum: International studies in social realism* (pp. 41–64). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

Zeiger, M. (2000). *Essentials of writing biomedical research papers* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Chapter 6
Disseminating Research

Now all that research has been written about, it needs to find its way to a wider audience. This chapter focuses on publishing processes, including peer review and co-authorship; touches upon how these relate to future careers; and considers some of the other writing genres doctoral writers produce outside the thesis itself. While doctoral writers must prepare some kind of written document for examination, they also need to learn about the broader dissemination of their research in a variety of written (and spoken) formats. For some doctoral writers, this aspect of research communication is embedded in the doctoral programme or provided by supervisors as a necessary part of research training; others find they must seek out their own opportunities to learn about the nuances of writing for audiences beyond their supervisors and examiners. Here we reflect on the pedagogies of publication and the opportunities afforded by participating in all aspects of publishing research, including the learning that comes from co-authoring. Beyond the desire to have an impact in the real world, a key reason to disseminate research is to build a reputation as a scholar and researcher in the field. This final chapter leads doctoral writers beyond the thesis into the wider world of research dissemination.

Publishing Processes and Peer Review

Supervising Student Publishing During Doctoral Candidature

Claire Aitchison

In some disciplines, especially in the hard sciences, publishing during the doctorate has a long history of well-established practices. I have worked with students involved in water-management research which consisted of a number of individual case studies and experiments conducted sequentially over the course of candidature. Each of these smaller projects was described as a complete, separate study containing an account

of the relevant literature, research question, methodological approach and findings. This system enabled the researcher to write the chapter and journal publication in tandem as their research progressed; it also facilitated post-completion publications and minimised major rewriting.

In another instance, a supervisor insisted her nursing students did a systematic review of the literature, requiring it to be written and submitted as a publication. With very little additional work, this output then becomes the literature review chapter of the thesis. For this supervisor, 'writing for publication' is a key pedagogical practice that facilitates student learning of the relevant literature, the methodology, and of the scholarly and publication practices of the field.

As more institutions have adopted various Ph.D.-by-publication models, many such practices have become explicit and formalised, making reworking of thesis chapters into publications redundant. However, not all supervisors are necessarily well tuned to such approaches and, of course, not all research projects are suitable. In addition, some supervisors may not regard student publishing during the doctorate as a high priority, or may have concerns about competing demands on their own and/or their student's availability.

In the humanities and social sciences there's less tradition of publishing during candidature; even 10 years ago, this was rare. Hence, supervisors in humanities and social sciences are less likely to co-author with their doctoral students than we see in lab-based, large-scale science research; instead, doctoral study is mostly an individual enterprise. The vast majority of supervisors saw their job as assisting students to do the research and write the examinable thesis. Now, many more supervisors in these disciplines see writing for publication as a component of doctoral study.

But supervising doctoral students to write for publication can be a difficult, labour-intensive challenge. Why would supervisors be interested in taking up the extra work required to support a student wishing to publish during candidature?

There is an understandable hesitation on the part of those who are supervising students already struggling with their doctorate. It's not uncommon to hear supervisors speak about the heavy workload involved in simply getting a student to fulfil the basic requirements for completion. Where the doctoral degree does not require researchers to publish, and where supervisors will not be co-authors, should a supervisor feel obliged to help with the additional work of publication?

I know students in the humanities and social sciences often feel awkward and hesitate to ask for their supervisors' assistance in their publication ambitions. And yet most students these days want to publish; at a minimum, they see it as a career imperative. How can we acknowledge and respond to this desire? We need to ask: what are our roles and obligations regarding students who want to publish?

Journal Article or Book Chapter?

Cally Guerin

In the context of trying to find out more about theses by publication, I've been reflecting on where doctoral students might place their publications. What are the differences between the genres of journal articles and book chapters in edited collections? Are these differences significant and, if so, how? If we are to support doctoral candidates in their writing, it can be useful to have considered the different opportunities these genres offer, especially if we are advising students to publish their research.

It seems that, in Education research at least, writing for peer-reviewed journals places different constraints on what we might write about, and how we might go about it. When sending something off for double-blind review by a journal, I notice that I'm more inclined to 'play it safe'. It's necessary to please any possible reader imaginable, as there is no control over who might make a decision about the article. This means the paper often ends up taking the form of a traditional 'scientific' paper reporting on empirical research, and using the IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results, Analysis, and Discussion) structure. Even so, I can't seem to keep the results and discussion separate in qualitative research—it just doesn't make sense in my writing.

In contrast, book chapters in edited collections seem to allow for rather more risks. Book chapters allow more space for reflection on bigger ideas than journal articles, and a little more licence to be adventurous in the approach to the topic. Perhaps this is partly because, again in Education research, the essay form is more common in book chapters than in journal articles. As part of an edited collection, these chapters don't need to stand alone in the way that articles usually do, even in special issues; rather, they sit alongside other chapters exploring closely related issues. This often allows for some cross-referencing between chapters, so that each chapter doesn't need to say absolutely everything on the topic, and the ideas can expand out beyond the individual chapter. Here, a quite distinctive, personally inflected contribution can be valued for the fact that it adds to the composite whole. It also seems that those reviewing the chapter, the editors and possibly other contributors to the collection, are likely to be more empathetic readers in terms of their interests and concerns. I'm not suggesting that this necessarily makes it an easier option, but it does feel less like writing into the black void of the unknown.

Thomson (2013) makes a good case for the advantages of book chapters, but there is some debate about the usefulness of articles versus chapters in terms of citations and profiling (see Anderson 2012 in 'The Scholarly Kitchen' blog and Deevybee 2012 in 'BishopBlog'). While these arguments against book chapters may become less and less valid as e-books become more visible through standard search engines, doctoral candidates should at least be aware of these other elements in the equation. When thinking about a thesis by publication or publishing from a traditional thesis, concerns about building a research profile and becoming known in the field should play a part in the decision.

Peer Review: What's the Fuss?

Cally Guerin

Ph.D. students are often encouraged to publish their research in academic journals, but it can be daunting to submit work to an unknown audience for judgement. Everyone has stories about receiving harsh, unfair reviews from journals. However much we try to tell ourselves and our students that 'it isn't personal', it *does* feel personal at the time of getting negative responses. As Chanock (2008) amusingly points out, the process can feel rather like going through the stages of grief—but in this case, it's the Seven Stages of Resentment. Of course she is being ironic, but there is more than a hint of truth in what she says.

Despite the problems with peer review, it underpins most academic work as the usual process from assessing grant applications through to publishing the results of those grants. It seems to be the best system we can come up with. So what are the problems?

One of the challenges in the system of peer review is the long delays this process can incur. It can be difficult for journal editors to find suitable, willing reviewers. Not only do many academics find themselves confronting ever-increasing workloads in their official jobs but, in most disciplines, they are asked to do this extra work for no pay and no recognition by their institution. Editors must rely on the 'gift economy' operating in academia, hoping that reviewers will believe that what goes around, comes around—by doing their share of reviewing, someone else will review their own article when they later submit to a journal. Delays occur when well-meaning reviewers agree to do the work, and then find themselves overwhelmed by other tasks and responsibilities. From an editor's point of view, very subtle nagging skills are needed to coax this voluntary work out of reviewers; from an author's point of view, a great deal might be hanging on the outcome of the review.

And how helpful are those reviews when they finally arrive? In most areas, the standard practice is blind review—double (where the identities of both author and reviewer are anonymous) or single (where the identity of the reviewer is unknown to the author). In theory, this anonymity sensibly protects reviewers so that they can be frank about their assessment without risking damage to their own careers. Unfortunately, this anonymity sometimes allows those reviewers to be vicious in ways that they might consider highly inappropriate if they were to speak openly to the authors.

Whether the reviews are positive or negative, they are really just two or three people's points of view—a fourth reviewer may want something else again. It's perfectly possible to get contradictory reports: there is always an element of chance in what ends up getting published. Even with the best intentions to be objective and constructive, reviewers can submit entirely different reviews of the same piece of research—they may have particular interests, specialised knowledge, or be focused on different aspects of the writing.

There are moves afoot to try to solve at least some of the weaknesses of peer review. One response has been to implement processes of 'open review', that is, where the identity of the reviewer is made public and the reviews themselves are published. While this might encourage more courteous behaviour on the part of the reviewer, the potential risks associated with a junior researcher criticising someone with a big reputation in their field remains. In some disciplines, everyone has a pretty good idea of what projects are being undertaken by other research groups and where the funding went, so that author identity is a matter of informed guesswork if not overtly known; in these situations, open review dispenses with the pretence of author anonymity.

Post-publication review (Jump, 2014) is another model that might be useful. This allows publication of research and then invites anyone who is interested in the topic to review the work. Such an approach fits well with contemporary practices of commenting on social media. While this system might draw some ill-considered reviews and may or may not be anonymous, on the whole it seems a good way of encouraging debate and ongoing conversations in the field.

In an era when research output is endlessly measured and quantified, the work of reviewing that output could, perhaps, also be measured in order to provide reviewers with more reward for their effort. Publons is one organisation making it possible for reviewers to get some credit for the work they put into reviewing; another is the 'R-index' suggested by Gero and Cantor (2015). These are both ways of recognising the work of reviewing as having a measurable 'impact' and contribution to the development of the discipline and the dissemination of knowledge.

All these concerns are becoming ever more pressing as the move towards open access gains momentum. As the whole landscape of academic publishing changes, these are important questions for all researchers, and pose major challenges for doctoral candidates, their supervisors and learning advisors supporting them.

Reviewing Can Help, If You Want to Learn How to Publish

Claire Aitchison

Reviewing can be useful as a stepping-stone pedagogy for learning to write for publication. Volunteering to review seems like giving oneself more work—true, but doing scholarly peer review can help develop publication skills, know-how, confidence and competence.

Anyone who has received reviewer feedback on their manuscript submissions is likely to have wondered about the reviewing process—and perhaps wondered about the value of doing some reviewing themselves. At an intuitive level, it's seductive to imagine that reviewing would provide insider knowledge that might benefit our writing and publication skills.

What's to Be Gained from Doing Peer Review?

- *Improve your writing.* Critically focusing on someone else's writing can sharpen your awareness of your own writing foibles, idiosyncrasies and strengths.
- *Develop self-editing skills.* Taking a critical eye to other people's writing helps develop self-editing skills when you apply the same reviewing and editing processes to your own work.
- *Up-to-date knowledge.* As a reviewer you get access to the latest research, trends and debates in your field months, even years, ahead of publication.
- *Publication know-how.* Being inside the system as a reviewer provides valuable insights: forewarned is forearmed. If you are aware of what a reviewer is expected to do, what they might look for, and how they might judge manuscripts, you are more likely to avoid such pitfalls yourself.

If you are using scholarly peer review as a strategy for learning, then seek out those journals that circulate the comments of each of the manuscript reviewers. I have certainly found this practice illuminating; it can be confirming to see other reviewers identify the same issues, and informative when they attend to quite different aspects in the paper.

How to Build Competencies for Scholarly Reviewing
As an editor of a scholarly academic journal, and as an academic author, I have come across inept reviewers whose critiques have been unacceptable. While many people learn by trial and error, my own view (particularly informed through my editor role) is that it's preferable to develop some key skills and competencies *before* taking on peer reviewing for scholarly journals.

Here are some suggestions for becoming a good reviewer.

- *Begin small.* If you've been to a particular conference a couple of times, and especially if you have presented a paper at that conference, then volunteering to review conference abstracts can be a great way to learn the ropes. Most conference organisers are keen to find reviewers for the hundreds of abstracts they receive. Reviewing abstracts for conferences is generally a well-supported and manageable task whereby the reviewer is asked to judge a submitted abstract against criteria such as relevance to the conference theme, theoretical or methodological soundness, and interest level.
- *Begin local.* One of the best ways to build reviewer skills is to join a writing group where members review each other's work regularly. Writing group peer reviewing enables participants to hone skills for identifying strengths and weaknesses in manuscripts and articulating those judgements in respectful ways. Furthermore, in a writing group, members can learn from reviewing AND can compare and discuss their feedback against that of other group members.
- *Find a mentor.* Supervisors and more experienced colleagues can be fantastic allies for learning reviewing practices. Having someone to talk over reviewing experiences, especially difficulties and challenges, can be invaluable. Obviously, high levels of trust and sensitivity are necessary to maintain the confidentiality required of blind reviewing.

Reviewing so often happens in a vacuum, in secret, and in isolation because of the requirements of blind review. But the very secretive and occluded nature of peer review is exactly what accounts for some of its biggest failings—not the least of which is the limited opportunities to find out about, discuss, debate and practise scholarly review.

I hope some of the issues raised here provide at least some avenues for us to begin to debunk the unnecessary mystery that shrouds the practices of scholarly review—and, importantly, help us build good reviewing practices.

Reviewing Conundrums: Is This a MAJOR or MINOR Revision?

Claire Aitchison

I was stuck in a conundrum—ready to submit my carefully worded review of a manuscript for a well-known scholarly journal, but uncertain whether I should tick 'major' or 'minor' revision required. And this isn't the first time I've found this decision difficult. What might be considered a minor revision for one person could be major for another.

In this particular example, my request didn't require more than a small paragraph of additional writing, plus some well-placed rhetorical sentences. In that sense I was looking for a relatively minor change to the text—the article didn't need major rewriting or restructuring. There was nothing inherently wrong with the paper. The author had a really interesting and valuable contribution to make. They had a sound argument and had nominated appropriate theoretical and methodological frames, and they had great data.

In essence I had two requests: I was asking for some clarification about the methodology which could be satisfied in one or two sentences. This was a relatively small ask if the author was familiar with the nominated method. My second request was that they explicitly integrate the theoretical frame they claimed to be using in their data analysis. Now, if the author wasn't really familiar with the theory, then in order to respond to this criticism, they would need to do some new reading and thinking. In this case, therefore, they would need to undertake some major work in order to prepare the revision—even though the revision itself may only involve 200 words.

So back to my role as a reviewer—do I tick the box for Major or Minor revision required? I checked the 'Instructions to reviewers' and found the information there unhelpful. The problem, as I saw it, was that relatively minor textual changes were required, but, depending on the knowledge and rhetorical dexterity of the author, achieving these changes may be a major task.

Now there's another aspect to this that, in a perfect world, shouldn't impact on reviewer decision making … but I suspect *often* does. In most of the journals I review for, if the submission is deemed to require only minor changes, then the reviewer

isn't expected to assess the resubmission. So, by ticking minor changes required, I can save myself some work … and that's a pretty seductive option for any already overburdened academic.

Sexism, Peer Review and Critical Thinking

Cally Guerin

You may have followed the furore in 2015 surrounding the peer review of an article submitted by two postdoctoral scientists, Fiona Ingleby and Megan Head. They had undertaken a survey regarding gender differences in transitions from Ph.D. to postdoc. The review they received from a PLoS ONE journal has since become the subject of much astonished discussion—for example, see Retractionwatch (Marcus, 2015), Bernstein (2015) in *Science*Insider and Baitz (2015).

In a nutshell, the reviewer suggested that the two female authors should 'find one or two male biologists to work with (or at least obtain internal peer review from, but better yet as active co-authors)' in order to avoid their apparently 'ideologically biased assumptions' and that higher publication rates by male doctoral students might be linked to the idea that 'male doctoral students can probably run a mile a bit faster than female doctoral students'. Presumably, the reviewer believed that the comments were offered as scholarly critique; most others felt they were the product of ill-informed gender bias.

I came across this discussion when preparing to talk to doctoral students about critical thinking. It's a topic that some students feel has been done to death, a regular feature in most university preparation programs. Yet it's a concept that many students still struggle to understand, let alone perform in their own work. It seems that critical thinking is exactly the skill or competence expected when engaging in peer review, just as much as when writing a doctoral thesis.

It's fine to tell doctoral students that they need to 'think critically' and to offer their own opinions on the scholarship in their field, to assess the value of what they read, and to evaluate the arguments put forward by other researchers. But doing so is not always easy. Despite the issues raised by the story mentioned above, the academic journal articles students read are usually of a very high standard, having been through a rigorous review process. That process is designed to assess the evidence and how it was generated, and to weigh up the claims put forward on the basis of that evidence on behalf of other readers. To some extent, then, the critical thinking of judgement and assessment has already been done for the reader.

The most useful approach to critical thinking that I've come across is that by Barnacle (2006). She provides a list of questions of the kind that we expect to see in advice about how to develop critical thinking (drawn from the classic handbook by Browne and Keeley, 1994/2007). But, much more interestingly, Barnacle then broadens the concept to include the concept of critical thinking as generative, in that it creates the conditions for proposing new theories or ideas.

And perhaps most helpful of all, she makes the point that it is very difficult to be a critical thinker when one is a novice in the field. It is much harder to identify what has been omitted from a discussion if you haven't yet read very much in the field; it is often difficult to imagine alternative points of view if you've only recently started thinking about an idea. For doctoral students grappling with how to demonstrate their own critical thinking, this can be encouraging and comforting in equal measure—it is reasonable to assume that they will get better at critical thinking the more they learn about their topic.

Barnacle also reminds us that becoming a critical thinker is a transformative process and changes who we are and the way we approach the world. Critical thinking should create scholarly communities where peer reviewers will not write the kind of review received by Ingleby and Head; in parallel, critical thinking should also aid researchers to respond productively when they receive reviews where 'critical thinking' appears to be based on misinformation.

Scholarly Editing and Networking

Cally Guerin

There's lots of advice to doctoral students about how important conference attendance is for networking, but not everyone finds this easy. Personally, I've never been very good at bouncing up to strangers to introduce myself, nor breaking into the tight huddle of buddies chatting during teatime at conferences, so I can understand why many find this daunting. I also used to think that the concept of 'networking' was a touch grubby—as if it described the unpleasant schmoozing of people who were being friendly just to see what they could get out of others. Then I realised it meant making an effort to get to know your community, which changed my attitude completely.

As well as conference attendance, an effective way to network and build longer-term collegial relationships is through editing—by working with others on collections of essays. I started doing this as a postgrad and volunteered on the journal that was published out of my department at that time. I learnt a lot about what to look for as a subeditor or proofreader. Hopwood's (2010) article on doctoral students as journal editors does a great job of articulating the value of non-formal learning afforded by this kind of academic work, and Thomson et al. (2010) also develop related ideas in detail.

Over the years, I have also co-edited a number of book-length projects. Yes, it can be quite a bit of work; and yes, this work is rarely acknowledged by the formal university structures that measure output. Editing anthologies or collections of academic papers is usually unpaid, relying on the academic 'gift economy' (see, for example, Antal & Richebé, 2009). Yet I continue to do this kind of academic writing work because it brings me other benefits that feed into the rest of my work that *is* recognised by the institution.

By being involved in co-editing, I learn a lot about current research, closely reading papers that I otherwise might not come across. It's also a great way to hone the skills of editing and of peer review. Noticing and articulating how papers can be strengthened forces the reader to think carefully about the research and the writing. Learning how to do this in a way that keeps authors on board with the project greatly improves the standard journal reviewing practice of writing something cursory behind the protection of blind review. It's more like providing feedback on students' writing as a supervisor. Through these projects I've also learnt much more about how the publishing industry works—how to put together a book proposal, how to market it, and how to target particular audiences.

But what I value most in this has been the opportunity to develop collaborative relationships with co-editors and contributing authors. Working alongside others, doing something productive together, has helped build ongoing relationships. The people involved in one project may well suggest ideas for the next; others will pass on information about events related to the topic of the book. Gradually, a community of like-minded academics forms to share knowledge about the discipline.

Of course, much can go wrong in undertaking tasks of editing or co-editing. There's the risk of offending authors by editorial decisions; of letting others down by not meeting deadlines; of insurmountable differences of opinion about how things should be done. So far I've been lucky, and have perhaps also learnt along the way (or, more accurately, have been taught by my co-editors and authors) how to communicate clearly in order to avoid these sorts of problems.

Nevertheless, I'd encourage doctoral candidates to volunteer to help with editing projects, whether they are special issues of journals or edited books. There's much to be gained from getting involved—it's a risk worth taking.

Co-authorship

Collaborative Writing: Practices and Strategies

Claire Aitchison

I've been working on a book project with my colleague. It's been fantastic—but intense, as we've worked to get a big job done on time. I enjoy co-authoring and it's put me to thinking more about this way of writing. Whether you are a student or supervisor, this post might offer a framework for thinking about undertaking collaborative writing projects.

Collaboration, of course, happens on many levels, including the initial pooling of ideas; the rigorous discussions that result in agreements about topic, structure, theoretical and conceptual framing; the practices of writing together and of sharing and critiquing each other's work; and the mundane tasks of editing, proofing and despatching manuscripts to publishers. Here I want to talk about arrangements for

writing collaborations and the actual practices of working with others to construct a manuscript.

Round Robin or turn-taking on one paper. This approach sees a manuscript being constructed over time, as each person adds to the text, building on what's been written by the previous author. Turn-taking usually occurs consecutively, section by section. Authors may work to a predetermined structure or the process may be more organic as each writer responds to existing writing. Clearly this works best when the authors have reasonably similar ideas and approaches to the topic.

The colour-by-number or community patchwork-quilt approach. In this approach each person writes their section independently and then the bits are assembled according to the master plan. The master plan (the content, argument, structure and allocation of tasks) may not necessarily be determined by the contributing authors. For example, a lead author (the originator of the project) takes on running the project, choosing and inviting contributors, allocating the tasks, determining the structure and writing schedule.

Serial co-authoring with allocated first authoring. This arrangement works, for example, when a group of people have collaborated on one large research project and each person has responsibility for the production of an article arising from it. This can be an effective use of time, requiring each individual to do the bulk of the writing and organising for one, discrete, resultant publication. It also means all members of the group will get their name on each publication.

Writing together. Actually writing together is my favourite kind of collaboration but it is also the most time-consuming and labour-intensive. I have tried doing this in cyberspace but, for me, there is nothing more enriching than physically sitting beside my co-author and working with them to put words on the page (and to take them off again, and put them back again, to reshuffle and rearrange words and thoughts together).

This kind of close-up collaboration is enormously rewarding and informing. Whenever I've done it, I have learnt from my colleague new ways of doing writing as an intellectual activity, but also as a physical, tech-savvy operation. For example, with one co-author I was always challenged to go home and read more, to think more deeply and to return to the production desk ready to reconceptualise our work. This week again, I've learnt heaps—a new way to 'cut and paste' and how to fix yet another EndNote challenge. I've been reminded of how important it is to set tasks for the day and to break up the heavy intellectual work with a quick walk, a decent lunch break, a laugh and even a little chocolate!

The combination. Most of my co-authoring collaborations fit into this category; that is, authors agree to write certain sections independently and other bits together, but all the co-authors participate in the final readings to ensure everyone is happy to 'sign off' on the document. This is the most pragmatic approach—it works best with colleagues at a distance and combines the best features of most of the strategies/practices I've listed earlier.

'Apologies—Running Late with Draft': Obligation and Writing

Claire Aitchison

Writing with others brings rewards—and obligations. As academics, we are frequently writing in collaboration with others: on grants, projects, books, articles and so on. Often with multiple writing projects running concurrently, we work with colleagues across time and space, in our own departments or across disciplines, cross-institutionally and internationally. We may know these individuals personally, or perhaps not really at all. Technology has enabled all sorts of collaborations between writers that, until recently, would have been impossibly difficult.

I am always interested in how people write in collaboration. There are endless possibilities and permutations. What works for some doesn't work for others. Most collaborations are defined by time, task and obligation. Each of the collaborators needs to commit time to the project, and most projects must be completed within a defined timeframe.

Time can be your friend and your enemy; can be both productive and immobilising; it can be motivational—and on the other hand, it can become the hill the project dies on.

'Time' demands organisation and carries obligations. I know of one group of co-authors who ensure writing gets done because they have one absolute rule, and one only—when the fortnight is up, the text *must* be circulated. No excuses, ever. In this group, it is absolutely obligatory to forward on the master document, irrespective of what the responsible author has done, or not done, to progress the manuscript. Their time imperative has been the winning formula for their ongoing collaborations. I like this strategy: although the timeline is inflexible, there is scope for forgiveness!

It's more common, however, to tie task to time. For example, we mostly commit with our co-authors to do a specific writing task by a certain date; and in supervision we mostly request students write X, Y and Z for the next panel meeting. Getting time and task to match isn't always easy, and there would be few writers amongst us who haven't occasionally failed on either score, if not both. Predicting how long a writing task will take is challenging. We see this in supervision when we ask students to write something we think should be a snap … and for them it's torture! How common is the request for an extension?

This is where I think obligation can be useful. My own view is that obligations to meet deadlines should (in most cases) trump the obligation to complete a particular task. Tasks can be modified, renegotiated, made more do-able, but mostly, time is non-negotiable. Deadlines are rarely able to be modified.

I believe that working to deadlines is important—but obligations to people can be even more powerfully motivational. I don't like letting myself down—but I hate letting others down. Perhaps that's why I find myself committing to collaborations more often than perhaps is wise. When I make a commitment to someone else, I am more likely to deliver.

Of course, there are times when no matter how pressing the deadline, our obligations to people need to come first. Sometimes life does get in the way, and commitments can't be kept. A certain amount of generosity and flexibility is essential for productive, long-lasting collaborations.

What's It Worth to You? Awarding Authorship Percentages

Cally Guerin

In the process of writing with a group of colleagues, I was reminded of the complexities of assigning authorship. In particular, the question came up regarding who had done the most important and/or the most difficult work.

Some felt that the original concept for the research was most important; others claimed that research design was the challenging part; another felt that organising and collecting the data were key; yet others believed the analysis of that data mattered most; and for others, framing all that empirical data in the relevant literature and locating it in the current debates in the field was what took creative imagination and lots of background reading and preparation.

These issues are pertinent to doctoral candidates writing joint-authored papers in theses by publication. At my university, a statement detailing who did what must be signed by all authors for any co-authored chapters written as journal articles. This is sometimes fairly straightforward if there are only the supervisor and candidate to be named. In other situations, where to draw the line on who contributed what gets considerably murkier.

There are some guides to working this out. The Australian Code of Conduct for Responsible Research (2007) states that:

> Attribution of authorship depends to some extent on the discipline, but in all cases, authorship must be based on substantial contributions in a combination of:
>
> - conception and design of the project;
> - analysis and interpretation of research data;
> - drafting significant parts of the work or critically revising it so as to contribute to the interpretation.

It is possible to think that this means the three elements listed are of approximately equal importance, though there are plenty who wouldn't agree.

The Vancouver Protocol makes it clear that legitimate authors must participate in all stages of:

- conception and design, or analysis and interpretation of data;

   AND

- drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content;

AND

- final approval of the version to be published.

But these codes and protocols tell us more about *who* should be included, rather than how *big* their contribution might be ('substantial' is not very helpful in disputes over percentages of contribution—everyone might think their work is 'substantial'). Researchers will place greater value on some elements of the project than others do.

I love co-authoring papers and learn from everyone I've written with—how they approach their research, tips on everything from ethics applications to database searches, and the writing processes that they find useful. Part of this learning includes discovering where other authors place the value and importance in their writing.

Career and Profile Building

Publishing During Doctoral Study—What Are the Benefits? or Why Would You Bother?

Claire Aitchison

In a workshop for doctoral students I asked: 'Why would you be interested in publishing during your doctorate? Given the amount of work involved and the uncertainty of success, why bother?'

Of course, I had already prepared the usual answers to this question—that publishing is good because it can:

- disseminate your research;
- contribute to your profession/community;
- mark your territory;
- build your public profile;
- advance your learning/thinking/research/thesis;
- develop writing skills and publishing know-how;
- build your career path;
- provide personal satisfaction;
- perhaps have financial benefits.

In the discussion, generally all these points are raised, and usually we laugh about how unlikely one is to benefit financially from publishing. Indeed, some scholars pay to get their work published (e.g., Schroter & Tite, 2006).

But this time, in a group of mostly international students, there was a very different discussion around the financial benefits of publishing during doctoral study. One student said she had received approximately $AUD 2,500 from the Indonesian government for each article in an international journal and $AUD 2,000 for publishing locally. Another student, from the Middle East, said he, too, received similar

reimbursement from his government for publishing. The Australians, on the other hand, were aghast—none of them stood to personally receive any financial benefit from publishing in scholarly journals.

There is no doubt that Australian institutions benefit from doctoral student publishing. Historically, Australian universities have received government support for publications. In addition, of course, high publication rates are equated with 'research output' and build an institution's reputation which, in turn, increases the chances of winning grants and attracting high-profile scholars—and more doctoral students.

Some institutions reward academics directly for their publications. I've heard of payments ranging from $AUD 12,000 per person per year to $AUD 1,000 per publication. I don't know of anywhere where supervisors receive financial benefit for helping their students publish.

While money might be made through doctoral publication, how fairly are the spoils being distributed? Who is receiving the benefits from the armies of writers, reviewers and editors who mostly labour for free? And there are also other, non-monetary considerations flowing from this 'push to publish'.

It seems to me that the imperatives around academic publishing are skewing doctoral scholarship and supervision, re-prioritising research choices, workloads and pedagogical practices. For example, another student at this workshop, who had recently arrived from China, already had one publication written and accepted. Furthermore, they had deliberately chosen a research project mining existing data to enable them to fast-track publications. Such pro-publication strategies and research decisions aren't necessarily problematic—but it is important to recognise potential impacts.

In some countries, doctoral candidature includes a requirement to publish. In Australia, most doctoral students are not required to publish to fulfil the requirements of their degree, yet the global competition for jobs means that many feel compelled to.

Some students are lucky enough to work in research clusters where writing for publication is integral to the practice of research. Some students have supervisors ready, willing and capable of supporting them. Some supervisors are able to assist students to dovetail writing for publication with the writing of the thesis and with the research practice itself. Some supervisors are happy to mentor students, co-authoring with them or assisting them through the publication process. Sometimes students find assistance outside of the supervisory relationship, for example, through courses or writing groups.

Yet, despite the benefits institutions accrue from doctoral student publishing, I remain surprised by how many students are left floundering—keen to write for publication but lacking the necessary support, skills and know-how. Financial incentives are no substitute for proper institutionally sanctioned, pedagogically sound practices.

If we truly recognise the importance of publishing research—its benefits for the knowledge economy, our institutions and doctoral researchers—then how can we best support those who do publish, and from whom institutions benefit so handsomely?

Doctoral Writing and Career Building

Susan Carter

In giving advice on how to develop academic careers, two professors began with stories of serendipity when external influences changed their direction, and both spoke of their own naivety in some early choices. Much of their helpful advice relates to viewing writing as a significant factor in developing an academic identity that is likely to affect career progression—or non-progression.

Both professors said that good advice about career decisions was crucial for novices. It should be actively sought from the right people. Some academics are genuinely keen to help and others less so—find those who do want to mentor. Some know how things work and others don't pay much attention to that—ask people who do know. Some welcome newcomers into their networks and knowledge and others don't. Novices are often reluctant to reveal ignorance of what they need to know, but they do need to ask.

These professors emphasised the importance of writing in research careers. Doctoral students and those supporting them don't always see writing as a big issue—in my recent survey of doctoral supervisors ($n = 226$), several from STEM disciplines kept insisting that my questions about writing were off track. They felt supervision was about doing research; writing was not the issue. Their doctoral students 'wrote up' after the research as a sort of mopping-up process. But doctoral writing forms the basis for any academic career, and for any other research career that entails writing reports. It can be valued as the driving force to steer the career trajectory.

Further advice included:

- never feel too humble to put yourself forward;
- you will need to develop strongly in teaching and service, but put your research and its writing first; and
- focus on writing and publication, and be strategic.

Supervisors should encourage research students to publish. It is sensible for them to collaborate to do so—this gives students the chance to leverage off their supervisors' higher profile. Take the time to write up conference papers and publish them.

The Education professor advised: 'keep writing personal; keep writing passionate.' For many, especially those in social sciences and arts/humanities, that advice works well. A sense of personal ownership of writing and a passion for the research can feed energy into the labour of writing.

Maximising Publication Value from a Research Project

These professors recommended developing continuity, so that research feeds into publication, and publication feeds further publication. Several well-focused articles from a research project will be stronger than one overly full, possibly less clear article. When a tangled article draft needs revision, one solution is to split it into two articles.

For example, a doctoral thesis on the globalisation of sumo wrestling produced three conference papers from a chapter on women and sumo: at sports, women's studies and cultural studies conferences. That one chapter had the potential for three peer-reviewed articles. Seeking different audiences and angling findings towards quite different discussions and arguments is helpful to productivity. Although self-plagiarism is anathema, many well-respected academics publish more than one article from the same research project, and, unsurprisingly, the description of methods and framing within literature overlap. Self-plagiarism isn't always clear cut; it makes sense to make as much use of your work as you can.

Build a solid 'research platform' over a few years in an area where you can aim for high impact as a recognised expert. Funding can make it challenging to delineate your research platform—you need to ensure that, within funded projects, there is a place for your niche area so that your research portfolio retains cohesion. Look across projects for common themes for an impressive academic biography. While funding is a two-edged sword, aim for prestigious funding and plan ahead to secure it.

My hunch is that academics who think writing is not important maybe haven't recognised the skills that they have as writers: they need to do so in order to mentor doctoral students appropriately.

Academic Selfies, Self-promotion and Other Narcissistic Behaviours

Claire Aitchison

I was talking to my 90-year-old father about his working life in a post-war world where opportunity seemed abundant, and where job security and predictable promotion trajectories were common. My father doesn't understand self-promotion. In his view of the world, good work is noticed and rewarded by good managers. Blowing one's own trumpet is crass; modesty and humility are admirable. I'm grateful he isn't part of my world and will never see how we academics survive by self-promotion.

Image by Claire Aitchison

I have conflicted views about this brave new world—sometimes it seems so self-indulgent and narcissistic. But I also recognise that there are few alternatives. The Anglo-Christian idea that 'the meek shall inherit the earth' and Confucian respect for humility, for example, just don't cut it for job-seeking doctoral students.

In our highly competitive world, doctoral students need to keep a very firm eye on profile building. Publishing—and not only traditional paper-based publishing—is a central plank to constructing one's **public profile**. Publishing is not simply about disseminating research: it is also about building an **image** of yourself as a scholar, promoting your work and your availability. Unfortunately, most of this promotional work must be driven by the individual; our institutions rarely assist scholars in this endeavour.

So, what academic selfies are available—and acceptable—for building this public profile?

Self -citation, or citing oneself, is a traditional approach, although it's not always clear where, when and how much one should cite oneself. For example, a friend is scathing about her colleague's habit of citing his own work within the first paragraph of his articles.

Citation circles (you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours) have long been used for building a presence and getting traction within a particular community. Of course, sometimes citing oneself or one's colleagues is entirely legitimate, but not always entirely innocent.

Email signatures can be effectively constructed to advertise new or highly cited publications.

Personal **websites** and online **professional networks** such as LinkedIn, Academia.edu and ResearchGate are widely used for displaying publications, profile analytics, and other professional achievements. A Google Scholar profile is essential these days.

Compared to these relatively static mechanisms, the power of **social media** (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, blogging) for profile building is like dynamite. Big and loud, social media can make a useful impact—but it can also be damaging. It is immediate and pretty unforgiving. Social media, more than these other tools, requires you to manage your own image-making. **Blogging—public diary-keeping**—is now commonplace and it's no surprise that doctoral scholars and researchers are increasingly taking to this medium as readers (Tenopir, Volentine, & King, 2013) and for the dissemination of their research (Gruzd, Staves, & Wilk, 2012). But blogs also present an image of their authors, inviting public engagement in ways that aren't predictable (Steel, Cohen, Hurley, & Joy, 2012). The format, title and visuals, the choice and treatment of topics, the style and tone all help **brand** the author as a certain kind of scholar.

Image making is hard-wired into social media tools, as I discovered when I signed up to Twitter. Having agonised over the choice of name (or hashtag or handle), finally, with the help of seasoned experts, I signed in—only to discover that Twitter then wanted a descriptor *and* a photo. Weeks later, I added a descriptor—as short as I could get away with. Not long afterwards, momentarily forgetting about the still absent photo, I tapped out a response to a tweet, only to receive this quip: 'I see you're still an egg head!' (referring to my blank, egg-shaped portrait). So much for my careful image making!

This relatively harmless mistake underlines how easy it is for social media to backfire. Blogging and other social media operate like selfies—you choose and make the image of **your public self**. Therein lie the benefits—and risks.

Participating in this self-promotional world is a performative act that (to a degree) is self-indulgent, but can also be business-like and professional—and, when viewed as reciprocal practice, can reap great rewards. Nevertheless, successful engagement necessitates careful thinking about identity, image and personal/professional boundaries.

My experience has been fun, but I recognise the central requirement to sell oneself in such public forums can be daunting. If your objective is career-building, then it's worth taking a considered approach to how, where and when you will build your public profile, and promote particular aspects of your research and professional persona.

Other Research Genres

How Do I Write Thee? Let Me Count the Ways (with Apologies to Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

Cally Guerin

Research students are required to write many different kinds of documents and in many genres over the course of a degree. This can be used by doctoral candidates to demonstrate to potential employers just what capable writers they are. One useful tool for noticing these writing skills is the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (you can find it at https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/rdf-related/introducing-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework-rdf-to-employers-2011.pdf). This framework lists, in detail, the 'knowledge, behaviours and attributes' developed throughout doctoral candidature, organising them as: knowledge and intellectual abilities; personal effectiveness; research governance and organisation; and engagement, influence and impact. While writing appears under all these domains, the last one, 'engagement, influence and impact', is the most obvious, including a section on 'Communication and dissemination'. Yet there is a lot of written communication required of doctoral candidates before they reach Vitae's endpoint of 'Communication methods/communication media/publication'.

To start with, even entering a Ph.D. requires the writing literacies needed to complete lengthy and detailed ***application forms***. Some students find this a daunting writing task which develops both complex positional and rhetorical writing skills and may also teach valuable lessons in how to construct such forms in other areas of their careers.

Then there is the task of writing a ***proposal***. This writing must provide the right level of detail about the project to persuade readers of its originality and interest, and that it is do-able in the set timeframe. The writing demonstrates that the aspiring researcher can organise the stages of the project in a logical order. Some familiarity with discipline expectations about methods, theory and writing style will also be demonstrated.

After that, the doctoral writer might engage in more conventional academic writing of ***thesis chapters, book chapters, journal articles or textbook entries***. Here they show that they understand the expectations of the scholarly audience who might read their work, that they can use discipline-specific language and have a command of the field's knowledge. Employers looking for evidence that an individual can perform the traditional role of an academic can be reassured that this writer knows the ropes. Writing ***conference presentations*** relies on some of this, but often takes on a more conversational tone (though that might depend somewhat on the discipline and/or the particular atmosphere of the conference).

Other important documents that candidates might write demonstrate further writing skills. For example, those submitting ***ethics applications*** soon realise they must present complex ideas and projects in a manner that the ethics committee—generally

composed of people who are not experts in their particular research field—can engage with. And then there might be all the attendant documents, written for participants who are often much further removed from the academic field of research: recruitment materials and invitations to participate in the research (emails, flyers); information sheets; consent and complaint forms. The ability to communicate complex ideas in ordinary language becomes essential—and can be oddly hard to do when one is adept at talking discipline jargon. Some projects require candidates to learn the skills of writing **survey and interview questions**. These need to be unambiguous; they also need to be easy for a layperson to understand if they are to get accurate responses.

Others will write **grant applications** and present the significance of their work to a well-informed, but non-specialist, audience. This is a time to promote the value of the research, rather than a moment for modesty or humility—the tentative hedging required in other writing has little place when important funding is at stake. And if successful, there are likely to be **progress reports** required, writing that might be aimed at an industry audience, or those whose priorities may not be identical to those in the academy.

Then (perhaps most importantly of all?) is the written communication with supervisors, often via **email**. Here, doctoral candidates learn about private writing that needs to be appropriately professional. Sometimes this is expected to have a formal, polite, deferential tone; other times, a casual, abbreviated note is perfectly acceptable. Negotiating this while maintaining clear communication requires great skill (we all know emailers who have had their messages misunderstood, potentially with very damaging effects). Effective email writing is an asset in any workplace.

More and more doctoral candidates are also writing about their research or doctoral experiences on **social media**, blogging and tweeting, or on professional academic sites like LinkedIn. Presenting and maintaining a presence in these forums requires a host of other writing skills and literacies to communicate effectively.

All of this writing happens before the collation of the final **thesis or exegesis**, a document that demonstrates how doctoral candidates are capable of carefully proofreading a long document. The document must be consistent throughout, present complex skills of referencing accurately, and meet the highest expectations of persuasive argumentation and scholarship. This capacity for sustained, precise presentation is, again, valuable for other long reports or publications.

Through these different writing experiences, doctoral writers learn how to express their ideas clearly, how to structure material so that all sorts of readers can engage with it, and how to design the appropriate layout of the document to indicate how it fits together. They learn about the nuances of genre and audience—what's appropriate, expected and useful in a range of different writing situations.

It's a huge list of writing skills developed through the 'depth and breadth and height' of a doctoral degree; these skills can be used in many contexts outside university departments. It's useful to remind doctoral writers of the vast skill set they've developed during candidature (and how they might present them to potential employers).

Talking About Writing

Cally Guerin

The Three Minute Thesis Competition (3MT) displays the range of extraordinarily talented individuals doing Ph.D.s. It's a wonderful competition at every level—from the local presentations in Schools and Faculties, through the University finals, and onto the Asia-Pacific event. Ph.D. students exhibit their capacity to speak fluently to a lay audience about their amazing projects. Watching students at every stage of preparation has made me notice just how valuable it is to *talk* about what you are *writing* about.

The enormous benefit of participating in the 3MT is learning to step back from the detail of the research and think about the bigger picture. The long, intense project of doctoral research often includes relevant and irrelevant tangents, and the task of finding a structure for the resulting complex arguments can be daunting (in fact, it can seem just about impossible at times!). The exercise of explaining it succinctly to someone else is a valuable way of identifying the focus. Was it really Einstein who said that if you can't explain it simply, then you probably don't really understand it yourself? Patrick Dunleavy uses words to that effect too, in his book *Authoring a PhD* (2003).

When the writing gets stuck, it is sometimes possible to talk about it to someone else (if your listener is a little reluctant, I've found it helpful to do this on a long car trip when they are trapped in the seat next to you…). After that, you can translate the verbal explanation into a written form—preferably reduced to just a few sentences. Going a step further, try to write the central argument, the main point you want the reader to understand, in just one sentence. Narrowing the focus like this can make a huge difference to creating a coherent thread of argument within a section, and also throughout the whole thesis.

Another useful approach is to think in terms of a verbal presentation when planning the outline for a chapter. You can imagine or actually create a PowerPoint slide show. What are the topics for each of your slides? What order should they appear in? What does your audience need in order to follow the steps of your argument? If you think about the slides as representing a paragraph each, that also helps to block out the steps of the argument. And, of course, slides are easy to move around when you realise the sequence isn't quite right, or to add an extra slide to make the transition clearer from one point to the next. Imagining yourself talking to the audience encourages objectivity about what's actually interesting, too.

The final reason to talk about your writing is to understand that writing is really a social activity (Lee & Boud, 2003), not something that has to happen in isolation, locked away with a computer in a dank, dark room somewhere in the depths of a university building. It's all about communication of ideas, after all. You're not doing it just for yourself, but to get those ideas out to a wider audience in your discipline. I have some sympathy with those who say that research is meaningless if it just stays inside your own head—focus on communicating.

Writing Text for Research Posters

Cally Guerin

Recently I sat down to make a poster about the DoctoralWriting blog for a higher education conference. I've made only a few research posters over the years; this genre is more common in some science disciplines than it is in humanities and social sciences. The exercise encouraged me to think about how this kind of research writing differs from that of a journal article or a thesis or, for that matter, a 20-minute oral presentation for a conference.

Poster prose is a little like reducing an 80,000-word thesis to a Three Minute Thesis presentation: turning an article-length idea into a poster requires the author to focus in on the key messages of the communication. Posters encourage writers to extract the skeleton of the narrative they have developed in more fulsome terms elsewhere, to distil the key ideas of the work into neat dot points or short statements. This is not a time to be chatty; a poster gives us only the central message.

Some of Dunleavy's (2015) advice on 'How to write a blog post from your journal article' applies to posters, too. He recommends minimising the methods section and literature review, and writing short paragraphs. He reminds us that it is also useful to capture the key message in a narrative title. Unlike blogs, though, posters can make good use of subheadings to emphasise key points, to break up the text, and communicate ideas quickly.

In any writing, it is important to consider the audience. Do poster readers want a condensed form of the whole thesis, or just one aspect of the work? Are they actually much more interested in the results and conclusions than in the theoretical framework and research methods? Perhaps some sections should be given a larger proportion of the space than one might expect in an article. Or the poster might act as an enticing introduction to the research, inspiring readers to seek out the full article or published chapter where they can discover the nuances left out in the abbreviated poster form.

My own tendency when looking at posters is to start at the top left corner and read down the columns, working towards the bottom right corner—just as I would a page in a book. Lots of the poster templates available online encourage this format, and many posters thus provide a condensed version of a traditional article in their form and layout. The following example demonstrates this type of transfer from an article to a poster. The text-based format is broken up with headings, and a few photos are used to illustrate the subject.

This can be effective, but there's no need to feel constrained by columns of text. Given that we can see the whole item at a glance, it's perfectly possible to draw the eye to other parts of the communication first, such as a diagram at the centre of the poster, or photographs that encapsulate the essence of the findings. The linear narrative of an article might be transformed into a hub-and-spokes format to demonstrate the complexity of relationships. The layout of the poster can be used to direct readers' attention to specific parts of the communication.

Think about font size to ensure that important elements such as subheadings can be read from a distance. Remember to check colour choices for contrast so that the text and images are easy to read. Consider also how it is possible to draw on the symbolic aspects of colour to support the message.

Since a poster is oriented towards visual elements rather than just the prose, it makes sense to take full advantage of images to support the words. Some posters can benefit from the central focus being on the images, with words playing a supplementary role. For those in disciplines where conference posters are not so commonly used, this can be both challenging and liberating. For example, Foxen (2017), a Ph.D. candidate in Humanities at the University of Exeter, reports on her experience of very successfully translating her research into a poster. Even if research does not generate data in the form of tables, charts or graphs, what other kinds of visual representations are possible? Could a diagram help explain relationships between stakeholders? Evocative images can get to the heart of arguments, regardless of the discipline. In the process of explaining research in this visual medium, it is possible to gain new insights into the work when seeing it presented differently.

Grant-Writing Season

Cally Guerin

When they have finally submitted their thesis and had the document examined, many doctoral writers continue their academic writing life by applying for funding for their next big research project. Grant writing is a major undertaking, requiring concise but nuanced argument in a highly competitive environment.

The annual research-grant-writing season in Australia is always timed to occur during the summer teaching break; instead of enjoying some well-deserved time off, academics are flat out putting together detailed proposals, competing for part of an ever-smaller pot of research money. As government funding has reduced and more academics put in applications, we engage in this hugely intensive and time-consuming activity knowing there is only a very slim chance of success. Most universities run workshops where experienced researchers and successful grant winners offer advice. These workshops are invaluable. In this post, I'd like to add some of my own reflections on my experience, and share some tips for other grant writers and those helping them through the process.

Specific Grant Requirements
Funding bodies generally provide lots of invaluable information about how to fill out the dense and complex online forms—read it! The requirements can change from year to year, so make sure that you are up to date with the current expectations. If your role is to help applicants, show them where to find that information so they can check back later to ensure they have included everything and put it in the right place.

Time
The warning that it will take longer than applicants might expect does need to be front and centre of any advice. A lot of detail must be supplied, and quite a bit of that must be gathered from other people, especially as many big funding bodies tend towards a general preference for collaborative rather than single-authored projects. Checks on eligibility must be carried out, and all partner institutions might need to approve the personnel, depending on specific grant conditions. Applicants may not be aware of just how long they'll need to wait on other universities, even if they have already talked to their research collaborators about the project itself.

Readers and Assessors
Grant-writing workshops also encourage researchers to present a clearly written outline of their proposal. It's important to emphasise that this writing must focus on what the *reader* needs to see. Just like preparing a Three Minute Thesis talk, it's important to avoid technical words in the summary. Grant assessors are often generalists from the broader field of enquiry into which the proposal falls.

For those applying to large government programs, it's also important to think about how the proposed research might it be received by the general public if it were to be funded—does it sound like a project worthy of tax-payers' dollars? Within the walls of academia, some projects are easily understood, but can look irrelevant

and esoteric outside that environment. It's well worthwhile explaining in everyday language why that research really does mean something beyond itself.

Word Limits

Check the word limits and stick to them from the start! Everyone believes their work is too complicated to explain in a short paragraph, but the task is actually to refine your own thinking so that you can be clear and succinct, focusing in on the central points that matter most.

Budgets

Budget can be the biggest mystery for first-timers. How do you know the going rate for employing a research assistant to set up interview appointments, or a technical expert to undertake some complex statistical analysis? If you want to send a researcher to attend a conference or undertake fieldwork, how do you know what is a reasonable allowance for a hotel room, travel on the ground and meals? It's important to discover where to find this information from the appropriate unit, such as the finance management segment of the Research Office or, in Australia, standard rates can be found on the Australian Tax Office website.

One particularly strong experience for me as a first-time, big-grant-writer was the requirement to develop a fully rounded fantasy of doing the research. I had to imagine numerous details including what will be published, what the associated website will look like, who will do what. After weeks of intense work fleshing out this fantasy, I felt like I'd already conducted the surveys and interviews, recruited research assistants and participants, delivered the workshops and built the website. At the end I found myself peering around my office and realising that I'd spent the past week inhabiting a fantasy life—not actually mine at all! But, like writing ethics applications, it focuses the mind on what needs doing, how, and to what purpose. Tiresome as it can feel, there are big advantages in immersing oneself in this fantasy.

References

Anderson, K. (2012). Bury your writing—Why do academic book chapters fail to generate citations? Retrieved from https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2012/08/28/bury-your-writing-why-do-academic-book-chapters-fail-to-generate-citations/.

Antal, A. B., & Richebé, N. (2009). A passion for giving, a passion for sharing: Understanding knowledge sharing as gift exchange in academia. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 18*(1), 78–95.

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007). Retrieved from https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2007.

Baitz, E. (2015). Sexism in science: One step back, two steps forward. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/sexism-in-science-one-step-back-two-steps-forward-41229.

Barnacle, R. (2006). On being a critical researcher. In C. Denholm & T. Evans (Eds.), *Doctorates downunder: Keys to successful doctoral study in Australia and New Zealand* (pp. 95–103). Camberwell, VIC: ACER Press.

Bernstein, R. (2015). PLOS ONE ousts reviewer, editor after sexist peer-review storm. Retrieved from http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2015/05/plos-one-ousts-reviewer-editor-after-sexist-peer-review-storm.

Browne, M. N. & Keeley, S. M. (1994/2007). *Asking the right questions: A guide to critical thinking* (8th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Chanock, K. (2008). Surviving the reviewing process and getting published. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 2*(1), E1–E4.

Deevybee. (2012). How to bury your academic writing. Retrieved from http://deevybee.blogspot.com/2012/08/how-to-bury-your-academic-writing.html.

Dunleavy, P. (2003). *Authoring a PhD: How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan International Higher Education.

Dunleavy, P. (2015) How to write a blog post from your journal article. Retrieved from https://medium.com/advice-and-help-in-authoring-a-phd-or-non-fiction/how-to-write-a-blogpost-from-your-journal-article-6511a3837caa.

Foxen, S. (2017) Anarchy in the academy: Why create an academic poster? Retrieved from http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/2017/03/27/anarchy-in-the-academy-why-create-an-academic-poster/.

Gero, S. & Cantor, M. (2015). Passing review: How the R-index aims to improve the peer-review system by quantifying reviewer contributions. Retrieved from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2015/05/20/passing-review-r-index-to-improve-peer-review-system/.

Gruzd, A., Staves, K., & Wilk, A. (2012). Connected scholars: Examining the role of social media in research practices of faculty using the UTAUT model. *Computers in Human Behaviour, 28,* 2340–2350.

Hopwood, N. (2010). Doctoral students as journal editors: Non-formal learning through academic work. *Higher Education Research & Development, 29*(3), 319–331.

Jump, P. (2014). Can post-publication peer review endure? *Times Higher Education*. Retrieved November 13, from https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/can-post-publication-peer-review-endure/2016895.article.

Lee, A., & Boud, D. (2003). Writing groups, change and academic identity: Research development as local practice. *Studies in Higher Education, 28*(2), 187–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/0307507032000058109.

Marcus, A. (2015) It's a man's world—for one peer reviewer, at least. Retrieved from http://retractionwatch.com/2015/04/29/its-a-mans-world-for-one-peer-reviewer-at-least/.

Schroter, S., & Tite, L. (2006). Open access publishing and author-pays business models: A survey of authors' knowledge and perceptions. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, 99*(3), 141–148.

Steel, K., Cohen, J. J., Hurley, M. K., & Joy, E. A. (2012). Why we blog: An essay in four movements. *Literature Compass, 9*(12), 1016–1032. https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12012.

Tenopir, C., Volentine, R., & King, D. W. (2013). Social media and scholarly reading. *Online Information Review, 37*(2), 193–216. https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-04-2012-0062.

Thomson, P. (2013) Why write book chapters. Retrieved from https://patthomson.net/2013/06/17/on-writing-book-chapters/.

Thomson, P., Byrom, T., Robinson, C. & Russell, L. (2010). In C. Aitchison, B. Kamler & A. Lee (Eds.), *Publishing Pedagogies for the Doctorate and Beyond*. London, UK: Routledge.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

As experienced doctoral educators, we have woven our three voices together in a collection of reflections on the practices of supporting, and doing, doctoral writing. This book brings together discrete responses to 'teacherly moments,' reviewed and critiqued collectively to be made public. From the original blog posts to the compilation of this book, writing, has, for us, been a living mechanism for reflection-in-(and on) action (Schön, 1987). It gives evidence of the value of practioner reflection in an era of audit where reflection can seem undervalued.

But our intentions were never simply personal—we always wrote also for our imagined community of readers, hoping to nudge, to inspire and to illuminate. Supervisors, doctoral educators and students are already acutely aware of the challenges of doctoral writing—to that knowledge we aimed to bring nuanced and innovative responses. At times, we provide easy tips and take-homes; more often, there is no short route: the reiterative cycles of words on the page, further thought, revision, review, revision in the light of reader feedback is unavoidable. This is the challenging reality of doctoral writing, where courage, self-belief, perseverance might be sustained by a book like this. We recognise and celebrate those necessary qualities of doctoral writers. Our respect for them is one motivation for producing this book.

We began this collection by considering what's involved in *becoming* a writer: navigating relationships, emotions and support while also creating a textual identity; as Kamler and Thomson note, 'there is continual slippage between the person and the text' (2006, p. 15). We then explored the processes and practices that facilitate the emerging writer's identity. Since its origins, the blog has witnessed a sustained interest in strategies for maintaining productivity. As we reviewed our own and guest posts, it became clear that students and supervisors longed for more social approaches to maintaining writing. Here we have grouped these social practices together, but we also suggest individual actions available for supervisors and students. It is here, considering practice, where we point to the pleasures of writing about research too.

After that, the focus turns squarely on to the page—to the craft of research writing and the need to develop 'doctoral level' capabilities such as the ability to produce clarity, criticality, accuracy and to fashion textual style and writerly voice. This section

ranges across concerns around suitable choices in the face of changing expectations about appropriate research discourse.

Unsurprisingly, one of the largest sections of this book is about writing the thesis, that very particular genre reserved exclusively for research study. This chapter covers an enormous territory, dancing from explicit advice on design and structure to general principles for critical and rhetorical writing and processes for shaping a successful dissertation text. The thesis itself is put under scrutiny, from a holistic overview to specific components and chapters. As supervisors and academic developers, we (three authors and probably many of our readers) are often most drawn to support the doctoral writer as a person, and yet inevitably the thesis itself monopolizes attention.

Nevertheless, over the last 5–10 years we have witnessed a growing demand for knowledge about how writing into the public arena can build profiles and careers. The final chapter responds to this and other changing requirements for writers: the greater acceptance of diverse forms of the examinable texts and institutional pressures to disseminate research. Thus, we conclude the book by considering this evolving space of new genres, and doctoral publishing, peer review, co-authorship and profile building.

Looking back over our practices and reflections, we recognise the challenges of doctoral writing for the writers themselves and for those who are supporting their efforts to communicate complex ideas. While research writing comes more easily to some than it does to others, we firmly believe that scholars from all disciplines, educational backgrounds and language groups can learn the craft of writing well. Our aim in this book is to facilitate that learning.

Necessarily, a book is linear. Yet the dimensions of doctoral writing in its practices and processes are anything but a clean start-to-finish trajectory. As much as this book interweaves our individual voices and concerns, so do the topics we cover within it interweave. Amongst the entanglement of doctoral writing, we hope that readers also find the deep pleasures of authorship that we have experienced at times as research writers. That is the real goal, we suggest: that doctoral writers learn how to sustain productivity, produce clear stylish writing, and find pleasure in the prose they produce and the researcher self they write into existence.

References

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2006). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bibliography

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects and others*. London: Duke University Press.

Aitchison, C. (2014). Learning from multiple voices: Feedback and authority in doctoral writing groups. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory* (pp. 51–64). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Aitchison, C., & Guerin, C. (2014). *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory*. London, UK: Routledge. Retrieved from http://www.tandf.net/books/details/9780415834742/.

Aitchison, C., & Lee, A. (2006). Research writing: Problems and pedagogies. *Teaching in Higher Education, 11*(3), 265–278.

Aitchison, C., & Mowbray, S. (2013). Doctoral women: Managing emotions, managing doctoral studies. *Teaching in Higher Education, 18*(8), 859–870. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2013.827642.

Aitchison, C., & Paré, A. (2012). Writing as craft and practice in the doctoral curriculum. In A. Lee & R. Danby (Eds.), *Reshaping doctoral education: International approaches and pedagogies* (pp. 12–25). London, UK: Routledge.

Aitchison, C., Kamler, B., & Lee, A. (Eds.). (2010). *Publishing pedagogies for the doctorate and beyond*. London, UK: Routledge.

Aitchison, C., Catterall, J., Ross, P. I., & Burgin, S. (2012). 'Tough love and tears': Learning doctoral writing in the sciences. *Higher Education Research & Development, 31*(4), 435–447.

Aitchison, C., Carter, S., & Guerin, C. (2018). Blogging: Connecting research communities online. In R. Erwee, M. A. Harmes, M. K. Harmes, & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *Postgraduate education in higher education* (pp. 153–164). Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Ali, A., & Kohun, F. (2007). Dealing with social isolation to minimize doctoral attrition: A four stage framework. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 2,* 33–49.

Anderson, K. (2012). Bury your writing—Why do academic book chapters fail to generate citations? Retrieved from https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2012/08/28/bury-your-writing-why-do-academic-book-chapters-fail-to-generate-citations/.

Antal, A. B., & Richebé, N. (2009). A passion for giving, a passion for sharing: Understanding knowledge sharing as gift exchange in academia. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 18*(1), 78–95.

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. (2007). Retrieved from https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2007.

Badenhorst, C., & Guerin, C. (2016). *Research literacies and writing pedagogies for masters and doctoral writers*. Leiden, Netherlands: Studies in Writing Series, Brill.

Baitz, E. (2015). Sexism in science: One step back, two steps forward. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/sexism-in-science-one-step-back-two-steps-forward-41229.

Barnacle, R. (2006). On being a critical researcher. In C. Denholm & T. Evans (Eds.), *Doctorates downunder: Keys to successful doctoral study in Australia and New Zealand* (pp. 95–103). Camberwell, VIC: ACER Press.

Belcher, W. (2009). *Writing your journal article in 12 weeks: A guide to academic publishing success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. N. (1995). *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: Cognition, culture, power*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bernstein, R. (2015). PLOS ONE ousts reviewer, editor after sexist peer-review storm. Retrieved from http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2015/05/plos-one-ousts-reviewer-editor-after-sexist-peer-review-storm.

Bishop, D. (2012). How to bury your academic writing. Retrieved from http://deevybee.blogspot.com/2012/08/how-to-bury-your-academic-writing.html.

Bitchener, J. (2017). *A guide to supervising non-native English writers of theses and dissertations: Focusing on the writing process*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Boice, R. (1987). A program for facilitating scholarly writing. *Higher Education Research and Development, 6*(1), 9–20.

Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day: A guide to starting, revising, and finishing your doctoral thesis*. New York, NY: Henry Holt.

Boote, D. P., & Beile, P. (2005). Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher, 34*(6), 3–15.

Bowden, D. (1999). *The mythology of voice*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Brause, R. (2000). *Writing your doctoral dissertation: Invisible rules for success*. London, UK: Falmer.

Bretag, T., Harper, R., Burton, M., Ellis, C., Newton, P., Rozenberg, P., et al. (2018). Contract cheating: A survey of Australian university students. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1–20.

Browne, M. N. & Keeley, S. M. (1994/2007). *Asking the right questions: A guide to critical thinking* (8th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Buxton, J., Carter, S., & Sturm, S. (2011). *Punc rocks: Foundation stones for precise punctuation* (2nd ed.). Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson Education.

Cadman, K., & Cargill, M. (2007). Providing quality advice on candidates' writing. In C. Denholm & T. Evans (Eds.), *Supervising doctorates downunder: Keys to effective supervision in Australia and New Zealand*. Camberwell, VIC, Australia: ACER Press.

Caffarella, R. S., & Barnett, B. G. (2000). Teaching doctoral students to become scholarly writers: The importance of giving and receiving critiques. *Studies in Higher Education, 25,* 39–54.

Can, G., & Walker, A. (2011). A model for doctoral students' perceptions and attitudes toward written feedback for academic writing. *Research in Higher Education, 52*(5), 508–536.

Cargill, M., & O'Connor, P. (2009). *Writing scientific research articles: Strategy and steps*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Carless, D., Salter, D., Yang, M., & Lam, J. (2011). Developing sustainable feedback practices. *Studies in Higher Education, 36*(4), 395–407.

Carter, S. (2008). Examining the doctoral thesis: A discussion. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 45*(4), 365–374. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290802377208.

Carter, S. (2009). Volunteer support of English as an additional language (EAL) doctoral students. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 4,* 13–25.

Carter, S. (2011). Doctorate as genre: Supporting thesis writing across campus. *Higher Education Research and Development, 30*(6), 725–736.

Carter, S. (2012). Original knowledge, gender and the word's mythology: voicing the doctorate. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, *11*(4), 406–417.

Carter, S., & Kumar, V. (2016). 'Ignoring me is part of learning': Supervisory feedback on doctoral writing. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 54*(1), 68–75.

Carter, S., & Laurs, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Developing generic support for doctoral students: Practice and pedagogy*. London, UK: Routledge.

Carter, S., Kelly, F., & Brailsford, I. (2012). *Structuring your research thesis*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

Carter, S., Blumenstein, M., & Cook, C. M. (2013). Different for women? The challenges of doctoral study. *Teaching in Higher Education, 18*(4), 339–351.

Carter, S., Laurs, D., Chant, L., & Wolgramm-Foliaki, E. (2017). Indigenous knowledge and supervision: Changing the lens [on-line ahead of publication]. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International.*

Castello, M., Inesta, A., & Corcelles, M. (2013). Learning to write a research article: PhD students' transitions toward disciplinary writing regulation. *Research in the Teaching of English, 47*(4), 442–477.

Catterall, J., Ross, P., Aitchison, C., & Burgin, S. (2011). Pedagogical approaches that facilitate writing in postgraduate research candidature in science and technology. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice, 8*(2). Retrieved from http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1212&context=jutlp.

Cham, J. (2012–) Piled higher and deeper. Available at http://phdcomics.com/comics.php.

Chanock, K. (2008). Surviving the reviewing process and getting published. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 2*(1), E1–E4.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundation of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London, UK: Sage Publications.

Cryer, P. (2003). *The research student's guide to success* (3rd ed.). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Curry, M. C., & Lillis, T. (2013). *A scholar's guide to getting published in English: Critical choices and practical strategies*. Toronto, ON: Multilingual Matters.

Darwin, C. (1873). *The origin of the species.* Retrieved from https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Origin_of_Species_(1872).

Deevybee. (2012). How to bury your academic writing. Retrieved from http://deevybee.blogspot.com/2012/08/how-to-bury-your-academic-writing.html.

Denholm, C. J., & Evans, T. D. (2007). *Supervising doctorates downunder: Keys to effective supervision in Australia and New Zealand*. Camberwell, VIC.: ACER Press.

Dunleavy, P. (2003). *Authoring a PhD: How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan International Higher Education.

Dunleavy, P. (2015) How to write a blog post from your journal article. Retrieved from https://medium.com/advice-and-help-in-authoring-a-phd-or-non-fiction/how-to-write-a-blogpost-from-your-journal-article-6511a3837caa.

East, M., Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2012). What constitutes effective feedback to postgraduate research students? The students' perspective. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 9*(2), 1–16.

Ede, L. (1992). *Work in progress: A guide to writing and revising* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Eira, C. (2005, December). *Obligatory intertextuality and proscribed plagiarism*. Paper presented at the 2nd Asia-Pacific Educational Integrity Conference, Newcastle, Australia.

Elbow, P. (1981). *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing without teachers*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Evans, D., & Gruba, P. (2002). *How to write a better thesis* (2nd ed.). Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press.

Feak, C. B., & Swales, J. M. (2009). *Telling a research story: Writing the literature review* (Vol. 2 of the revised and expanded edition of *English in today's research world*). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Feak, C. B., & Swales, J. M. (2011). *Creating contexts: Writing introductions across genres.* Retrieved from https://www.press.umich.edu/elt/compsite/ETRW/9780472034567-commentary.pdf.

Flaherty, A. W. (2015). *The midnight disease: The drive to write, writer's block and the creative block*. Boston, MA: HoughtonMifflin.

Fotovatian, S. (2013). Three constructs of institutional identity amongst international students in Australia. *Teaching in Higher Education, 17*(5), 577–588.

Foxen, S. (2017) Anarchy in the academy: Why create an academic poster? Retrieved from http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/2017/03/27/anarchy-in-the-academy-why-create-an-academic-poster/.

Frank, L., Basch, E., & Selby, J. V. (2014). The PCORI perspective on patient-centered outcomes research. *JAMA Network Open, 312*(15), 1513–1514. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2014.11100.

Gero, S. & Cantor, M. (2015). Passing review: How the R-index aims to improve the peer-review system by quantifying reviewer contributions. Retrieved from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2015/05/20/passing-review-r-index-to-improve-peer-review-system/.

Glatthorn, A. A. (1998). *Writing the winning dissertation: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Golde, C., Jones, L., Conklin Bueschel, A., & Walker, G. E. (2006). The challenges of doctoral program assessment: Lessons from the Carnegie initiative on the doctorate. In P. L. Maki & N. A. Borkowski (Eds.), *The assessment of doctoral education: Emerging criteria and new models for improving outcomes* (pp. 53–82). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Goode, J. (2010). Perhaps I should be more proactive in changing my own supervisions? In M. Walker & P. Thomson (Eds.), *The Routledge doctoral supervisor's companion: Supporting effective research in education and the social sciences* (pp. 38–50). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Goodson, P. (2016). *Becoming an academic writer: 50 exercises for paced, productive, and powerful writing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Goodwin, S., & Huppatz, K. (2010). *The good mother: Contemporary motherhoods in Australia*. Sydney, NSW: Sydney University Press.

Gopen, G. G., & Swan, J. A. (1990). The science of scientific writing. *American Scientist, 78*(6), 550–558.

Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2014). *'They say / I say': The moves that matter in academic writing*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Grant, B. (2010). Negotiating layered relations of supervision. In M. Walker & P. Thomson (Eds.), *The Routledge doctoral supervisor's companion: Supporting effective research in education and the social sciences* (pp. 88–105). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Gruzd, A., Staves, K., & Wilk, A. (2012). Connected scholars: Examining the role of social media in research practices of faculty using the UTAUT model. *Computers in Human Behaviour, 28*, 2340–2350.

Guerin, C. (2013). Rhizomatic research cultures, writing groups and academic researcher identities. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 8,* 137–150.

Guerin, C. (2014). The gift of writing groups: Critique, community and confidence. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Writing groups for doctoral students and beyond* (pp. 128–141). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Guerin, C. (2016). Connecting the dots: Writing a doctoral thesis by publication. In C. Badenhorst (Ed.), *Research literacies and writing pedagogies for masters and doctoral writers* (pp. 31–50). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Guerin, C., & Green, I. (2012). Voice as a threshold concept in doctoral writing. In M. Kiley (Ed.), *Narratives of transition: Perspectives of research leaders, educators & postgraduates* (pp. 197–198). Retrieved from http://www.qpr.edu.au/Proceedings/QPR_Proceedings_2012.pdf.

Guerin, C., & Green, I. (2016). Cultural diversity and the imagined community of the global academy. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03288791.2014.922048.

Guerin, C., & Picard, M. (2012). Try it on: Voice, concordancing and text-matching in doctoral writing. *International Journal of Educational Integrity, 8*(2), 34–45.

Guerin, C., Carter, S., & Aitcheson, C. (2015). Blogging as learning community: Lessons for academic development? *International Journal of Academic Development*. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1360144X.2015.1042480.

Guerin, C., Carter, S., & Aitchison, C. (2016). Networks, nodes and knowledge: Blogging to support doctoral candidates and supervisors. In M. Fourie-Malherbe, R. Albertyn, C. Aitchison, & E. Bitzer (Eds.), *Postgraduate supervision: Future foci for the knowledge society*. SUN MeDia: Stellenbosch, SA.

Guerin, C., Green, I., & Bastalich, W. (2011). Big love: Managing a team of research supervisors. In A. Lee & V. Mallan (Eds.), *Connecting the local, regional and international in doctoral education* (pp. 138–153). Serdang, Malaysia: Universiti Putra Malaysia Publishers.

Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination*. London, UK: Sage Publications.

Hamilton, J., Carson, S., & Ellison, E. (2013). *Building distributed leadership for effective supervision of creative practice higher research degrees Final Report for Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.* Retrieved from supervisioncreativeartsphd.net.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies, 14*(3), 575–599. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.

Helms-Park, R., & Stapleton, P. (2003). Questioning the importance of individualized voice in undergraduate L2 argumentative writing: An empirical study with pedagogical implications. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 12*(3), 245–265.

Hirvela, A., & Belcher, D. (2001). Coming back to voice: The multiple voices and identities of mature multilingual writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(1), 83–106.

Holbrook, A., Bourke, S., Fairbairn, H., & Lovat, T. (2007). Examiner comment on the literature review in PhD theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 32*(3), 337–356.

Hopwood, N. (2010). Doctoral students as journal editors: Non-formal learning through academic work. *Higher Education Research & Development, 29*(3), 319–331.

Hughes, T. (1957). The thought fox. In *The hawk in the rain*. London: Faber & Faber.

Hyland, K. (1998). Persuasion and context: The pragmatics of academic metadiscourse. *Journal of Pragmatics, 30*(4), 437–455.

Ivaniĉ, R. (1998). *Writing and identity: The discoursal construction of identity in academic writing*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Benjamins.

Ivaniĉ, R., & Camps, D. (2001). I am how I sound: Voice as self-representation in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(1), 3–33.

Jackson, D. (2013). Completing a PhD by publication: A review of Australian policy and implications for practice. *Higher Education Research and Development, 32*(3), 355–368.

Jazvac-Martek, M., Shuhua, C., & McAlpine, L. (2011). Tracking the doctoral student experience over time: Cultivating agency in diverse spaces. In L. McAlpine & C. Amundsen (Eds.), *Doctoral education: Research-based strategies for doctoral students, supervisors and administrators* (pp. 17–36). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Johnston, S. (1997). Examining the examiners: An analysis of examiners' reports on doctoral theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 22*(3), 333–347.

Jump, P. (2013, May 16). A plague of plagiarism at the heart of politics: Germany and Eastern Europe rocked by string of high-profile cases within their governments. *Times Higher Education*.

Jump, P. (2014). Can post-publication peer review endure? *Times Higher Education*. Retrieved November 13, from https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/can-post-publication-peer-review-endure/2016895.article.

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2006). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2014). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision* (2nd ed.). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Kearns, H., & Gardiner, M. (2012). *The seven habits of highly successful PhD students*. Glenelg North, SA: Thinkwell.

Kearns, H., Gardiner, M., & Marshall, K. (2008). Innovation in PhD completion: The hardy shall succeed (and be happy!). *Higher Education Research & Development, 27*(1), 77–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360701658781.

Kempe, S. (2005). A conversation on conversation: A research journey with Professor Anne Sigismund Huff. *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management, 11*(2), 4–12.

Kiley, M. (2009). 'You don't want a smart Alec': Selecting examiners to assess doctoral dissertations. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*(8), 889–903.

Kobayshi, S., Grout, B., & Rump, C. O. (2015). Opportunities to learn scientific thinking in joint doctoral supervision. *Innovations in Education & Teaching International, 52*(1), 41–51.

Kumar, M., & Kumar, V. (2009). Recursion and noticing in written feedback. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 12*(1), 94–99.

Lamott, A. (1995). *Bird by bird: Some instructions for writing and life*. New York, NY: Anchor.

Laurs, D. (2014). One-to-one generic support. In S. Carter & D. Laurs (Eds.), *Developing generic support for doctoral students* (pp. 29–33). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Lee, A. (2008). Supervision teams: Making them work. *Guides on Postgraduate Issues*, Series 2, number 6.

Lee, A., & Boud, D. (2003). Writing groups, change and academic identity: Research development as local practice. *Studies in Higher Education, 28*(2), 187–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/0307507032000058109.

Lee, A., & Aitchison, C. (2009). Writing for the doctorate and beyond. In D. Boud & A. Lee (Eds.), *Changing practices of doctoral education* (pp. 87–99). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Leonard, D., Becker, R., & Coate, K. (2005). To prove myself at the highest level: The benefits of doctoral study. *Higher Education Research and Development, 24*(2), 135–149.

Lieb, S. (1991). Principles of adult learning, *VISION*, Fall. Retrieved from https://docplayer.net/16690157-Lieb-s-1991-principles-of-adult-learning-phoenix-az-vision-south-mountain-community-college.html.

Lockhart, J. C. (1997). *Towards a theory of the configuration and management of export-dependent land-based value systems: The case of New Zealand.* Doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland, New Zealand. Retrieved from https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/2229.

MacLure, M. (2010). The offence of theory. *Journal of Education Policy*, *25*(2), 277–286. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930903462316.

MacLure, M. (2013). The wonder of data. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 13*(4), 228–232.

Manathunga, C. (2012). Supervisors watching supervisors. *Australian Universities Review, 54*(1). Retrieved from https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=424318263696740;res=IELHSS.

Manti, L., & Dowling, R. (2015). Supporting the PhD journey: Insights from acknowledgements. *International Journal for Researcher Development, 6*(2), 106–121.

Marcus, A. (2015) It's a man's world—for one peer reviewer, at least. Retrieved from http://retractionwatch.com/2015/04/29/its-a-mans-world-for-one-peer-reviewer-at-least/.

McAlpine, L., & Norton, J. (2006). Reframing our approach to doctoral programmes: An integrative framework for action and research. *Higher Education Research and Development, 25*(1), 3–17.

McAlpine, L., Jazvac-Martek, M., & Hopwood, N. (2009). Doctoral student experience in Education: Activities and difficulties influencing identity development. *International Journal for Researcher Development, 1*(1), 97–109.

McCallin, A., & Nayar, S. (2012). Postgraduate research supervision: A critical review of current practice. *Teaching in Higher Education, 17*(1), 63–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2011.590979.

Mccaskill, M. (1990). *Grammar, punctuation, and capitalization: A handbook for technical writers and editors*. Retrieved from https://ntrs.nasa.gov/archive/nasa/casi.ntrs.nasa.gov/19900017394.pdf.

Mendelsohn, D. (2006). *The lost: A search for six of six million*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Mewburn, I. (2011). Shut up and write! The Thesis Whisperer blog. Retrieved June 14, from https://thesiswhisperer.com/2011/06/14/shut-up-and-write/.

Mewburn, I. (2011). Troubling talk: Assembling the PhD candidate. *Studies in Continuing Education, 33*(3), 321–332. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0158037X.2011.585151.

Mewburn, I. (2014). The zombie thesis. Retrieved from https://thesiswhisperer.com/2014/07/09/the-zombie-thesis/.

Mewburn, I., Tokareva, E., Cuthbert, D., Sinclair, J., & Barnacle, R. (2013). 'These are issues that should not be raised in black and white': The culture of progress reporting and the doctorate. *Higher Education Research & Development, 33*(3), 510–522. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2013.841649.

Mullins, G., & Kiley, M. (2002). 'It's a PhD, not a Nobel Prize': How experienced examiners assess research theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 27*(4), 369–386. https://doi.org/10.1080/0307507022000011507.

Murray, R. (2002). *How to write a thesis*. Maidenhead, UK: McGraw Hill/Open University Press.

Murray, R. (2011). *How to write a thesis* (3rd ed.). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.

Murray, R. (2013). 'It's not a hobby': Reconceptualizing the place of writing in academic work. *Higher Education, 66*(1), 79–91.

Murray, R. (2014). Doctoral students create new spaces to write. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory* (pp. 94–109). London, UK: Routledge.

Murray, R., & Newton, M. (2009). Writing retreat as structured intervention: margin or mainstream? *Higher Education Research & Development, 28*(5), 541–553.

Murray, R., & Cunningham, E. (2011). Managing researcher development: 'Drastic transition'? *Studies in Higher Education, 36*(7), 831–845.

New South Wales Ombudsman. (2016/2017). *Complaints about the Supervision of Post-Graduate Students*. New South Wales, Australia (ISBN 978-1-925569-50-6). Retrieved from https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications.

Nietzsche, F. (1998). *Twilight of the idols, or, how to philosophize with the hammer* (D. Large, Trans.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Original published 1888.

Nilsen, R. (2006). *Innovative developments in doctoral programmes for Europe*. Paper presented at the New dimensions in doctoral programmes in Europe: Training, employability and the European knowledge agenda. The UK Council for Graduate Education Summer Conference, Florence, Italy.

O'Connor, P., & Petch, M. (2012). Merleau-Ponty, writing groups and the possibility of space. In L. Clughen & C. Hardy (Eds.), *Writing in the disciplines: Building supportive cultures for student writing in UK higher education* (pp. 75–97). Bingley, UK: Emerald.

Oppezzo, M., & Schwartz, D. L. (2014). Give your ideas some legs: The positive effect of walking on creative thinking. *Journal of Experimental Psychology. Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 40*(4), 1142–1152. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036577.

Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. London, UK: Routledge.

Paré, A. (2010). Slow the presses: Concerns about premature publication. In C. Aitchison, B. Kamler, & A. Lee (Eds.), *Publishing pedagogies for the doctorate and beyond* (pp. 30–46). London, UK: Routledge.

Paré, A. (2011). Speaking of writing: Supervisory feedback and the dissertation. In L. McAlpine & C. Amundsen (Eds.), *Doctoral education: Research-based strategies for doctoral students, supervisors and administrators* (pp. 59–74). New York, NY: Springer.

Paré, A., Starke-Meyerring, D., & McAlpine, L. (2009). The dissertation as multi-genre: Many readers, many readings. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, & D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a changing world* (pp. 179–193). Fort Collins, CO: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlour Press.

Park, C. (2007). *Redefining the doctorate: A discussion paper*. York, UK: Higher Education Academy.

Picard, M., & Guerin, C. (2011). 'Be original, but not too original': Developing academic voice through innovative use of text-matching and concordancing software. In C. Nygaard, N. Courtney, & C. Holtham (Eds.), *Beyond transmission: Innovations in university teaching* (pp. 221–234). Farringdon, UK: Libri.

Pinker, S. (2014, September 26). Why academics stink at writing. *The Chronicle of Higher Education: The Chronicle Review*. Retrieved from http://stevenpinker.com/files/pinker/files/why_academics_stink_at_writing.pdf.

Poulsen, A. K. I. (2009). Another way with words: Language as twentieth-century art practice. Doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Rankin, E. (2001). *The work of writing: Insights and strategies for academics and professionals*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Reeves, M. (2000). Telling the tale of the rise of the novel. *Clio: A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History, 30*(1, Fall), 25–49.

Robertson, M. J. (2017). Team modes and power: Supervision of doctoral students. *Higher Education Research and Development, 36*(2), 358–371.

Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Scevak, J. (2006). Text features and aids in doctoral writing. In C. Denholm & T. Evans (Eds.), *Doctorates downunder: Keys to successful doctoral study* (pp. 159–164). Camberwell, UK: Acer Press.

Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schroter, S., & Tite, L. (2006). Open access publishing and author-pays business models: A survey of authors' knowledge and perceptions. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, 99*(3), 141–148.

Sharmini, S., Spronken-Smith, R., Golding, C., & Harland, T. (2015). Assessing the doctoral thesis when it includes publication. *Assessment and Evaluation, in Higher Education, 40*(1), 89–102.

Shortland, S. (2010). Feedback within peer observation: Continuing professional development and unexpected consequences. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 47*(3), 295–304.

Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. (2007). *Oxbridge*. UK: Oxford University Press.

Silvia, P. (2010). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: APA Life Tools.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. New York, NY: Zed Books.

Steel, K., Cohen, J. J., Hurley, M. K., & Joy, E. A. (2012). Why we blog: An essay in four movements. *Literature Compass, 9*(12), 1016–1032. https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12012.

Strauss, P. (2013). 'I don't think we're seen as a nuisance'—the positioning of postgraduate learning advisors in New Zealand universities. *Text Journal of Writing and Writing Courses, Special Edition.* Retrieved from 21textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue21/Strauss.pdf.

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (1994, 1996, 2004). *Academic writing for graduate students.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. (2000). *English in today's research world: A writing guide*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Swedberg, R. (2012). Theorizing in sociology and social science: To the context of discovery. *Theory and Society, 41*(1), 1–40. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-011-9161-5.

Sword, H. (2007). *The writer's diet*. Auckland, NZ: Pearson Education NZ.

Sword, H. (2009). Writing higher education differently: A manifesto on style. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*(3), 319–336.

Sword, H. (2012). *Stylish academic writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sword, H. (2016). 'Write every day!': A mantra dismantled. *International Journal for Academic Development, 21*(4), 312–322. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144x.2016.1210153.

Sword, H. (2017). *Air and light and time and space: How successful academics write*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tenopir, C., Volentine, R., & King, D. W. (2013). Social media and scholarly reading. *Online Information Review, 37*(2), 193–216. https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-04-2012-0062.

Thesen, L. (2014). 'If they're not laughing, watch out!': Emotion and risk in post-graduate writing groups. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Writing groups for the doctorate and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory* (pp. 172–176). London, UK: Routledge.

Thomson, P. (2013) Why write book chapters. Retrieved from https://patthomson.net/2013/06/17/on-writing-book-chapters/.

Thomson, P. (2014). Don't send your PhD examiner to sleep. Retrieved from https://patthomson.net/2014/07/03/sending-the-thesis-examiner-to-sleep/.

Thomson, P. (2015). Bad academic writing—An easy target. Retrieved from https://patthomson.net/2015/12/14/bad-ademic-writing-an-easy-target/.

Thomson, P., & Kamler, B. (2013). *Writing for peer reviewed journals: Strategies for getting published*. London, UK: Routledge.

Thomson, P., Byrom, T., Robinson, C. & Russell, L. (2010). In C. Aitchison, B. Kamler & A. Lee (Eds), *Publishing Pedagogies for the Doctorate and Beyond*. London, UK: Routledge.

Tinkler, P., & Jackson, C. (2004). *The doctoral examination process: A handbook for students, examiners and supervisors*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Trafford, V., & Leshem, S. (2002). Starting at the end to undertake doctoral research: Predictable questions as stepping stones. *Higher Education Review, 34*(4), 43–61.

Trafford, V., Leshem, S., & Bitzer, E. (2014). Conclusion chapters in doctoral theses: Some international findings. *Higher Education Review, 46*(3), 52–81.

Truss, L. (2003). *Eats, shoots & leaves: The zero tolerance approach to punctuation*. London, UK: Profile Books.

Watkins, M. (2011). *Discipline and learn: Bodies, pedagogy and writing*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publications.

White, B. (2011). *Mapping your thesis: The comprehensive manual of theory and techniques for masters and doctoral research*. London, UK: ACER.

Wisker, G. (2005). *The good supervisor: Supervising postgraduate and undergraduate research for doctoral theses and dissertations*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wisker, G. (2012). *The good supervisor: Supervising postgraduate and undergraduate research for doctoral theses and dissertations* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Macmillan International Higher Education.

Wisker, G., Robinson, G., Trafford, V., Warnes, M., & Creighton, E. (2003). From supervisory dialogues to successful PhDs: Strategies supporting and enabling the learning conversations of staff and students at postgraduate level. *Teaching in Higher Education, 8*(3), 383–397.

Wu, S. (2013). Filling the pot or lighting the fire: Cultural variations in conceptions of pedagogy. *Teaching in Higher Education, 7*(4), 387–895.

Young, M., & Muller, J. (2014). On the powers of powerful knowledge. In E. Rata & B. Barrett (Eds.), *Knowledge and the future of the curriculum: International studies in social realism* (pp. 41–64). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

Zeiger, M. (2000). *Essentials of writing biomedical research papers* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Zerubavel, E. (1999). *The clockwork muse: A practical guide to writing theses*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Zhao, C. G., & Llosa, L. (2008). Voice in high-stakes L1 academic writing assessment: Implications for L2 writing instruction. *Assessing Writing, 13*(3), 153–170.

Index