Postgrad Orientation

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Postgraduate research

- Objectives are to show that:
  - You can work independently on a significant project
  - Master a topic in detail
  - Work in a methodical and scientific manner
  - Present your results or findings in a professional manner
  - (...training for more research... e.g. PhD)
From undergrad to postgrad

(Possibly) 1\textsuperscript{st} time you’ve not had

- Regular lectures
- Assignments
- Hand-in deadlines
- Exams
- Class mates
Research as a postgrad can be
- Lonely
- Disorientating
- Confusing
- Frustrating
- Very rewarding
- ...
Thesis research

- To gain the most from the experience you need to
  - Structure
  - Plan
  - Discipline yourself
  - Motivate yourself
  - Support
How to be successful as a postgrad

For all types of research projects/theses

1. **Commitment**
   - Work every day, “It’s like a job”, persistence
   - Always stay in touch with your supervisors

2. **Development**
   - Good programming skills
   - Know how to use tools and best practices
   - Independent problem solving, persistence

3. **Reading and Writing**
   - Willing to read & analyze a lot of related work
   - Writing skills: spelling/grammar/style
Postgraduate myths

- My supervisor will do the hard work
- I’ll have plenty of time to write my dissertation/thesis
- I will be able to do other stuff (work, travel, studies) on the side
The CS Dept. & you

- The CS Dept. provides:
  - A desk
  - Access to computing facilities
  - Access to the Internet and printing (to a limit)
  - Technical support
  - A supervisor (at least one)
You & your supervisor

- This relationship is crucial

- You should meet regularly
  - Once a week or so

- Quality time is important
You & your supervisor

You should:

- Go to meetings with a list of items that you want to address
- Take notes
- Give your supervisor something in writing to review, a few days before the meeting
- Make a date and time for the next meeting
- Keeping google docs documents updated and open for read/edit from your supervisor
You & your supervisor

Your supervisor will:

- Provide you with general guidance
- Give you some suggestions
- Give you feedback on your writing
- Encourage you
- Criticize your work (based on years of experience supervising other students and doing research)
You & your supervisor

Your supervisor is NOT expected to:

- Do work for you
- Give you a step-by-step plan
- Debug your code
- Correct your English
Writing a dissertation/thesis

- Keep a research diary or journal
  - Record what you read (and surf)
  - Take notes when you read
  - Record what activities you do each day
  - Jot down ideas
  - Periodically read back through your journal

- Do not leave bibliography to the end
  - You may find you overlooked some interesting work
Your dissertation/thesis

- The hardest thing you’ve ever done?
- The dissertation/thesis is the goal
  - If your computer program is 100% perfect
  - But you don’t explain it in an academically-credible way

YOU FAIL !!!

- There is no 2\textsuperscript{nd} chance
Your dissertation/thesis

- Do not leave the writing until the end
  - Perfect code + poor diss/thesis = fail
  - Poor code + good diss/thesis = pass
- Write regular reports at each stage
- Give them to your supervisor (even if he/she doesn’t ask for them)
- They will become the basis of your dissertation/thesis
Writing a dissertation/thesis

- Give each chapter to your supervisor, one at a time
- Write chapters in this order:
  - Background
  - Design
  - Implementation
  - Evaluation
  - Conclusions
  - Introduction

Finally, write the abstract and title!
Writing a dissertation/thesis

- Before submitting, ask a friend to proof read your work
  - You might offer to proof read theirs!
- Do a spell-check and a grammar check
- Don’t assume that the examiners will “figure out” or be willing to guess at what you mean
  - If I concentrate on English I cannot read the science behind your work
- Be absolutely confident that you haven't plagiarized anything
  - Plagiarism is an automatic FAIL
The examination

VERY IMPORTANT

- The other examiner
  - Does not know you
  - Has never seen your computer program
  - Doesn’t know you’re an A+ student
  - Judgement is made **ONLY** on your dissertation
The University’s expectations

- Dissertations at The University of Auckland will vary from discipline to discipline, but in all cases successful dissertations/theses will be expected to demonstrate
  - Evidence of **independent thought**
  - Confident handling of **theoretically sophisticated material**
  - An ability to **evaluate critically the findings** and discussion in the relevant literature
  - An ability to engage in rigorous **analysis, criticism and problem-solving**
  - Mastery of the **conventions of the discipline** at a high level
Getting Help

- The Centre for Academic Development (CAD) has lots of help available post-grad support.

- Student health and counselling services.

- The Student Learning Centre.
Any problems 😞

- Talk to your supervisor first! (You can have two supervisors, even from different departments)
- Then talk to Beryl / Christof (We are independent & confidential)
- Talk to the Graduate Centre
- You can change supervisors midway
DISSEstATIONS (HONS AND PGDIP)
Planning a dissertation

- Plan (and keep to it)

- Work backwards from submission date
  - 2 months to revise your second draft
  - 2 months to write a second draft
  - 2 months to write a first draft
  - 1 month for evaluation
  - 2 months for coding, data collection, theorem-proving etc.
  - 1 month for design
  - 1 month for literature review
  - ~ 11 months – you must overlap some tasks!!!

- Length of dissertation:
  A rough guideline is 10000-12000 words
Expected presentations

- **End of 6th week**: Give a brief (ten-minute) oral presentation on initial research plan, either to your research group or at a general session. (You can also create web page and poster)

- **Before the end of lectures**: Make a final oral presentation, briefly describing your preliminary conclusions either to your research group or at a general session.
Submission

- **Due date:**
  Monday 5pm after last week of lectures

- **Submission:**
  - Email a PDF version of your dissertation to your supervisor(s) and the Student Administrator (Patricia Rood) (No hard copy is required)

- **Examination:**
  - Two examiners will examine, grade and report on your dissertation (one is likely to be your supervisor)
  - The examiners’ reports are reconciled by an external examiner
THESES
(MSC)
Planning a thesis

- Plan (and keep to it)
- Work backwards from submission date
  - 2 weeks for binding
  - 1 months to revise your second draft
  - 1 months to write a second draft
  - 2 months to write a first draft
  - 1 month for evaluation
  - 3 months for coding, data collection, theorem-proving etc.
  - 1 month for design
  - 1 month for literature review
  - 1-2 months to decide on topic
  - ~ 14 months – you must overlap some tasks!!!
Submission deadlines

- Deadlines (full time)
  - Start 1st semester, deadline = 15th Dec
  - Start 2nd semester, deadline = 1st May
  - Part-time students get an extra year

- Short extensions are usually granted
  - Start 1st semester, short extension = 28th Feb
  - Start 2nd semester, short extension = 15th July
  - Your initial plan should not include an extension.
Extensions and suspensions

- Long extensions and suspension are granted by the Dean of Science with departmental recommendation

- Both require evidence of exceptional circumstances (not foreseeable, extraordinary, outside of your control)

- Extensions can be granted for 2 or 3 months and further tuition fees are payable

- Suspensions can be for one or two semesters
The "Guide to Theses and Dissertations" tells you how to submit a thesis to the Graduate Centre.

- Have at least 3 copies of your thesis bound, usually by the University Bindery.

- Submit 2 of the bound copies to the Graduate Centre, where you will be issued a time-stamped submission receipt and yellow examination stickers will be attached to the 2 copies.

- Submit a digital copy to the Graduate Centre as well.

- Give your submission receipt, the 3 bound hardcopies, and 1 e-version on a CD, to the MSc Administrator.
Why 3 bound copies?

- The University requires the submission of 2 bound copies to deposit in the General Library.
- The Department requires 1 bound copy for the departmental library.
- The Department will reimburse you for the cost of binding 2 copies,
  - if you present your receipt from the University Bindery to the MSc Administrator for repayment and evidence of your bank account number.
- Your MSc supervisor may want to keep one copy: it is a nice gift 😊
Graduation

- The examination can take from 3 to 6 months so you may **not** be able to graduate in May if you submit after the 15 December deadline.

- You will **not** be able to graduate in September if you submit after the 1 May deadline.

- You can apply to graduate on Student Services Online only after you have received your final grade.
The examination

- Two examiners read your thesis
  - Your supervisor may be an examiner
  - Each Examiner writes a report, and recommends a grade
- An assessor reads the examiner’s reports, and reads your thesis and produces a report and grade based on the examiners’ reports
- At least one member of your examining committee is external to the University
- The Department Postgraduate Committee reconciles the reports and decides on the final grade
- The Postgraduate Dean of Science and the Graduate Centre sign off on the grade
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