

Tips for Doctoral Students at UC

Last updated: January 2025

- **Length of PhD** – PhDs have a minimum enrolment period of three years’ effective full-time study (3.00 EFTS or 360 points) and a maximum of four years’ effective fulltime study (4.00 EFTS or 480 points). This means that a full-time student cannot submit a PhD thesis for examination until three years after the date of original enrolment. If you suspend or go to part-time enrolment, that date will be shifted accordingly.
- **Submission date** – It is up to you to know the final date by which you need to submit your thesis. For full time students, the final submission date will be 4 years after the start date of your original enrolment, and for part time students it will be 6 years and 2 months after the start of the original enrolment. The submission date will be shifted accordingly if you have suspensions or change between studying part- and full-time. You decide when (within the permitted limits) your thesis is going to be submitted. Your supervisors will guide and advise you, but the submission date is your decision. Under exceptional extenuating circumstances, and with the support of your supervisors and department, school or programme, you may apply for an extension of your thesis submission deadline. Such applications must be made prior to the final date of submission and will not be approved automatically. Those that are approved will incur additional fees.
- **Fees and enrolment** – All doctoral students must be enrolled and have paid their fees throughout their entire time as a doctoral candidate. You should get an enrolment reminder email, but fees and enrolment are generally due on the anniversary of your first enrolment date. Students on scholarships will have their scholarship payments suspended if they are not enrolled. Your enrolment will end when you submit your thesis and you are not required to be enrolled during the examination of your thesis. If you are required to revise your thesis and resubmit it, you will need to re-enol and pay further fees.
- **Visas** – It is the responsibility of international students in New Zealand on visas to ensure that their visas are valid from one enrolment period to the next. If your visa is not current, you may not be able to re-enrol.
- **Setting expectations** – Early in your doctoral enrolment, it is important to discuss expectations with your supervisors; what you expect from them and what they expect from you. Particularly when you have come to New Zealand from overseas, you may find that your supervisors and you have different cultural norms. In many cases these may not be important to your relationship, but it is essential that you discuss any important cultural differences that you may have.

- **Supervision** – You must have at least two supervisors and no more than four. Your Senior Supervisor, who has primary responsibility for looking after your academic interests, must be a continuing member of the University’s academic staff (i.e. a lecturer). You can have other supervisors who do not work at UC.
- **Supervisory Agreement and Doctoral Confirmation processes** – The Doctoral Supervisory Agreement (including Appointment of Supervisors and Research Proposal) is the first milestone in the lifecycle of doctoral students and is due six months after enrolment. The Doctoral Confirmation process is typically conducted around 12 months and is a critical stage in a student’s candidature. A student who is not confirmed by this process cannot continue.
- **Progress reports** – Progress reports will be due every six months after confirmation. You are responsible for completing Progress Reports and other University documents as and when they are required. It is not your supervisors’ job to remind you or to fill out your part of a form.
- **Owning your research** – Your research and your thesis need to be your work. Your supervisors will help, advise and guide you, but in the end you are responsible. In other words, you must “own” your thesis and your research.
- **Talking to your Supervisor** – It is important that you talk to your supervisors on a regular basis and keep them informed about your work, your progress and any problems or impediments that you are experiencing.
- **Graduate Research Coordinators** – On occasions you may need to talk to someone else about academic issues. Your department, school or programme will have a Graduate Research Coordinator or Director of Postgraduate Studies who can provide you with further advice or direct you to someone else who can help you.
- **Paid work** – The University strongly recommends that you do not spend more than 20 hours a week on paid employment if you are a full-time doctoral student.
- **Ill health and other adversities** – If you become ill, have on-going health or family issues, or need to return to your home, it is very important that you inform your Senior Supervisor, who will advise you about what you need to do or will direct you to someone who can help you.
- **University closures** – New Zealand has a number of public holidays during which the University is closed. Where permitted by your department, school or programme, you may choose to work on these days, but buildings may be closed and few or no services will be available. Typically over summer, from about 21st December through to about 10th January, many staff are away.
- **Holidays** – In addition to the days of university closure (including public holidays), you are entitled to 4 weeks of holidays every year. You do not need to formally “apply” for such holidays, but should arrange them by agreement with your Senior Supervisor. You will not be granted a “suspension” for holidays.

- **Suspensions of study** – If you are unable to study for periods of a month or more you may apply for a suspension, during which you will not be required to pay fees. Note however, that scholarship payments will not be made over such periods and that suspensions of three months or more may have consequences for international students who hold study visas. Applications should be approved prior to the period of suspension.
- **Change of Study Location (extramural study)** – If you need to conduct part of your research outside of Christchurch, you must apply for extramural study by completing a Change of Study Location form. International students must realise that extramural study in excess of 12 months will incur international fees. It is recommended that all students travelling overseas have travel insurance. Those who have Student Safe insurance should check that their policy is valid for any intended periods and destinations.
- **Graduate research forms** – The forms you will need during your enrolment are often updated, so make sure you use the latest form downloaded from the Te Kura Tāura | UC Graduate School website ([Current doctoral students | University of Canterbury](#)).
- **Code of Conduct** – you are expected to follow the University’s Code of Conduct for students ([Student Code of Conduct | University of Canterbury](#)).
 - Abide by the policies and regulations of the University, and laws of New Zealand.
 - Abusive or inappropriate language and behaviour, and bullying are not acceptable.
 - Cheating, copying and plagiarism are not acceptable.
- **Email address** – your official UC email address will be an *@pg.canterbury.ac.nz* address. All university email messages will be sent to this address so you need to check it regularly.

Who can help me? Your supervisors, your Graduate Research Coordinator, Te Kura Tāura | UC Graduate School, Student Care, UCSA, Student Services.