# QPR

**2026**

# QUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

qpr.edu.au

## Transforming Graduate Research for the Future

Adelaide University | Flinders University

# National Wine Centre of Australia

LEVEL 1
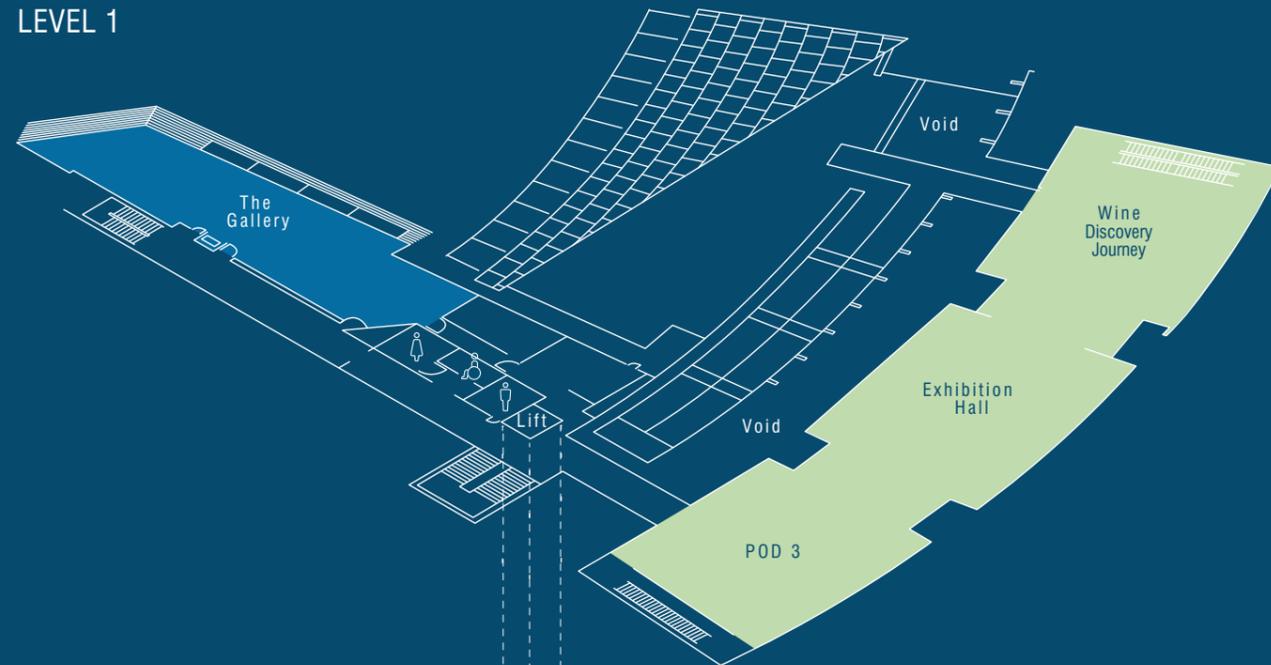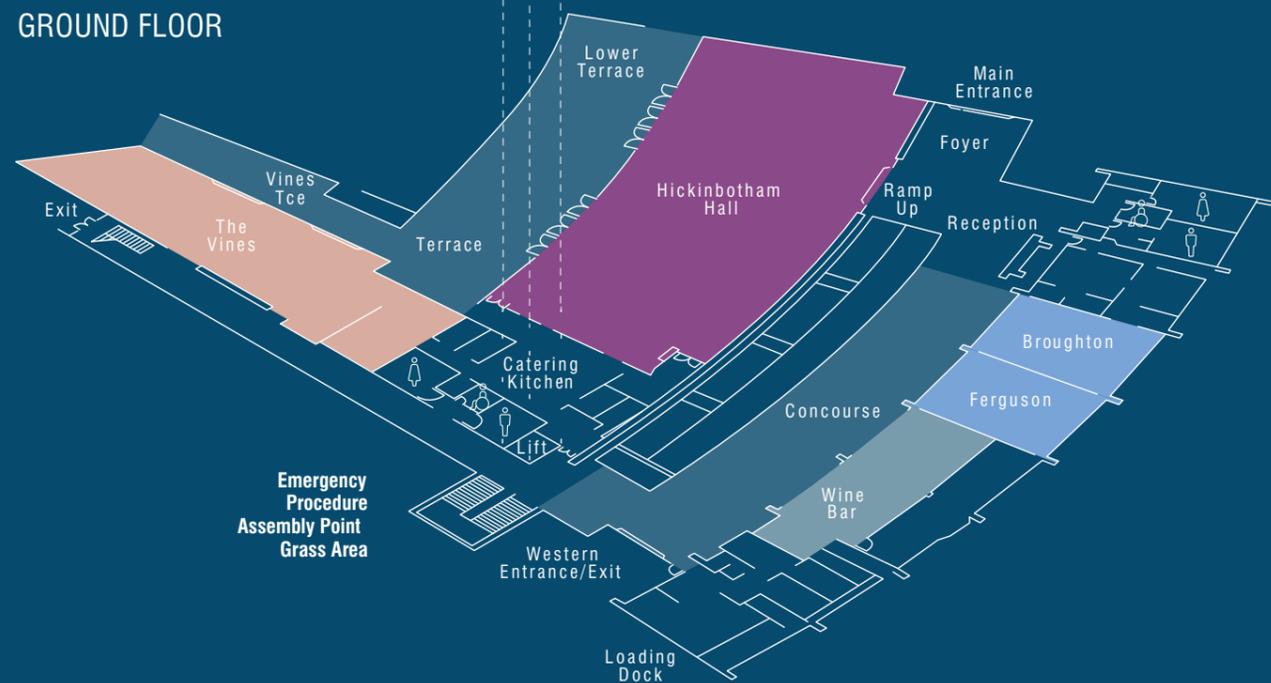
The Gallery

Void

Wine Discovery Journey

Void

Exhibition Hall

Lift

POD 3

GROUND FLOOR

Emergency Procedure Assembly Point Car Park

Lower Terrace

Main Entrance

Foyer

Vines Tce

Hickinbotham Hall

Ramp Up

Reception

The Vines

Terrace

Exit

Catering Kitchen

Broughton

Ferguson

Lift

Concourse

Emergency Procedure Assembly Point Grass Area

Wine Bar

Western Entrance/Exit

Loading Dock

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# WELCOME TO COUNTRY

**We acknowledge the Kaurna people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters of the Adelaide region.**

We recognise and honour the deep cultural, spiritual, social and emotional connections the Kaurna people have maintained with their land, waters and community for thousands of years.

We pay our respects to Kaurna Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to live, learn and work on this land, and acknowledge the enduring relationship the Kaurna people continue to have with Country.

**Cliffy 'Tangku Munaitya' Wilson**
(Proud Kaurna, Narungga, Ngarrindjeri, Ngadjuri, and Arrente Man)

Kuma Kaaru
kumakaaru.com.au

## From the Convenor

# WELCOME TO QPR2026, THE 15TH QUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

**For thirty years, QPR has brought representatives of the global doctoral education community together in Adelaide, South Australia, to discuss, debate and celebrate graduate research.**

Our aim has always been to understand and improve the research degree student experience. It is a worthy aim and we do this by exploring both theory and practice across the increasingly global research degree ecosystem.

Graduate research students contribute significantly to national and international  research endeavours and they are the people who will lead research and discovery in coming decades.

In twenty years' time I anticipate that some of the research students who are volunteering their time at QPR2026 this week will be returning as accomplished doctoral supervisors, Research Degree Coordinators, Deans of Graduate Studies and who knows what. Their importance to the future of scientific discovery and innovation cannot be overstated (I use the term scientific in the European sense to mean all forms of systematic investigation no matter what discipline it is undertaken in – be it the Humanities, Social Sciences or STEMM).

That importance is frequently overlooked in the busy-ness of everyday university life but here at QPR we have the chance to break through that busy-ness and take time to promote and celebrate all things graduate research.

This year's conference theme, 'Transforming Graduate Research for the Future' reflects both our desire to understand the way graduate research is being transformed and also our desire as actors in the doctoral education space to transform the practice and policy of graduate research in good rather than negative ways. The best way to improve the future is to understand both past and present and to learn from that understanding to integrate those learnings into future policy and practice.

This is the first QPR conference since the three South Australian-based Universities whose Deans of Graduate Studies organised the first in 1994 became two.

The University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia have become Adelaide University and this year's conference has been organised by Adelaide and Flinders Universities. The organisers have continued the conference's relationship with the Australian Council of Graduate Research, the Australasian Research Management Society, and CAPA (the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations).

To conclude, I welcome you to QPR2026 as representatives of this global doctoral education community - research students, supervisors, university policy-makers and managers, and scholars and researchers in the discipline of doctoral education. I am delighted to be able to welcome you once again to Adelaide and hope that you enjoy your time here and also find time for intellectual stimulation and at least some leisure.

As always, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the biennial gathering of the QPR community.

*Alistair McCulloch*

# Welcome.AI

**In the spirit of playfulness that has always characterised QPR and to make a positive use of one of the major challenges facing both Higher Education and, indeed, the world, I put the above welcome into ChatGPT and asked for it to be re-written in the style of a noir short story. I'll leave it to you to decide who's the better author!**
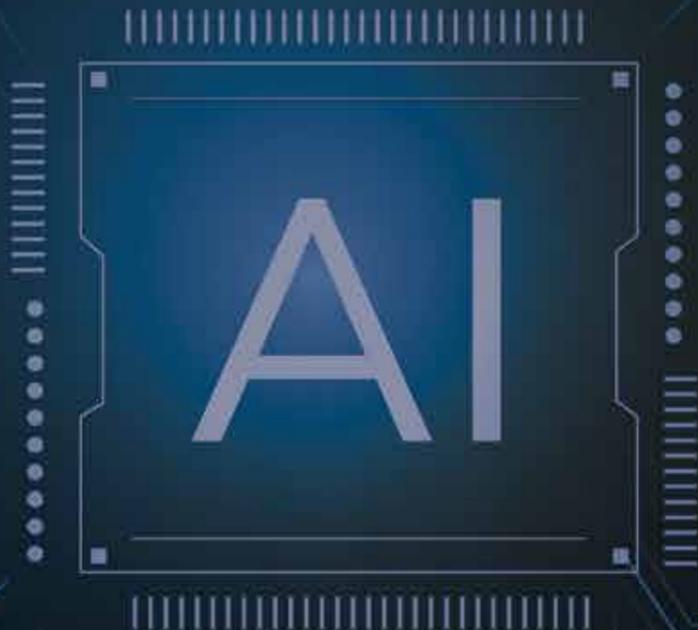
"The rain had been threatening Adelaide all afternoon, the kind that hangs in the air like a question nobody wants to answer. Inside the conference hall, the lights hummed low and warm, and the fifteenth gathering of the Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference—QPR2026 to those in the know—was getting underway.

For thirty years, the QPR crowd had been drifting into this corner of Adelaide, from every far-flung outpost of the doctoral world. Professors with tired eyes, research students with nervous ambition, administrators carrying policies like briefcases full of secrets. They came to talk about the same thing every time: the strange business of graduate research—how it works, why it breaks, and how it might be made better.

It's an honest aim. Understanding the life of a research student isn't simple work. It means walking the thin line between theory and practice, through a global maze of universities, disciplines, and ambitions. The ecosystem's bigger now than it used to be—bigger, louder, harder to read.

Graduate researchers sit right in the middle of it all. They're the ones doing the digging, turning over stones the rest of the world hasn't noticed yet. Give it twenty years and some of the volunteers passing out badges at QPR2026 will be back— older, sharper—running the show as supervisors, Research Degree Coordinators, maybe even Deans of Graduate Studies. Funny how the future walks past you wearing a lanyard and carrying a clipboard.

Their role in the long game of discovery is bigger than most people realize. Science—using the word the old European way, meaning any careful search for truth whether it happens in the Humanities, the Social Sciences, or the hard-edged corridors of STEMM—depends on them. But in the daily racket of university life, their importance can get lost in the shuffle. That's why gatherings like QPR matter. They cut through the noise. They shine a light where it counts.

This year's theme—*Transforming Graduate Research for the Future*—has a certain ring to it. Transformation's a tricky business. To change the future, you've got to understand the past and keep one eye on the present. Only then can you steer the system somewhere better.

And things have changed. The old trio of South Australian universities that launched the first QPR back in 1994 has become two. The University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia joined forces to become Adelaide University. This year the conference is being organised by Adelaide University and Flinders University—new arrangement, same old mission.

The usual allies are still in the room too: Australian Council of Graduate Research, Australasian Research Management Society, and Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations. Old partners in a long-running conversation.

So here we are. Researchers, supervisors, policy-makers, and students from every corner of the doctoral world, gathered again in Adelaide. A global community under one roof, trading ideas, arguments, and maybe a few good stories.

Thirty years plus is a long run for a conference. Long enough to earn another birthday.

Welcome to QPR2026. Pull up a chair, keep your mind sharp, and if you're lucky, you might even find a little time to enjoy the city before the rain finally decides to fall."

# QUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

**QPR Conference | 15-17 APRIL 2026**

**Transforming Graduate Research for the Future**

Doctoral education and graduate research more generally continue to be debated internationally with the issues under discussion including but not limited to form, purpose, the optimum number of graduates, stakeholder engagement and involvement, and delivery and assessment in an age of Generative AI being at the fore.

The participants in these debates are governments and supra-governmental bodies, as well as universities and those within them who deliver or study for postgraduate research degrees.

Since its inception in 1994, QPR has brought together interested and, sometimes, concerned parties from within these constituencies (supervisors, students, researcher developers, Deans and PVCs concerned with Graduate Research, professional staff and academics who deliver support, academic and skills development, and those whose academic research focus is the discipline of doctoral education).

Together, we bring our different understandings and perspectives to the forum of debate as we engage in an ongoing and always respectful discussion, debate and sense-making exercise about this complex and often challenging area of policy and practice – the arena within which graduate research training is shaped and delivered.

The biennial QPR conference is an important venue in which these debates take place attracting as it does key thinkers and scholars from across the world who are engaged in the area of doctoral education, something that over the years has positioned Adelaide as a key location in the global graduate research ecosystem.

# A SHORT HISTORY

**We are pleased to welcome you once again to Adelaide for the Quality in Postgraduate Research (QPR) Conference, Graduate Researchers: "Transforming Graduate Research for the Future."**

The QPR conferences are now well established as a meeting place for supervisors, postgraduate students, support staff, policy makers, administrators, members of government agencies and those who research in the area of postgraduate education. The conferences provide an opportunity to debate current policies affecting research education; to exchange views on current research and good practice; and to link staff and student interest groups.

### In the beginning: 1994

The first of the fourteen (to date) Adelaide 'Quality' conferences held in 1994 was titled *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Making it happen*. This conference, by its very title, indicated a concern with the, then new to Australia, Quality Audits. At the time there was a sense that universities knew 'where they were going and could make it happen.' The specific aim of the conference was to share good practice, and share we did.

### Brave or foolish: 1996

By 1996 much of the confidence had gone out of the title and the conference was asking *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Is it happening?* This was in direct response to the results of the three quality audits that had been conducted. These results gave pause to think as were indicated by the title of the opening keynote: Lessons from the Quality Review with the final panel session titled Life after the Quality Audit.

### What was the new agenda? 1998

Two years later in 1998 life was 'getting serious' as evidenced by the title of the conference *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Managing the new agenda*. What was the new agenda? To a large extent it was the West Report (Learning for life final report: Review of higher education financing and policy) suggesting in Chapter 6 that the community wanted to get better value from its investment in research training (West 1998).

### Could we afford the new agenda? 2000

It could be argued that the 2000 quality conference title *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Making ends meet* had an almost despondent ring to it in comparison to the upbeat *Making it Happen* of 1994. There was probably room for despondency as the Australian Government's Green and White papers had been published in the interim.

The Green Paper *New knowledge, new opportunities: A discussion paper on higher education research and research training* (Kemp 1999) and then the White Paper *Knowledge and innovation: A policy statement on research and research training* (Kemp 1999) have had a profound influence on the way in

which universities provide research education for students, how they monitor that experience, and how they are paid to provide that experience.

### Internationalising the agenda: 2002

The earlier conferences had always attracted a wide range of participants and strong participation from outside Australia, and in November 2001 New Zealand higher education instituted its own postgraduate conference. Following participation by a number of South Africans in earlier conferences there emerged in South Africa a biennial conference in the year other than QPR, and there have also been postgraduate conferences in Thailand.

The organisers of the 2002 conference were keen to integrate the perspectives of various participants and the countries they represented, hence the title *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Integrating perspectives* and so for the first time the conference had two keynote speakers from outside Australasia: the UK and Thailand.

# A Short History

## Using our imagination: 2004

The 2004 conference was sub-titled *Re-imagining research education* in the belief that the time was ripe for reflection and debate on how best to take advantage of the opportunities offered in many countries by new national policy frameworks that impact on supervisory practice and on student experiences and performance. In line with the theme, participants were invited to frame their contributions in terms of creative responses.

## Testing the creation of knowledge: 2006

The 2006 conference provided an opportunity for participants to engage in the double-barrelled meaning of the title: *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Knowledge creation in testing times*.

The 'testing times' referred to the Australian government's move to develop processes to assess the quality of Australian research; e.g. the Research Assessment Exercise (UK) or the Performance Based Research Fund (New Zealand).

Of particular interest to participants of the conference related to the Research Quality Framework that had been proposed for Australia. However, not long before the conference the 'roll-out' of the process had stalled with the appointment of a new Chair of the Expert Advisory panel hence there was a re-think of the issues involved.

## The global research environment: 2008

The title of the 2008 conference was *Research education in the new global environment* and it attracted outstanding local and international speakers and presenters.

The conference was fortunate in that Professor Barbara Evans, formerly of the University of Melbourne, spoke from her experience of being a Dean of Graduate Studies in Canada and Australia regarding doctoral education within the global environment. Barbara also introduced the three guests; from the USA, France and China.

## Educating rather than training: 2010

Ten years after the vigorous debate at the 2000 QPR regarding the use of the term 'training' rather than 'education' the title of the 2010 conference was *Educating Researchers for the 21st Century*.

The theme was skilfully addressed by Dr Wilhelm Krull, Secretary General of the Volkswagen Foundation, Germany.

Dr Krull outlined his vision in using research and research funding to provide opportunities for those in the global south.

## Narratives of transition: perspectives of research leaders, educators and postgraduates: 2012

The theme for the 2012 conference focused on the multiple transitions that permeate the world of postgraduate research, both nationally and internationally. Higher education throughout the world is undergoing transformations like never before. Universities and staff are undergoing public scrutiny, assessment and reduced funding while challenges to the core purposes of universities are prevalent.

Nevertheless, the importance of research and research training remain very much at the forefront of the higher education agenda. Issues to do with quality supervision, research training, timely completions, high quality publications, and increasing knowledge management and production are issues that continue to challenge administrators, academics, policy makers and postgraduate students in the academy.

It is of great analytical interest to study and report on how these transitions and transformations are evolving and impacting upon higher education governance, postgraduate research, research development and dissemination, research training, research leadership and academic lifestyle.

## Quality: 2014

In 2014, the Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference returned to its roots by having '*Quality*' as the central conference theme.

The conference explored different dimensions of quality, including, but not limited to the supervision relationship, in quality systems for managing candidature and in the development of publication skills and timely completions.

The three keynotes highlighted the fact that the doctorate is evolving but, as noted by the UKCGE's Gill Clarke, the purpose of the doctorate remains the same - the development of independent researchers producing high quality research. Both Thomas Jørgensen (EUA) and Joe Luca (Edith Cowan University) noted the need for 'quality cultures' that take cognizance of diversity and suggested good practice frameworks for the development of this culture at national, institution, department, supervisory team and student levels. With over 300 participants, the 11th conference got QPR's third decade off to a flying start.

# A Short History

## Society, Economy and Communities: 2016

The theme for 2016 invited our community to consider the big picture for postgraduate research in terms of *Society, Economy & Communities: 21st Century Innovation in Doctoral Education*. Globally, doctoral education continues to develop rapidly in terms of size, form, diversity and ascribed purposes. Alongside these developments, debates continue over its future, forms of delivery and the nature of the learning and innovation that it facilitates and engenders. These debates involve actors as diverse as individual research students and international bodies such as the OECD and the World Bank.

Our aim was to reflect on the socially contingent nature of doctoral education, including the role of agency in determining the research candidate's experience and also the structural and cultural factors impinging on that experience. In one keynote, Professor James Arvanitakis unpacked the tensions between what is said about doctoral education and what students actually experience.

Professor Helen Marsh, Vice-Chair of the group that produced the Australian Council of Learned Academies' (ACOLA) report on research education, emphasized in her keynote that, in order to achieve relevant 'contextualized' doctoral education for the 21st century, three important components need to be addressed: the person, the nation and the system.

## Impact, Engagement, and Doctoral Education: 2018

Our theme in 2018 was engagement in doctoral education and the impact this could have both on those who participate in it and also on the socio-technical environment within which it is delivered. We were very pleased to welcome the Chief Scientist of Australia (Dr Alan Finkel) who delivered a very informative and very entertaining opening plenary address on the importance of doctoral education to culture, innovation, and economic development in contemporary societies.

The focus on impact was taken further in the second plenary delivered jointly by Professor Gina Wisker and Dr Gillian Robinson (both from the UK), in an address co-authored by Professor Leibowitz from South Africa's University of Johannesburg who sadly could not join us in person because of a health issue that sadly took her life later in 2018. This thought-provoking session asked the audience to reflect on the purpose of the knowledge generated, developed, and refined in postgraduate research education, contrasting the sometimes competing purposes in Global North and Global South.

In the third and final plenary, Hugh Keans applied his critical eye to one of the darker impacts of doctoral study, the way in which it can impact on students' mental wellbeing. Drawing on many years of work with research degree candidates, Hugh identified the structural and cultural causes of negative mental wellbeing and left the conference with the strong message that it was the people in the conference room that could make a positive difference to mental wellbeing through their roles as Deans, supervisors and others working to support graduate researchers.

## Success in Doctoral Education: Perspectives on Research Training: 2020

Delegates had left the 2018 conference celebrating a highly enjoyable event and saying to each other that they hoped to meet again at the next conference in Adelaide in April 2020. That conference was due to focus on the large variety of perspectives on research training and had a great program of papers lined up but, as we now all know, in March 2020 the world began to shut down, slowly at first but then in a great rush as the full extent of the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. The conference had to be canceled (we had hoped that it would only be a postponement for a year, but it soon became apparent that face-to-face events were on hold for much more than a matter of months).

The conference was put on hold until 2024 and we hope the wait will have been worthwhile.

## Graduate Researchers: identity and importance: 2024

After a gap of 6 years enforced by the COVID19 pandemic, we chose as our conference theme in 2024 the identity and importance of Graduate Researchers, the people who constitute the beating heart of most universities' research engines.

We began with a plenary roundtable involving indigenous scholars from around the world who discussed doctoral education as a site of potential epistemic justice, foregrounding Indigenous and transcultural knowledges and identities. This opening session was the prelude to a full stream of presentations focused on Indigenous research and researchers.

Day two opened with Professor Pat Thompson talking about what social media memes can tell us about the Graduate Researcher experience, and Day three saw the Director of the Forrest Research Foundation and some of the doctoral students it works with and supports discussing the Foundation model and the way that affects those working within it.

The conference theme was also reflected in many of the papers that were presented with many examining aspects of the relationship between industry (defined very broadly) and doctoral research and researchers, and the careers that Graduate Researchers follow later. Supervision, the most important single relationship during the research student's period of study, and how to improve and enhance its impact continued to attract significant attention.

Delegates left the conference having had a greater range of topics to choose from than ever before and feedback suggested that a good and enjoyable time was had by the majority of those who came along.

# THE NATIONAL WINE CENTRE OF AUSTRALIA

**With its own on-site vineyard, the National Wine Centre of Australis grows several of the most important red and white varieties used in the Australian Wine Industry.**
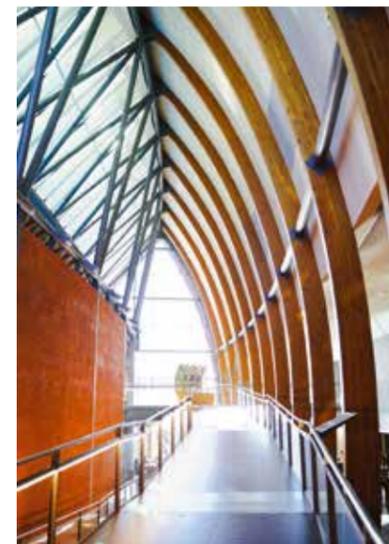
The National Wine Centre - the venue for QPR2026 is situated on the edge of Adelaide's stunning Botanic Gardens. The centre combines eye-catching architecture and smooth functionality to create an exciting tourism attraction which showcases the Australian wine industry. Then National Wine Centre was built in the year 2000 as a joint State and Federal Government venture and was officially opened in October 2001. The building has won many awards for the architecture due to the unique use of natural lighting, metal and wood.

From the rammed earth wall to the 150 year old jarrah wood floor boards used in Hickinbotham Hall, the National Wine Centre has the unique and incomparable feel of being in a winery or vineyard. Natural products were used to create the building in the shape and design of an oak barrel.

The National Wine Centre of Australia has planted its own on-site vineyard. Several of the most important red and white varieties used in the Australian Wine Industry are grown in the vineyards, located at the Hackney Road entrance.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Semillon and Riesling are featured with pride of place. The greatest number of vines is given to Shiraz, on which Australia has developed a worldwide reputation.

The National Wine Centre contains a flexible function venue able to cater for 10 to 1000 guests. The centre boasts six pillarless function spaces. The complex also features outdoor terrace areas with views of the stunning Botanic Gardens. Guests can complete their National Wine Centre experience by tasting fine Australian wines, or enjoying a meal from the seasonal tapas menu in the Cellar Door.

# General Information

## REGISTRATION DESK

The registration desk is located in the concourse foyer and will be open on Wednesday 15 April from 8.00am, the conference starting at 8.45 am.

## QPR CONFERENCE APP

In our commitment to sustainability, we're excited to announce that QPR has an App!

Connect with fellow attendees and stay in the loop with session times, overviews, speaker bios, maps, social functions + more!

**Step 1:** Download *Entegy Events* - Open the App Store on your mobile/Smart phone and download *Entegy Events.*

**Step 2:** Enter event access code: QPR2026

**Step 3:** Enter your personal login details email / name. Don't forget to allow access to others to help us all connect during the conference.

**Step 4:** Enjoy!!

For those who like an old school Conference Book, this is still accessible for download on our website qpr.edu.au.

## WI-FI

**SSID:** NWC Visitor
**Password:** Natwine00

Follow the prompts to register.

## COFFEE CARTS

Kindly sponsored by Epigeum to welcome you on day 1.

## LUNCH AND REFRESHMENTS

Will be served in Hickinbotham Hall and Terrace.

## WINE BAR

**Open daily from 8am – 6pm**

120 wines available for paid tastings, also cellar door services where wine can be purchased as gifts and shipping can also be arranged at additional charges.

## SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

If you have advised the organisers of a special dietary requirement, this information has been forwarded to the venue and food will be labelled according to dietary requests.

## MOBILE PHONES AND PAGING DEVICES

Please remember to bring personal chargers. Participants are asked to ensure that all mobile phones are switched off during Conference sessions.

## TOILETS

Are located next to Reception on Ground Floor. Additional toilets are located at the western end of the ground Floor and on level 1 next to the lift.

## SMOKING

For guests who smoke, there is smoking permitted on the terrace area outside the room. Please use the mounted ashtray next to the large tree past the iron gates facing Botanic Road.

## LUGGAGE STORAGE

Located within Hickinbotham Hall at the Eastern End within the bollarded area

## EMERGENCY EVACUATION

In the event of an evacuation, designation National Wine Centre staff will act as fire wardens to assist in the movement of all staff, exhibitors and visitors to the designated assembly point.

However the evacuation points are located on the ground floor at the Western End of the building past the WINED bar terrace at the Botanic Gardens end of the building.

## CAR PARKING

Exhibitor bump in and loading 2 x 15 minute unloading parks are located at the western end of the venue, access via the driveway on Botanic Road before bus stop 1 and entry via the concourse.

**Disabled parking**

2 x Disabled parks are located at the western end of the venue, access via the driveway on Botanic Road before bus stop 1 and entry via the concourse.

**Guest car parking**

Parking is available after the first parking bay off Hackney Road and on Plane Tree Drive in Botanic Park. Parking is Botanic Gardens Pay and Display metered parking with up to ten hours.

**First Bay – Hackney Road (1 Minute Walk)**

- Limited pay and display parking
- Maximum of 4 hours between 8am - 6pm
- Free parking after 6pm, all day Sunday and Public Holidays

Please Note: A section of the car park is marked 'Reserved Monday-Friday, 8am - 6pm' Please refrain from parking in these bays

**Second – Hackney Road, Botanic Park (3 Minute walk)**

- Limited pay and display parking
- Maximum of 4 hours between 8am – 6pm
- Monday to Friday $2.60 per hour, Saturday 0.70c per hour
- Free parking after 6pm, all day Sunday and Public Holidays

**Plane Tree Drive – Botanic Park (3 Minute walk)**

- Pay and Display
- Maximum of 10 hours between 8am - 6pm
- Monday to Friday $2.60 per hour, Saturday 0.70c per hour
- Free parking after 6pm, all day Sunday and Public Holidays

**Rundle Road (7 - 9 Minute walk)**

- Pay and Display, Adelaide City Council
- Maximum of 4 hours between 8am – 6pm
- Monday to Friday $15.60 for 4 hours maximum
- Saturday and Sunday $2.00 flat fee
- Free parking after 6pm

## TRANSPORT

**Public transport**

The city Tram line drops off near the Botanic Gardens entrance on North Terrace only a few minutes walk from the venue.

Adelaide Metro Infoline Bus, Train, and Tram timetables are available at:

adelaidemetro.com.au

**Taxis**

Should you require to book a taxi, there is a taxi phone located at the Reception Desk on the ground floor near the Main Entrance.These are linked directly to Suburban Taxis Pick up is from the base of the ramp on Hackney Road.
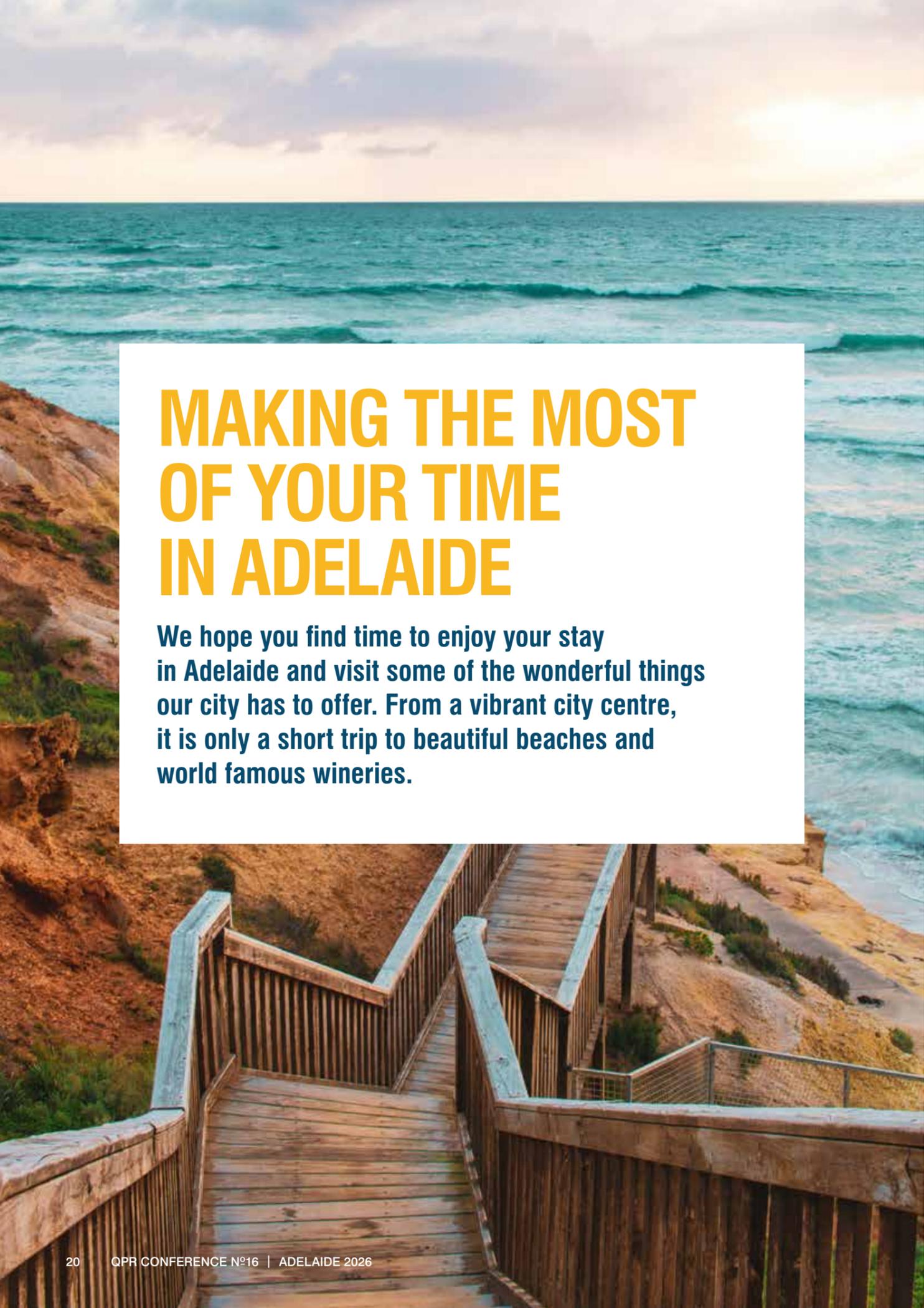
# MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME IN ADELAIDE

**We hope you find time to enjoy your stay in Adelaide and visit some of the wonderful things our city has to offer. From a vibrant city centre, it is only a short trip to beautiful beaches and world famous wineries.**

### City Centre

Physically gifted with luxuriously wide boulevards, great swathes of parks and gardens, enormous skies and wide-open spaces, Adelaide is also a city of contrasts. Elegant sandstone architecture stands opposite edgy bohemian laneways and alleys. Highly awarded fine dining restaurants exist alongside pop up bars and food trucks. Sophisticated cultural events run in unison with the delightful madness of performing arts and music festivals.

Rundle Street is the heart beat of Adelaide's ever popular cosmopolitan East End District. Located between Frome Street and East Terrace, it has a vibrant social scene that fills the cafes and bars dotted amongst (or in) historic buildings.

Discover cutting-edge fashion stores and leading designer labels, funky gifts, home wares, jewellery and accessories. The quality, variety and mix of fashion and specialty retail are second to none.

Be tantalised all year round by some of Adelaide's best known cafes, restaurants and wine bars. Enjoy alfresco dining and the vibrancy that makes this street one of Adelaide's favourites.

Enjoy pubs and hotels, some of the oldest and grandest in Adelaide and catch a flick at the famous Palace Nova East End Cinema, or the Mercury Cinema near UniSA's City West campus which features art house, foreign and main stream films.

Take a detour down the wonderful laneways off Rundle Street, such as Ebenezer Place and Vardon Avenue. Discover some of Adelaide's grooviest fashion stores and other quirky shops.

### Wineries

Adelaide is home to several world-famous wine regions, including the Adelaide Hills, the Barossa, Clare Valley, the McLaren Vale and Coonawarra. The countryside is littered with wineries and their cellar doors, offering a broad selection of wines and dining.

### Beaches

One of our favourite things about Adelaide's metropolitan beaches is the fact that they're so accessible. Feeling drained after a day at work? Jump in the car, chuck on your swimmers and within the hour you can be sprawled on a towel in the sun at Semaphore or perfecting your freestyle at Moana. With so many options so close to the city, it's easy to be overwhelmed.

But fear not. Here are our top beaches in Adelaide.

**Glenelg**

**Brighton**

**Henley**

**Grange**

**Semaphore**

**Port Noarlunga**

**Christies Beach**

**Moana**

**Hallet Cove**

# Primary Sponsors

### Adelaide University

Adelaide University is a leading contemporary comprehensive university of global standing. We are dedicated to ensuring the prosperity, wellbeing and cohesion of society by addressing educational inequality through our actions and through the success and impact of our students, staff and alumni. Partnered with the communities we serve, we conduct outstanding future-making research of scale and focus.

adelaideuni.edu.au

### Flinders University

Flinders University vision is to be internationally recognised as a world leader in research, an innovator in contemporary education, and the source of Australia's most enterprising graduates.

Flinders University's purpose is to change lives and change the world, and this is translated into action by serving both the best interests of our students and the needs of our community.

Our Values anchor who we are and how we act. Integrity, Courage, Innovation and Excellence shape the standards we set for ourselves, and form the enduring foundation for our collective purpose and ambition for the decade ahead.

flinders.edu.au

# Gold Sponsors

### Epigeum

Epigeum is the leading provider of exceptional online courses designed to help universities and colleges transform their core activities – in research, studying, and support and wellbeing.

epigeum.com

### Tricky Goose Training

Tricky Goose specialises in education about research quality, ethics, integrity, and supervision. Our courses are more scholarly, and frankly, more fun. We customise our courses to suit your institution's policies and preferences. We have a simple process to make these changes for you.

trickygoose.training

### The Habit Lab

The Habit Lab delivers science-backed, neuro-inclusive habit systems helping schools, universities and organisations prevent overwhelm, sharpen focus, protect mental health, and build sustainable performance through practical courses, group intensives and consultancy.

thehabitlab.com.au  Tiny habits®. Big impact.

&

### Fistral

**Our purpose is simple: to help researchers fulfil their potential and make a meaningful difference through their work.**

Fistral supports HDRs build the transferable skills they need to thrive during and beyond their Masters or PhD. For over 20 years we have partnered with universities and organisations worldwide to deliver practical, research-contextualised training in areas such as project management, communication, personal effectiveness, leadership, teamworking and collaboration.

fistraltraining.com

# the habit lab.

***Researcher-first training that strengthens capacity, careers and culture***

→ **HABIT ESSENTIALS™**

**A 24/7 on-demand habit skills toolkit to supercharge productivity and protect wellbeing.**

A digital program developing capability in applied habit science and realistic, capacity-aligned research planning. Participants learn strategies to build daily habits that sustain progress and protect focus, while managing energy and leveraging AI to simplify work and life.

For the whole researcher community — particularly effective for orientation, transitions, neurodiverse communities and supervisors.

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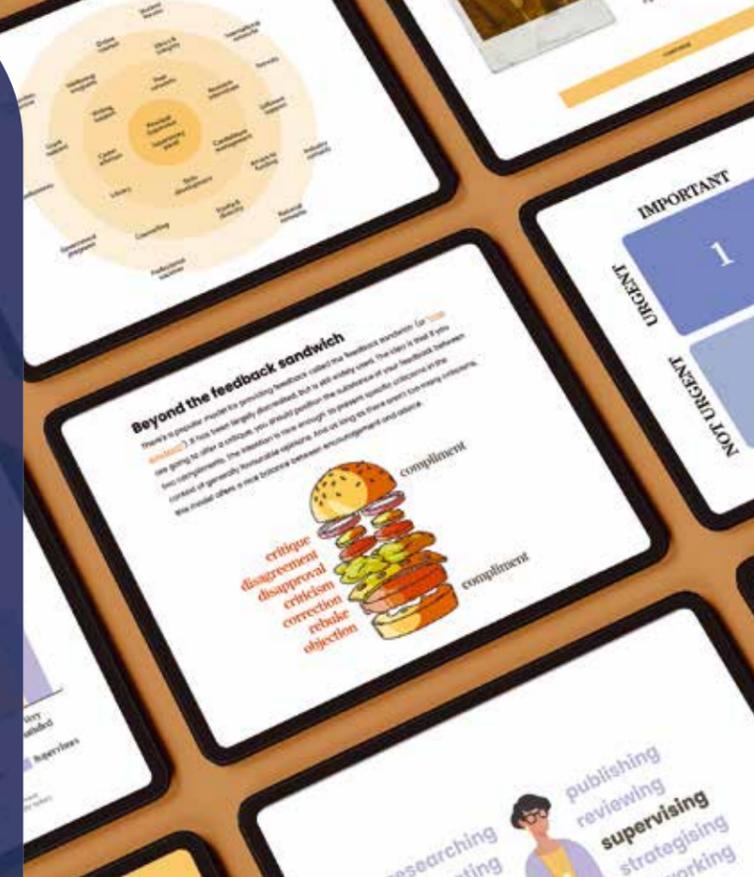 — Professor

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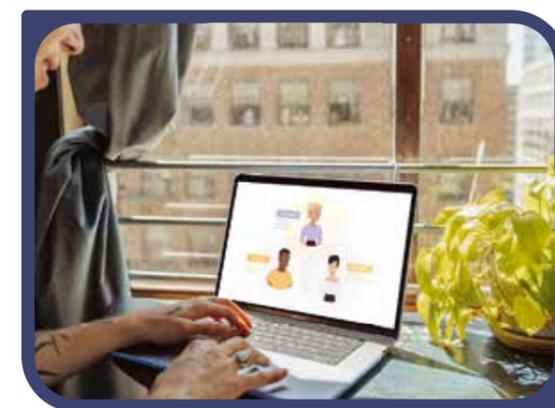
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The Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS) is the peak professional body for Research Management Professionals across the Australasian region including Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. It's membership encompasses Universities, independent research institutions, government and health and research organisations. ARMS is dedicated to the development of Research Management Professionals, the promotion of the profession of research management, and the advancement of the research and research management enterprise. It does this through professional training and development, including a professional accreditation program; knowledge exchange through regional chapters, SIGs, Networks, regular events, the annual conference and a suite of online resources; as well as advocacy for the profession.

researchmanagement.org.au

### On The Reg Team

On The Reg Team is a training company dedicated to helping researchers be efficient and happy at work. In these trying times, this goal is harder than you would think! Our workshops provide fun, safe spaces for people to explore their work habits and develop new ones. We work with researchers inside and outside the academy to improve work practice and reduce stress. All our workshops feature AI tips and tricks as well as tried and true methods to improve writing and teaching practices as well as enable high quality research.

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## ARMS
Australasian Research Management Society

## Join our Research Management Community

### ARMS Membership 🔗

ARMS is the leading professional body for Research Management Professionals across Australasia (including Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Singapore, providing the tools, training, and connections to help you thrive at any career stage.

### Strategic Plan: Towards 2030 🔗

*ARMS' Strategic Plan: Towards 2030* strengthens our role as the peak body for research management, focusing on advocacy, professional development, inclusivity, and honouring Indigenous knowledges. The plan supports a diverse, connected member community and a future-ready research ecosystem.

### Accreditation Programs 🔗

ARMS offers flexible accreditation pathways that support Research Management Professionals at every career stage. We offer programs specifically tailored to Research Management Professionals working in Higher Degree Research (HDR) enviorments.

### SIGs & Networks 🔗

ARMS offers a range of Special Interest Groups and Networks that connect members with shared professional interests. The Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) and ARMS run the Australasian Research Training Network (ARTN), open to all members involved in, or supporting, higher degree research.

### ARMS 2026 Conference 🔗

The ARMS 2026 Conference runs 9–11 September at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. Early Bird registrations are still available! Join colleagues from across Australasia, Singapore, and beyond under the theme "Connected Futures: Partnerships, Platforms, and People Powering Research."

# Special Thanks

The Quality in Postgraduate Research community extends its sincere appreciation to Professor Alistair McCulloch for his distinguished service and enduring commitment to the QPR Conference.

His leadership, scholarly insight, and dedication to enhancing postgraduate research have been instrumental in shaping the conference's standing and continuing success.

## Organising Committee

**Professor Alistair McCulloch**
Adelaide University and
Conference Convenor

**Associate Professor Tania Crotti**
Adelaide University and
Co-Conference Convenor

**Dr Dani Milos**
Flinders University and
Co-Conference Convenor

**Lea McBride**
Conference Coordinator -
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Event Styling & Planning

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**Professor Alistair McCulloch**
Adelaide University

**Associate Professor Tania Crotti**
Adelaide University

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**Dr Mark Gregory**
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**Professor Louise Sharpe**
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the Australian Council of
Graduate Research [ACGR]

**Tracy Sullivan**
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NATIONAL WINE CENTRE

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ALPHA STATE

## Social Events

### THE SOCIAL SIDE OF QPR

**We're delighted to welcome you back to QPR in beautiful Adelaide, where incredible local produce and award-winning Australian wines await.**

#### WEDNESDAY 15 APRIL

**When:** 6:00pm onwards

**Where:** Hickinbotham Hall & Terrace, National wine Centre

**Bookings:** Reach out to QPR staff at admin@qpr.edu.au or visit www.qpr.edu.au to book online.

**We've found a formula that works.** Reconnect with colleagues in the beautiful terrace setting of the National Wine Centre, where you can walk, mingle, and enjoy the evening, no large formal tables required.

Join us for a taste of some of the best food and wine South Australia has to offer, as we combine welcome drinks and dinner into one fabulous event celebratigng our vibrant festival state.

Enjoy exceptional food, drinks, and entertainment while getting to know your fellow delegates in a relaxed and social atmosphere.

At just $80 per person, this is an evening not to be missed.

#### THURSDAY 16 APRIL

**When:** 6:00pm onwards

**Where:** Adelaide CBD - Adelaide

**Bookings:** Delegates to contact venues personally. Adelaide is renowned for its food & wine scene creating a perfect way to spend time with fellow delegates in our beautiful city.

There are a number of wonderful locations within 15min walking distance of the National Wine Centre, ranging from traditional Aussie pubs, through to wine bars, comedy clubs and some of Australia's most unique dining experiences. Head to Rundle Street and take a walk around a huge range of mouthwatering options.

Africola

Golden Boy (Thai)

Society

Daughter In Law

Nola

The Howling Owl

Staazi & Co.

Mothervine

Mr Goodbar

The Exeter Hotel

The Austral

Lemongrass (Thai)

San Churo

Eros Kafe (Greek)

Brklyn

# Artists

**South Australia proudly holds its reputation as the Festival State, and we are delighted to present a selection of our finest musicians for an enchanting evening under the stars.**

### ADELAIDE STRING DUO

Jacqui and Brenton Edgecombe are the Adelaide String Duo, partners in music and in life. They have been performing together since 1997 having met as fellow members of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Their unique violin and cello duo performs music across a wide range of genres, from classical to folk to hard rock!

Jacqui and Brenton have lived in Sydney and Melbourne, performing internationally in theatres, clubs and on cruise ships with their multi-MO-Award winning musical variety act String Fever. Since 2017 they have been happy to call Adelaide home again and are enjoying the musical life of their beautiful native city.

### NANCY BATES

Nancy Bates is a First Nations composer, writer, educator, and proudly Barkindji. With cultural ties to communities running the length of the Baarka, she is a river woman living a multifaceted life, intertwining music, education, and advocacy to weaponise and resist colonisation.

Recognising her exceptional contributions to the music industry, Nancy Bates has been honoured as an Ambassador for the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA).

## ◯ Epigeum
### A Sage Resource

# Research Programmes

**The Epigeum Research Programmes** support academics throughout all stages of their career, and are flexible enough to fit around a researcher's busy schedule. Programme materials are developed to reflect key issues in research practice, build vital knowledge and skills, and encourage researchers to reflect on their own practices and opportunities for further development.

## Supervising Doctoral Studies

### Update coming soon in 2026

*Supervising Doctoral Studies* offers comprehensive, flexible and engaging training in the core principles and practices of doctoral supervision, to equip and empower supervisors to support candidates' development into independent researchers. Aimed at both new and experienced doctoral supervisors in all disciplines, the programme addresses emerging developments in the field to ensure that supervisors maintain a current knowledge of the context in which they work, and can navigate responsibilities with confidence.

To better support supervisors, *Supervising Doctoral Studies* will be updated in 2026 to provide enhanced resources and guidance.

## Mastering Mentoring

### In development

The *Mastering Mentoring* programme is designed to support the development of meaningful relationships and create a supportive and inclusive environment. Mentoring opens doors and provides an opportunity for growth by providing access to knowledge, resources and networks, which is especially important for researchers in the early stages of their career. The programme will provide an online university-wide curriculum for researchers who are mentors and mentees by scaffolding the key skills and attributes required to develop effective and rewarding mentoring relationships.

*Mastering Mentoring* will take a two-stream approach, focusing on upskilling mentors and preparing mentees for mentorship.

### Contact us

Get in touch with our academic partnerships team today to find out more about the courses we have available and how they can work together as a bundle to meet your institution's needs.

**www.epigeum.com**

# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Each day of QPR2026 will open with a plenary session, Days 1 and 2 will take the form of traditional keynote addresses and on Day 3 the conference will engage with a roundtable discussion exploring the unique contribution graduate research capabilities can make in the small and medium enterprise context.**

This will touch on issues to do with skills recognition, industry engagement, and entrepreneurship in the Graduate Research space. Our two keynote addresses will look to the future of the PhD as a qualification and form of research training and also at the future of research degree supervision. Between them, our plenary sessions will address fundamental issues in the structure, content and purpose of the graduate research degree and will set the scene for the conference's exploration of the central issues involved in transforming graduate research for the future. Taken together, our speakers will set the tone and agenda of the conference and precipitate three days of in-depth discussion on all-things doctoral.

## Keynote Speakers





**Professor Louise Sharpe** is Pro-Vice Chancellor (Researcher Training) at the University of Sydney and ACGR President (2025–2026). A clinical psychologist, she researches psychosocial interventions for chronic illness. She has published 300+ papers, supervised 60+ HDR students, held continuous NHMRC/ARC funding since 2001, and received distinguished career awards.

**Dr Karen Clegg** is Reader in Doctoral Education in the School for Arts and Creative Technologies at the University of York and Co-PI/Director of the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP), a £4.6million, Research England funded project designed to transform the practice and culture of research supervision.

# Keynote Speakers

**Dr Nigel Palmer** is Senior Policy Manager for skills and education with Business NSW. Nigel works at the intersection of education, industry and public policy. He has over 20 years' experience in tertiary education policy, research education, industry engagement and program development, and is a Visiting Fellow with the Australian Studies Institute.

His doctoral research at the Australian National University considered the definition and measurement of quality in doctoral education. Nigel has been involved in supporting interdisciplinary graduate research for many years, fostering original research among emerging scholars. His mission is to promote quality and innovation in education, research and workforce development.

Nigel will be joined by panelists Professor Inger Mewburn, Tara Jacobsen, and Dr Jodie Trembath.

# Panelists

**Professor Inger Mewburn** is the Director of Researcher Development at The Australian National University, but she is better known as @Thesiswhisperer on the internet. Aside from running workshops for ANU researchers, she creates new posts on the Thesis Whisperer blog, writes scholarly papers and authors books about research education. She has special interests in post PhD employability, research communications and neurodivergence.

**Tara Jacobsen** is a workforce strategist, educator, researcher, and PhD candidate exploring how social capital shapes employability and entrepreneurial outcomes. Co-founder and Director of Groei Education+, she designs industry-aligned learning pathways that build transferable capabilities, adaptability, and leadership across sectors. Her work connects human capability, enterprise innovation, and non-linear career development.

**Dr Jodie Trembath** leads ACCI's skills and workforce policy portfolio, covering education, training, employment, migration, small business, and tourism. She chairs the Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance Taskforce, serves on the Ministerial Advisory Board for Jobs and Skills Australia and the Manufacturing Skills Australia board, and cochairs JSA's Education and Training Advisory Group. She holds a PhD in organisational anthropology from ANU.

## Keynote Speakers

## Presentation 01

📅 Wednesday, 15 April
9:30am

📐 Hickinbotham Hall

🧍 Keynote Address

# PROF. LOUISE SHARPE

Professor Louise Sharpe is Pro-Vice Chancellor (Researcher training) at the University of Sydney. She has been a member of the ACGR executive committee since 2024 and ACGR President in 2025 and 2026.

Louise has been an academic at the University of Sydney since 1999, after she finished her PhD at the University of London. She is a clinical psychologist, by training, and focuses on psychosocial interventions for people with chronic health conditions, like chronic pain and cancer. She has published more than 300 peer-reviewed publications, had more than 60 Higher Degree Research students and has had continuous funding from either NHMRC and/or ARC since 2001.

Her contributions have been recognised with Ian M. Campbell distinguished career award for contributions to Clinical Psychology (Australian Psychological Society, 2007) and the distinguished career award for contributions to cognitive behaviour therapy (Australian Association Cognitive Behavioural Therapy [AACBT], 2015).

She is a fellow of AACBT and the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia.

## Future Proofing the PhD: Ensuring Research Capacity for Australia into the Future

**Professor Louise Sharpe** ACGR President and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Researcher Training), University of Sydney

The PhD remains the cornerstone of Australia's research capability — producing not only the next generation of academic leaders, but also the innovators and problem-solvers our nation, and the world needs. As we face growing global challenges it has never been more important to understand why we need the PhD and why we need PhD candidates. And most importantly, to ensure that our research training system is fit for the challenges ahead?

In this keynote, Professor Sharpe will benchmark Australia's research training system against international trends. She will examine the crucial role of advocacy in building public awareness of the PhD's value — not only to universities, but to the nation's social, economic, and cultural future.

To this end Professor Sharpe will showcase key initiatives led by the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) to support and promote quality in research training, including the newly developed:

· ACGR Researcher Development Framework

· Good Practice Guidelines for Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Research Training

· Good Practice Guidelines for Supporting Neurodivergent HDR Candidates

· Sector Snapshot of Industry Engagement in HDR

These initiatives, grounded in evidence and best practice, aim to broaden participation, strengthen research culture, and promote the critical importance of the PhD in training a workforce of individuals equipped to meet the complex global problems before us.

# DR. KAREN CLEGG

Karen is Reader in Doctoral Education and Practice in the School for Arts and Creative Technologies at the University of York.

Karen is Co-PI/Director of the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP) is a £4.6million, Research England funded project designed to transform the practice and culture of research supervision. Working with 58 research organisations and global businesses RSVP is believed to be the largest collaborative, cross-disciplinary, translational research project into doctoral education ever funded.

Karen has been actively involved in researcher development for over 25 years and designed programmes for GTAs, Fellows and Research Leaders at the University of York. She has published on assessment and reflective practice in HE and doctoral education. She is an elected executive member of several professional bodies, a trained coach and an accomplished conference speaker.

### Recent Publications:

Forthcoming: Kitano T and Clegg K (2026) *Enabling Effective Team Supervision (title tbc)* in the 2nd Edition of Gasson S et al 'Confident Supervisors: creating independent researchers'.

Kitano, N., Aldous, C., Race, D., & Clegg K (2026) T*he Taboo of Power Dynamics in Doctoral Supervision: Cross-Cultural Insights from Australia, South Africa, and the South Pacific region in Higher Education Quarterly Special Edition.* Wiley-Blackwell Publishers. Published in association with SRHE.

Clegg K, Quinlan L and Palmer N (2025) *Research Supervision in the Context of REF - time for a stepchange?* Wonkhe 24 January

Gower O, Clegg K and Cleaver D (2024) *The UK Research Supervision Survey (UKRSS) 2024.* UK Council for Graduate Education.

Clegg K, Houston G & Gower O (2024) *Doctoral Supervision and Research Culture: what we know, what works and why.* Routledge

Clegg K (2023) *A Team Approach to PhD Supervision.* WonkHE.

*Shining a light on supervisors can improve research culture.* Research Professional. 20 September 2023.

2021 - *Coverage of the UKCGE UK Research Supervision Survey -* WonkHE, Times Higher Education, Nature

Taylor S and Clegg K (2021) '*Towards a framework for the recognition of good supervisory practice,' in Lee A and Bongaardt R (Eds).* The Future of Doctoral Education, Routledge

Braccia E, Clegg K, Davies J, Palmer N, and Mark Smith (2021) *Crisis as Opportunity: the challenges for (Business) Doctoral Schools in Global Focus*, the EfMD Buisness Magazine https://www.globalfocusmagazine.com/crisis-as-opportunity/

Clegg K and Bryan C (2019) 2nd Edition '*Innovative Assessment in Higher Education: a handbook for academic practitioners'*

Thursday, 16 April 09:15am

Hickinbotham Hall

Keynote Address

## Transforming Graduate Supervision for the Future: creating and curating change.

**Dr Karen Clegg** Co-Director/Principal Investigator RSVP and Reader in Doctoral Education and Practice, School for Arts and Creative Technologies, University of York,

Underpinning the themes of QPR 2026 is a recognition that change in graduate education is needed. We are invited to collectively re-imagine the size, scope, scale and accessibility of doctoral research for the next generation of researchers.

In this keynote address I'll explore the vital role that research (HDR) research supervision plays in providing the environment and culture(s) in which researchers can thrive and flourish as individuals and who can contribute to society by conducting research that embraces modernity, welcomes complexity and invites challenge.

The Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP), aims to transform the culture and practice of research supervision. Working with 58 practitioner partners from across the globe, RSVP is believed to be the largest project focussed on disrupting, celebrating and recognising supervision practice.

Drawing on focus groups with academic and industry based supervisors, Deans and Directors of Doctoral Schools and higher degree researchers and empirical evidence from the UK Research Supervision Survey 2024 we will take stock of what we know about the supervisory experience. We'll then explore how team supervision can provide the context in which the creativity, collegiality, collaboration, communication and compassion needed for effective and world enhancing research can grow.

In conclusion, we'll look at the future of supervision practice as a vehicle for culture change and how we, as educators, creators and curators of researcher development can effect sustainable change.

## Keynote Speakers

# DR. NIGEL PALMER

Nigel Palmer is the Senior Policy Manager for Skills and Education, BusinessNSW and an AuSI Visiting Fellow from the Australian Studies Institute.

Nigel's areas of research include higher education quality assurance and research education policy and practice. Nigel has been actively engaged in policy development in Australian higher education since 2005, having authored submissions to over ten government inquiries and appearing to give evidence before five federal parliamentary committees.

Recent publications include *Mind the Cap: Postgraduate Coursework Degrees and Tuition Fees in Australia* (2018), *Degree Completion as an Indication of Quality* (2016), *The Modern University and its Transaction With Students* (2014), *Research Training in Australia* (2013), *System-Level Quality Strategies & the Student Experience* (2013), *The CRC Contribution to Research Training* (2012) and *Selection & Participation in Higher Education* (2011).

Nigel also recently presented a paper on diploma supplements and graduate mobility at the 12th Session of the UNESCO Regional Committee on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education.

Recent consultancy projects include development and delivery of HDR Leadership and Peer-to-Peer programs, benchmarking policy and practice in doctoral education and capacity-building for qualifications recognition and graduate mobility for APEC.

Nigel will be joined by Tara Jacobsen, Inger Mewburn, and Jodie Trembath.

## Presentation 106

### Beyond Employability: Graduate Research Capability in an SME Context

**Hosted by Dr Nigel Palmer** Senior Policy Manager for Skills and Education, BusinessNSW & AuSI Visiting Fellow, Australian Studies Institute. Nigel will be joined by Tara Jacobsen, Inger Mewburn and Jodie Trembath

Research education around the world is increasingly informed by the need to enhance graduate employment outcomes. In Australia, the recent release of the Ambitious Australia Report on the national R&D system gives renewed impetus to this imperative. The report recommends the expansion of industry-aligned models for research training at scale. The report also calls for a greater emphasis on entrepreneurial research training programs.

These recommendations have a familiar ring to them. While small and medium employers account for roughly 99.5% of employers and 84.2% of jobs nationally, most of the energy in graduate research employment outcomes remains invested in the 0.5% of employers able to accommodate research graduates at scale. This panel investigates the merits of embracing a capabilities approach to evolving the 'employability' narrative with the other 99.5% of employers in mind.

The panel brings together experts in skills recognition, industry engagement, doctoral education and entrepreneurship to consider the unique contribution of graduate research capabilities in a small and medium enterprise context. The panel will consider how graduate research capabilities can enhance employment outcomes for both research graduates and employers. This means more than simply getting a job. This session will explore how research education equips graduates with distinctive capabilities that are uniquely valuable. In doing so, it seeks to broaden the conversation from graduate 'employability' to wider questions of how research capabilities can be recognised and valued across the broader economy, and their alignment with current and future skills needs.

# DAY ONE PROGRAM

## Wednesday, 15 April 2026



## Conference Program - Day 1

| 08:45 - 09:30 | **OPENING, HOUSEKEEPING, AND WELCOME TO COUNTRY** |
|---|---|

**Chair:** *Professor Alistair McCulloch, Graduate Research School, Adelaide University*
**Welcome to Country:** *Cliffy 'Tangku Munaitya' Wilson.*

| 09:30 - 10:30 | **PLENARY** │ HICKINBOTHAM HALL |
|---|---|

01 *Professor Louise Sharpe, University of Sydney*
**Future Proofing the PhD: Ensuring Research Capacity for Australia into the Future**

| 10:30 - 11:00 | **REFRESHMENT BREAK** │ HICKINBOTHAM HALL AND TERRACE |
|---|---|

| 11:00 - 11:55 | **CONCURRENT SESSIONS** |
|---|---|

| STREAM 1 HICKINBOTHAM HALL | STREAM 2 THE VINES | STREAM 3 EXHIBITION HALL | STREAM 4 THE GALLERY | STREAM 5 BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Roundtable | Supervision | Assessment | Developing Impact | Transferable Skills in Graduate Research |
| 02 Manathunga, Qi, Raciti, Gilbey, Stanton, Tuxworth, Whop, and Smith **Indigenous knowledge approaches in doctoral education: transforming graduate research futures** | 03 *Kitano, Aldous, Race, and Clegg* **The Taboo of Power Dynamics in Doctoral Supervision** | 06 *Spronken-Smith, Wisker, Waghorn, Moss-Gibbons, Kiley, Highman, and Fa* **Empowerment and Care in Doctoral Oral Examinations** | 09 *Munasinghe* **Future-proofing Graduate Researchers** | 12 *McAlpine and Holley* **Supporting doctoral student skill development in research methodologies: Challenges and opportunities** |
| | 04 *Pavliuk, Smirnov, and Terentev* **Coffee, "Small Favors", and Power: Where Should Doctoral Supervision Draw the Line? Evidence from Paired Surveys in Russia** | 07 *Holbrook* **Four contrasting cases of doctoral candidate readiness for examiner comment** | 10 *Collins and Martin* **Training for Tomorrow: Doctoral Development for Successful Societal Impact** | 13 *Ncanywa* **Aligning Entrepreneurship Education with Postgraduate Programmes for Stimulating Third Stream Income in South African Universities** |
| | 05 *Dodgson* **Managing abrasive and avoidant supervisors** | 08 *Solli, Afdal, and Bjerke* **Supervisor Experiences of Doctoral Thesis Resubmission or Rejection** | 11 *Ruwhiu, Spronken-Smith, Myles, and Mirosa* **Making a Mark: Doctoral Research Impact** | |

| 11:55 - 12:00 | **INTER-SESSION BREAK** |
|---|---|

| 12:00 - 13:00 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STREAM 1**<br>HICKINBOTHAM HALL | **STREAM 2**<br>THE VINES | **STREAM 3**<br>EXHIBITION HALL | **STREAM 4**<br>THE GALLERY | **STREAM 5**<br>BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| Roundtable | Supervision | Researcher Development | Graduate Research in an AI World | Assessment and the Graduate Research Degree |
| **14**<br><br>*Mewburn, Riley, and Bronlow*<br><br>**Twice-Exceptionality in Doctoral Education: Rethinking Diversity in Graduate Research** | **15**<br><br>*Botha and Luyt*<br><br>**A Conceptual Supervision Framework for Active Engagement: Considerations in Supervising CALD HDR Students Online** | **18**<br><br>*McAlpine and Holley*<br><br>**Taking stock: The need to Reframe our Research Practices around PhD Education** | **20**<br><br>*Esterhuyzen and Rielander*<br><br>**Reimagining Graduate Research and Leadership in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Advancing Inclusive, Ethical, and Safety-Conscious Scholarship in South Africa** | **22**<br><br>*Frick and Thom*<br><br>**Sharing is caring, or not? The implications of sharing examiner reports with doctoral students prior to the viva** |
| | **16**<br><br>*Kalu*<br><br>**Effective Graduate Supervision: Insights from Graduate Students and Supervisors in the Gulf Region** | **19**<br><br>*Meagan Tyler*<br><br>**Is Researcher Development a Radical Act?** | **21**<br><br>*Villanueva*<br><br>**A Short Course on GenAIs in Academic Writing and Research: A Reflective Case Narrative** | **23**<br><br>*Edmondston*<br><br>**Inclusion of published literature reviews in doctoral theses: a comparison of theses from four Australian Universities** |
| | **17**<br><br>*Wisker*<br><br>**Different Journeys: Cultivating Doctoral Researcher Independence with Professional Doctorate Students (DBA) at a Distance, through Cohorts, Collegiality and Effective Intercultural Research Supervision Practices** | | | **24**<br><br>*Kumar, Bakar, and Baker*<br><br>**The Right to Know: Rethinking Pre-Viva Release of Examiner Reports in Doctoral Examination'** |
| 13:00 - 14:00 | **LUNCH** \| HICKINBOTHAM HALL AND TERRACE | | | |

| 14:00 - 15:00 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STREAM 1**<br>HICKINBOTHAM HALL | **STREAM 2**<br>THE VINES | **STREAM 3**<br>EXHIBITION HALL | **STREAM 4**<br>THE GALLERY | **STREAM 5**<br>BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| Roundtable | Identity | Roundtable | The Graduate Researcher Experience | Industry Engagement |
| **25**<br><br>*Prideaux and Kearns*<br><br>**Could Improving Psychosocial Safety Enhance Research Degree Student Success?** | **26**<br><br>*Kimani*<br><br>**Writing Ourselves into Futures: A Collaborative Autoethnography of Two East African Women's Doctoral Writing as Transformation** | **28**<br><br>*Gasson and Winter*<br><br>**Supervisors in Creating Independent Researchers** | **29**<br><br>*Dyer, Smith, and Lobo*<br><br>**Peer Power: Boosting the Graduate Research Experience through Mentorship** | **32**<br><br>*Atkins*<br><br>**Scaling Graduate Research Industry Engagement: Reflections, Results, and Recalibrations** |
| | **27**<br><br>*Firth, Lubansky, Bendrups Pasalis, Spiers, McLoon, Prestia, Korepta, Lithgow, Cousens, Coussens, Sawyer, and Swieca*<br><br>**Who is a Graduate Researcher (GR) Developer? Do GR Administrators Reflect on their Own Professional Identity as Bureaucratic or Developmental?** | | **30**<br><br>*Milos and Dunlop*<br><br>**Designing with Dialogue: Graduate Researcher Voice in Program and Policy Development** | **33**<br><br>*Gaillard*<br><br>**A Tale of Three Settings: Early Insights from the CSIRO Industry PhD Program** |
| | | | **31**<br><br>*Matthews, Stein, and McFarlane*<br><br>**Learning from and with each other: Partnering Professional Staff and Research Students in Research Training** | |
| 15:00 - 15:30 | **REFRESHMENT BREAK** \| HICKINBOTHAM HALL AND TERRACE | | | |

| 15:30 - 16:25 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STREAM 1** HICKINBOTHAM HALL | **STREAM 2** THE VINES | **STREAM 3** EXHIBITION HALL | **STREAM 4** THE GALLERY | **STREAM 5** BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| Roundtable | Supervision | Re-imagining Graduate Research | Career Trajectories | Early-stage Graduate Researchers |
| **34** *Spronken-Smith, Ruwhiu, and Riley* **Reimagining Assessment of Doctoral Degrees to Promote Inclusivity, Authenticity and Relevance** | **35** *Szorenyi, Rozengarten, and Payne* **Disability and Neurodivergence in HDR Supervision: Transforming Practice** | **38** *Aldous and Grossman* **Unpacking the Neoliberal Knapsack: Reimagining Doctoral Education in Clinical Medicine Through Disciplinary and Contextual Lenses** | **41** *Weise, Castelló, Loeser, and McCulloch* **Unequal Pathways: Diversity and Structural Barriers in Global Researcher Careers** | **44** *Lucas* **Unlearning is the highest form of learning: negotiating knowledge and the open fields of curiosity via the building of the doctoral proposal in research preparatory coursework** |
| | **36** *McChesney* **Towards Trauma-Informed Postgraduate Research Supervision** | **39** *Mutereko* **An Analysis of Neoliberalism's Effects on the Quality of Postgraduate Education in South Africa** | **42** *Cavu, Veles, and Kim* **From Milestone to Momentum: Translating Doctoral Learning into Sustainable Careers** | **45** *Zupan and Kinnear* **Supporting Development of Foundational Research Skills and Capabilities in Research Higher Degree Candidates** |
| | **37** *Sims* **The PhD Relationship: Following and Leading** | **40** *Dodgson, Riley, Rowland, and Ruwhiu,* **From Research to Impact: Launching New Zealand's Applied Doctorate Scheme** | **43** *Gasson* **Early Career Researcher Pathways, Tensions and Stories** | **46** *Mackie and Soin* **How we Developed Scenarios for Dialogical Training in Research Integrity for HDR Candidates who are using Generative Artificial Intelligence** |
| 16:25 - 16:30 | INTER-SESSION BREAK | | | |

| 16:30 - 17:25 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STREAM 1** HICKINBOTHAM HALL | **STREAM 2** THE VINES | **STREAM 3** EXHIBITION HALL | **STREAM 4** THE GALLERY | **STREAM 5** BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| | Supervision | QPR Doctoral Writing Special Interest Group | Roundtable | The Graduate Research Experience |
| | **47** *Kitano and Clegg* **Supporting and Recognising Team Supervision** | **49** *Lum and Guerin* **Making Tech Work for You: Tools, Tips, and Real-World Practice** | **50** *Milos and Leitch* **Graduate Completion Rates – What can be Learned from a Comparison of Australian and South African Data** | **51** *Shaw and Clancy* **Enabling an Engaged Research Culture and Community for Contemporary HDR Programs** |
| | **48** *Ross and Whitcomb* **Enhancing Supervision Excellence in Graduate Research: A Collaborative Approach** | | | **52** *Burckhardt-Bedeau* **Fail. Learn. Share. Win! The Value of #Academic.Fail** |
| 17:30 - 18:00 | INTER-SESSION BREAK - WINE BAR OPEN | | | |
| 18:00 - 21:30 | WELCOME FUNCTION AT WINE CENTRE | | | |

# DAY TWO PROGRAM

## Thursday, 16 April 2026

| Time | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **09:00 - 09:15** | **OPENING AND HOUSEKEEPING** | | | |
| **Chair**: *Dr Dani Milos, Office of Graduate Research, Flinders University*<br>**Opening:** *Professor Raymond Chan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Flinders University* | | | | |
| **09:15 - 10:20** | **PLENARY** \| HICKINBOTHAM HALL | | | |
| **53** | *Dr Karen Clegg, University of York*<br>**Transforming Graduate Supervision for the Future: creating and curating change** | | | |
| **10:20 - 10:30** | **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE FLOOR**<br>*Requests to make a on-minute announcement should be registered at the registration desk by 8.45am on Day 2 of the conference.* | | | |
| **10:30 - 11:00** | **REFRESHMENT BREAK** \| HICKINBOTHAM HALL AND TERRACE | | | |
| **11:00 - 11:55** | **CONCURRENT SESSIONS** | | | |

| STREAM 1<br>HICKINBOTHAM HALL | STREAM 2<br>THE VINES | STREAM 3<br>EXHIBITION HALL | STREAM 4<br>THE GALLERY | STREAM 5<br>BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Roundtable | Doctoral Experience | International Perspectives | Improving supervision | Graduate Researcher Wellbeing |
| **54**<br><br>*Lemon, Mewburn, Winter, Firth, and Bolzle*<br><br>**Transforming Doctoral Wellbeing Through Collective Writing Practices: The Shut Up & Write! Ecosystem** | **55**<br><br>*Pavliuk*<br><br>**Do thesis topics matter? How thesis topic characteristics relate to doctoral experience and self-confidence in defence** | **58**<br><br>*Andrew, De Maio, Stein, Matthews, and McFarlane*<br><br>**Centering the student voice: Understanding the Academic and Research Literacy needs of International HDR Students** | **60**<br><br>*Morini, Sears, and Castano*<br><br>**Things Can Only Get Better: Reimagining Changes in Supervisory Relationships Through Speculative and Playful Practices** | **63**<br><br>*Bekova and Smirnov*<br><br>**"I Don't Want to Kill Any More Mice": Taboo and Silence in PhD Education** |
| | **56**<br><br>*Edwards*<br><br>**From Evidence to Action: Developing a Digital Peer Support Ecosystem for PhD Student Wellbeing** | **59**<br><br>*Leitch, Burton, Faller, and Ntshoe*<br><br>**What are the Attributes one would expect of the Master's Graduate?** | **61**<br><br>*Sears, Castaño, and Wynne*<br><br>**…and the Winners are… Outstanding! Harnessing an Institutional Award Scheme to Explore Understanding of Excellence in Supervisory Teams** | **64**<br><br>*Clarence*<br><br>**High on emotion: Seeing (un)belonging and in/exclusion through the lens of doctoral candidates' emotional labour** |
| | **57**<br><br>*Frieze and Croser*<br><br>**Orienting the Journal in the Graduate Researcher Experience** | | **62**<br><br>*Hill*<br><br>**(Supervisors) Keeping up with Doctoral Change: A Community of Practice** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **11:55 - 12:00** | **INTER-SESSION BREAK** |

# Conference Program - Day 2

| 12:00 – 13:00 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| STREAM 1 HICKINBOTHAM HALL | STREAM 2 THE VINES | STREAM 3 EXHIBITION HALL | STREAM 4 THE GALLERY | STREAM 5 BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| | Perspectives on the Successful PhD | Supervision | Creative Ways of Working With Graduate Researchers | Graduate Researcher Wellbeing |
| | **65** *Wei, Yang, and Guo* **Reimagining Doctoral Success: A Comparative Case Study Beyond Prescriptive Advice** | **67** *Crotti, Fragkoudi, and Szorenyi* **Surveying the Needs of our Members: A Higher Degree Research (HDR) Supervision Community of Practice (CoP) in a Changing Landscape** | **70** *Cavu and Pitt* **Using Metaphor, Analogy, and Storytelling to Illustrate Career Development Learning Concepts with Researchers** | **72** *Carruthers, Holbrook, and Spray* **Doctoral Liminality and Psychological Safety** |
| | **66** *Smith* **Transforming the External Doctorate Experience: Agency, Connection and Success in a Distributed Research World** | **68** *Salinas and Valverde* **Doctoral Supervision as Servant Leadership: Towards a Relational Understanding of Supervisory Excellence** | **71** *Khoo and Tyler* **So you think you can meme? Creating Spaces for Doctoral Researcher Solidarity and Vulnerability** | **73** *Hanna and Davidenko* **The Wheels on the MBUS: What Drives PhD Student Wellbeing at the Monash Business School** |
| | | **69** *Wald, Spronken-Smith, and Baker* **Co-Supervision in Applied Doctorates: Supervision Training Across the University and Industry Divide** | | **74** *Alwis, Ihashi, McCabe, and Johanesen* **Building Resilient Researchers: Embedding Wellbeing Plans in Graduate Research** |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | **LUNCH** | HICKINBOTHAM HALL AND TERRACE | | |

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# Conference Program - Day 2

| 14:00 – 14:55 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| STREAM 1 HICKINBOTHAM HALL | STREAM 2 THE VINES | STREAM 3 EXHIBITION HALL | STREAM 4 THE GALLERY | STREAM 5 BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| Roundtable | Supervision | Graduate Research in an AI World | Administering the Graduate Research Degree | Graduate Researcher Wellbeing |
| **75** *Thomson, Mewburn, McCulloch, and Bolzle* **Academic Support and Potential Pedagogical Debt** | **76** *Baker, Spronken-Smith, Zupan, and Brown* **It Takes a Village: A Visual Mapping Tool to Empower PhD Candidates and Strengthen Their Support Communities** | **79** *Wang, Palmer, and Walsh* **A Redcard, Choice or Necessity? Moving forward with AI in a qualitative PhD project** | **82** *Xavier, Hamed, Tan, and Prince* **Evolving HDR Administration Through Automation: From Grassroots Innovation to Institutional Transformation** | **85** *Le and Munoz* **Fostering a sense of belonging for doctoral candidates: Insights from a literature review** |
| | **77** *Solli and Afdal* **From Supervisors to Supervision: Exploring Distributed Supervision in Doctoral Education** | **80** *Qi and Tuxworth* **Supervisory Conversations about Gen AI: Navigating the New Taboo Topic** | **83** *Dipitso* **Tracking Student Engagement Using Learning Analytics: Insights from a South Africa Research Intensive University** | **86** *Clarence, Nixon, and Lu* **Enacting an ethic of care: creating a 'deliberate' doctoral community within a UK-based doctoral programme** |
| | **78** *Govender* **The Triadic Stakeholder Imbalances in Postgraduate Research – A Case for Re-Imagining Stakeholder Intentions** | **81** *Taylor and Borger* **Embedding Coding and AI Literacy in Biomedical Science Education** | **84** *Carr, O'Leary, and Carroll* **Professional Support for Professional Students – Aligning Administrative Support with the Changing Needs of Professional Doctoral Students** | **87** *Smyth* **Beyond administration: professional staff as wellbeing support providers in doctoral education** |
| 15:00 – 15:30 | **REFRESHMENT BREAK** | HICKINBOTHAM HALL AND TERRACE | | |

| 15:30 - 16:25 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STREAM 1** HICKINBOTHAM HALL | **STREAM 2** THE VINES | **STREAM 3** EXHIBITION HALL | **STREAM 4** THE GALLERY | **STREAM 5** BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| Diversity in Graduate Research | Roundtable | Research Training SIG | Roundtable | Assessment, the Graduate Research Degree and AI |
| **88** *Ericsson and Vidal* **Who is the 'International Student'?** | **91** *Wallace, Chen, Guerin, Maher, and Smith* **Excellence and Experience: Developing Senior Supervisors** | **92** *Milos, and Cavu* **From Conversation to Collaboration: Co-Creating HDR Research Training Frameworks** | **94** *Kalucy, Smyth, Wen, and Gedeon* **From Partnership to Placement: Designing Meaningful Industry Engagement for Higher Degree Researchers (HDRs)** | **95** *Firth* **Re-shaping Graduate Research: Internships, Vivas & AI for a Student-First Future** |
| **89** *Smith* **Exploring Māori and Pasifika Doctoral Allyship on Country to Grow First Nations Research Capacity** | | **93** *Gedeon and Edmondson* **The PhD – Piled Higher and Deeper than ever: the expanding expectations of the modern PhD** | | **96** *Chin and Moustafa* **Who's Ready for the Viva? Workload, AI, and the Future of HDR Examination** |
| **90** *Jung* **The Meaning of 'Qualified': Student Experiences with Doctoral Admission Processes in China** | | | | **97** *Holden* **Enhancing Doctoral Thesis Quality: Thesis Examination, GenAI and Thesis including Publication** |
| 16:25 - 16:30 | INTER-SESSION BREAK | | | |

| 16:30 - 17:30 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STREAM 1** HICKINBOTHAM HALL | **STREAM 2** THE VINES | **STREAM 3** EXHIBITION HALL | **STREAM 4** THE GALLERY | **STREAM 5** BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| Barriers to Success | Roundtable | Ways of working with Graduate Researchers | Roundtable | Roundtable |
| **98** *Mngeni* **The Multifaceted Barriers Encountered by Postgraduate Students in a South African University** | **100** *Wisker, Highman, Spronken-Smith, Kiley, Waghorne, Fa, and Moss-Gibbons* **Good Practices for Running Oral/Viva Examinations** | **101** *Delaney, Ralph, and Teah* **Curtin Thesis Fest: a new approach to improving HDR wellbeing and experience** | **104** *Chang, Collins, Guerin, Todd-Williamson, and Tyler* **Life Beyond PhD Completion: Approaching the Tensions and Opportunities of Researcher Development for Graduate Researchers' Post-PhD Career Aspirations** | **105** *Gregory, Ross, and Bendrups* **Joint PhDs... are they worth it?'** |
| **99** *Stracke, Kumar, Webb, Holbrook, and Burke* **Learning from Failure for Doctoral Education** | | **102** *Ulyannikova* **More than Money: How a Student Grant Scheme Became a Catalyst for Skills Development** | | |
| | | **103** *Lye* **From Keywords to Deep (Re)Search: Implications of AI-Powered Academic Search for Doctoral Inquiry** | | |
| 17:30 | END OF DAY 2 | | | |

# DAY THREE PROGRAM

**Friday, 17 April**

## Conference Program - Day 3

Friday, 17 April
8:30am - 11:15pm

| 08:30 - 08:45 | **OPENING AND HOUSEKEEPING** |
|---|---|

**Chair:** *Associate Professor Tania Crotti, College of Health, Adelaide University*
**Opening:** *Professor Nicola Phillips, Vice-Chancellor, Adelaide University*

| 08:45 - 9:45 | **PLENARY** | HICKINBOTHAM HALL |
|---|---|

**106** **Chair:** *Dr Nigel Palmer* **Panel:** *Tara Jacobsen, Jodie Tremath, Professor Inger Mewburn*
Beyond employability: Graduate Research capability in an SME Context

| 09:45 - 9:50 | **INTER-SESSION BREAK** |
|---|---|
| 9:50 - 10:45 | **CONCURRENT SESSIONS** |

| STREAM 1<br>HICKINBOTHAM HALL | STREAM 2<br>THE VINES | STREAM 3<br>EXHIBITION HALL | STREAM 4<br>THE GALLERY | STREAM 5<br>BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Working with Knowledges | Roundtable | Spirituality and the Graduate Researcher Experience | Policy and Graduate Research | Interactive Project Roundtable |
| **107**<br>*van der Westhuizen*<br>**Grounded Theory Methodologies in Graduate Research – Transformation from Below** | **109**<br>*Holbrook, Burke, Batty, Feldon, Lovat, Spray, and Carruthers*<br>**Opportunities and Challenges for the Development of Doctoral Learning Capabilities in the Next Decade** | **110**<br>*Namakula, Manathunga, Motala, Akala, Raciti, Qi, Wisker, Kimani, Tuxworth, and Smith*<br>**Transforming Doctoral Education: the Complex Role of Spirituality in Doctoral Education for Women of Colour** | **112**<br>*Li, Zhao and Xiao*<br>**Publication Policies for Chinese Doctoral Students: A Discourse Perspective** | **115**<br>*Clancy and Shaw*<br>**Doctoral Education in a GenAI-Enabled World: An Interactive Open Roundtable Discussion** |
| **108**<br>*Sato*<br>**Nurturing Researchers for Academic Pluralism: Analyzing Graduate Students' Narratives on their Encountering Japanese Thought** | | **111**<br>*Rees*<br>**Faith, Wellbeing, and Social Cohesion in Graduate Research Education** | **113**<br>*Qi, Raciti, and Motala*<br>**Funding Female PhDs in South Africa and Australia: Analysis from an Intersectional Lens** | |
| | | | **114**<br>*Jones, Lee, Azar, and Salmon*<br>**Enhancing Global Capabilities in Doctoral Education: Insights from the UNSW Scientia PhD Scholarship Scheme** | |

| 10:45 - 11:15 | **REFRESHMENT BREAK** | HICKINBOTHAM HALL AND TERRACE |
|---|---|

| 11:15 - 12:10 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STREAM 1** HICKINBOTHAM HALL | **STREAM 2** THE VINES | **STREAM 3** EXHIBITION HALL | **STREAM 4** THE GALLERY | **STREAM 5** BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| Pedagogies in Graduate Research | Diversity in Graduate Research | Gender and Graduate Research | Career Trajectories | Supervision |
| **116** *Napasu* **When We Tok Stori, We Learn: Reflection on Using Indigenous Pedagogy in Postgraduate Research Education** | **118** *Rielander and Esterhuyzen* **Supervising the Unseen: A PRISMA-Based Systematic Literature Review on Leveraging 4IR and 5IR for Inclusive Postgraduate Support of Students with Hidden and Learning Disabilities** | **120** *Barnacle, Hewson-Munro, Cuthbert, McCook, and Sidelil* **Actioning the Men: Enhancing Prevention Efforts for Gender-Based Harms in Graduate Research** | **122** *Massyn, Areskoug, Josefsson, and Olsson* **Future Academic Careers: Perspectives from Doctoral Students and Supervisors** | **124** *Dube* **Rethinking Supervision in Africa in the context of Artificial Intelligence and emerging theories** |
| **117** *Riedy* **A Transformative Doctoral Pedagogy for Sustainable futures** | **119** *Spiers* **Gender and Equity Assessments for Graduate Research Policy Reviews** | **121** *Kimani* **Gendered Geographies of Success: Reimagining Women's Doctoral Journeys Across Kenya, South Africa, and Australia** | **123** *Bilsland and Lum* **Beyond the Velvet Bonnet: Where are all the PhDs going?** | **125** *McChesney, Frick, Tshuma, Burford, Richmond, and Shreeve* **How has Doctoral Supervisory Practice been Transformed through the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic?** |
| 12:10 - 13:00 | **LUNCH** \| HICKINBOTHAM HALL AND TERRACE | | | |

| 13:00 - 13:55 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STREAM 1** HICKINBOTHAM HALL | **STREAM 2** THE VINES | **STREAM 3** EXHIBITION HALL | **STREAM 4** THE GALLERY | **STREAM 5** BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| Researcher Development | Supervision | | Administering the Graduate Research Degree | Research Writing |
| **126** *Bendrups and Sharpe* **Introducing the ACGR Researcher Development Framework** | **129** *Raciti and Fredericks* **Next Practice in Indigenous HDR Supervision: Sharing Research Training Program Funding Across Universities to Strengthen Completions and Capability** | | **131** *Pike* **Reimagining HDR Support: Blending the Benefits of a Centralised Structure with Person-Centred Service at The University of Queensland** | **134** *Winter and Billingham* **Experiments in Building a Research Students' Writing Feedback Community** |
| **127** *Irvine, de Waegh, Heke, Port, Williams, and Davidson* **Localising Graduate Research Education: A Researcher Development Framework for Aotearoa New Zealand** | **130** *Carr, Kirkwood, and Leckie* **Partnering for Successful Supervision – the Supervisee at the Centre of the Process** | | **132** *Ballard and Salmon* **Strategic and Operational Excellence in Cotutelle and Global PhD Partnerships: Insights from RMIT University and The University of New South Wales** | **135** *Lemon* **Beyond Writing Support: How Shut Up & Write! Embodies a Pedagogy of Belonging for Doctoral Wellbeing** |
| **128** *Villanueva, Pablo, Rosario, and Eacersall* **A Researcher Development and Education Framework for Open and Distance eLearning Programs in Asia** | | | **133** *Leitch, Taole-Mjimba* **The Role of International Partnerships in Transforming Graduate Research – A Vision for the University of Fort Hare** | |
| 13:55 - 14:00 | **INTER-SESSION BREAK** | | | |

# Conference Program - Day 3

| 14:00 - 14:25 | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| STREAM 1<br>HICKINBOTHAM HALL | STREAM 2<br>THE VINES | STREAM 3<br>EXHIBITION HALL | STREAM 4<br>THE GALLERY | STREAM 5<br>BROUGHTON & FERGUSON |
| Supervision SIG | Training for Graduate Researchers | | | |
| 136<br><br>*Crotti*<br><br>**Research Supervision SIG Network**<br><br>**(short meeting to gauge interest)** | 137<br><br>*Rofe and McCulloch*<br><br>**They don't hold many academic conferences in Scunthorpe': The Perils of the Predatory Conference** | | | |

| 14:25 - 14:30 | INTER-SESSION BREAK |
|---|---|
| 14:30 - 15:00 | **PLENARY CLOSE OF CONFERENCE**   | HICKINBOTHAM HALL AND TERRACE |
| 15:00 - 16:00 | **REFRESHMENTS ON THE LAWNS AND FAREWELLS** |

# Posters

Digital displays of poster presentations can be found in the Concourse of the National Wine Centre 15-17 April. Posters can also be found via the confernce app.

**Zupan and Kinnear**

Facilitating institutional knowledge and belonging in commencing HDR candidates

**Hill**

The Politics of Artful Inquiry: Spaces for Empowerment

**Villanueva, Pablo, Rosario, and Eacersall**

A Researcher Development and Education Framework for Open and Distance eLearning Programs in Asia

**Slemming**

A Scoping Review of Postgraduate Students' Academic Support Needs during the Research Writing Process

**Burckhardt-Bedeau**

#Academic.Fail Pedagogical Tools for Research Success

# Student Posters

Each year, we offer complimentary places to a number of HDR students to participate in the QPR Conference. We are pleased to showcase digital posters of their current research in 2026 as they embark on their research journey.

## Adelaide University

**Alhaj, Adelaide University**

Harnessing the Potential of Parents from Refugee Backgrounds to Improve Educational Outcomes for Refugee Students in South Australia

**Bray, Adelaide University**

Strengthening Animal Welfare: Why Regulatory Instructions Must Match Legislative Intent

**Coddo, Adelaide University**

Using participatory design to develop a patient reported outcome and experience measure to evaluate medication-related harm in hospitalised patients

**Duh, Adelaide University**

How is the decision-maker's ego managed in the organisational environment?

**Huang, Adelaide University**

The biodiversity dividend: Wellbeing gains and economic values of metropolitan park visitation in South Australia

**Ivanov, Adelaide University**

The Island Mentality of a Tall Poppy: Regulating the Coexistence of Genetically Modified and Non-genetically Modified Crops in Australia

**Knights, Adelaide University**

Designing an Evidence-Informed Group Singing Program for Grief: A Feasibility Framework

**Loaiza-Betancur, Adelaide University**

Core Athletic Performance-based Intervention Set for athletes: The CAPIS study

**McDonough, Adelaide University**

Use of an implementation science framework to guide a PhD thesis project

**Perrett, Adelaide University**

Reimagining Federalism: Evaluating Treaty Federalism as a Framework for Indigenous Sovereignty, Self-Determination, and Nationhood in Australia

**Rahman, Adelaide University**

Preliminary Design and Multi-Hazard Assessment of Curved Multilayer Shielding Panels for Lunar Dome Habitats

**Rehman, Adelaide University**

How does the value of investing in Australian water entitlements compare to other investments over time?

**Scanlan, Adelaide University**

Towards proteomics-based prediction of ex vivo platinum sensitivity in ovarian cancer ascitic cellular aggregates

**Sharp, Adelaide University**

Making a Splash: Cetacean Representation in Australian News Media on Facebook

**Thong, Adelaide University**

Knowledge, attitudes and practices of livestock farmers towards antibiotic use and resistance in farms: A systematic scoping review

**Wang, Adelaide University**

Supporting Personalisation through Artificial Intelligence (AI) Chatbots in Flipped German Classrooms: A Cross-National Study in China and Australia

## Flinders University

**Abblitt, Flinders University**

Hearing their voices. What are the current perspectives of Australian Teachers toward Voice Care?

**Bantie, Flinders University**

Trajectories of sepsis survivors in Australia: a scoping review

**Coussens, Flinders University**

Brokers of Influence: Investigating the Impacts of Advocacy Groups on Modern Slavery Policy in an Australian Context

**Islam, Flinders University**

Policy and administrative challenges of managing cross-border forced displacement: Bangladesh's management of the Rohingya crisis in comparative perspective

**Jayathilaka, Flinders University**

Enhancing Mental Health Service Integration through Commissioning A Co-design and Implementation Study

**Kirton, Flinders University**

Could young and/or exercised plasma transfusions be used to manage neurodegenerative conditions?

**Lau, Flinders University**

Perspectives of older adults with pre-frailty and frailty when engaging with an online nutrition educational resource: a qualitative study

**Odeyemi, Flinders University**

Exploring strategies for career advancement, mental health maintenance, and sustained research interest among Australian researchers with unsuccessful funding application outcomes: A qualitative study

**Sullivan, Flinders University**

General practitioner engagement with continuing professional development: A scoping review

**Tun, Flinders University**

Experiences of everyday harm by people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) - perspectives of people with disability from Myanmar in Australia

**Wei, Flinders University**

Home language maintenance and development among Chinese families in Australia

# PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS DAY 1

## Wednesday, 15 April 2026

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📅 Wednesday, 15 April
9:30am

🏛 Hickinbotham Hall

👥 Keynote Address

## Future Proofing the PhD: Ensuring Research Capacity for Australia into the Future

**Professor Louise Sharpe** ACGR President and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Researcher Training), University of Sydney

The PhD remains the cornerstone of Australia's research capability — producing not only the next generation of academic leaders, but also the innovators and problem-solvers our nation, and the world needs. As we face growing global challenges it has never been more important to understand why we need the PhD and why we need PhD candidates. And most importantly, to ensure that our research training system is fit for the challenges ahead?

In this keynote, Professor Sharpe will benchmark Australia's research training system against international trends. She will examine the crucial role of advocacy in building public awareness of the PhD's value — not only to universities, but to the nation's social, economic, and cultural future.

To this end Professor Sharpe will showcase key initiatives led by the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) to support and promote quality in research training, including the newly developed:

· ACGR Researcher Development Framework

· Good Practice Guidelines for Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Research Training

· Good Practice Guidelines for Supporting Neurodivergent HDR Candidates

· Sector Snapshot of Industry Engagement in HDR

These initiatives, grounded in evidence and best practice, aim to broaden participation, strengthen research culture, and promote the critical importance of the PhD in training a workforce of individuals equipped to meet the complex global problems before us.

# Presentation 02

Wednesday, 15 April
11:00am

Hickinbotham Hall

Roundtable

## Indigenous knowledge approaches in doctoral education: transforming graduate research futures

**Prof. Catherine Manathunga** University of the Sunshine Coast, **Dr Jing Qi** RMIT,, **Prof Maria Raciti** University of the Sunshine Coast, **Prof. Kathryn Gilbey** Batchelor Institute, **Prof. Sue Stanton** University of the Sunshine Coast, **Dr Jiao Tuxworth** University of the Sunshine Coast, **Uncle John Whop** Batchelor Institute

As the world faces considerable political, social, cultural and technological uncertainty, it is crucial that we take seriously the need to investigate how we achieve knowledge justice in graduate research for Indigenous and transcultural doctoral candidates in Australia and globally. In particular, we need fresh ways of shaping graduate research that incorporates Indigenous knowledge approaches. This involves transforming how we imagine the agency of Country, the power of Story and iterative, intergenerational and intercultural knowledge creation in doctoral education and supervision (Manathunga et al., 2022). Drawing upon postcolonial/decolonial theories (Chakrabarty, 2007; Williams et al., 2017), this research paper presents the findings of a large qualitative research project that explored implementing Indigenous knowledge approaches in Australian doctoral education.

With the support of an ARC Discovery grant, this non-Indigenous led, First Nations and transcultural project team conducted life history interviews and time mapping with over 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and transcultural (migrant, culturally diverse and international) doctoral candidates and their supervisors across 2022-2023. In this 55-minute presentation, the research team will present the findings of their research which was designed to explore new ways of creating spaces within doctoral education and thesis creation for the histories, geographies, languages and cultural knowledges of First Nations and transcultural communities.

The presentation will summarise the findings from the comparative policy analysis of Aotearoa New Zealand, South African and Australian doctoral education policies for Indigenous and black majority doctoral candidates that was conducted as the first phase of the project. It will then present and justify its innovative combination of life history methodologies (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009) and time mapping before providing information on the overall demographic profile of its participant doctoral candidates and supervisors.

Using postcolonial/decolonial thematic analysis approaches, the presentation will illustrate its analysis of how Country, Story and iterative, intergenerational and intercultural knowledge creation strategies are present in the life stories and time maps of selection of First Nations, transcultural and non-Indigenous participants. The paper will conclude with an introduction to the project website, which contains practical resources on how to use life histories in doctoral supervision and how to create time maps that illustrate how candidates' cultural knowledges, histories, languages and geographies impact upon their research. The website also showcases the brief life histories and time maps of a selection of participants. It is anticipated that this research project and the practical resources it provides will help to foreground relational and respectful approaches to the supervision of First Nations and transcultural doctoral candidates. These transformations have the potential to achieve greater knowledge justice in doctoral education that is likely to help us navigate the changing graduate research landscapes of the future.

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# Presentation 03

Wednesday, 15 April
11:00am

The Vines

Supervision

## The Taboo of Power Dynamics in Doctoral Supervision

Natasha Kitano Queensland University of Technology, **Colleen Aldous** University of KwaZulu- Natal, **Digby Race** University of the South Pacific, **Karen Clegg** University of York

This review paper explores the often-unspoken power dynamics between doctoral supervisors and students, focusing on the taboo surrounding the discussion of these imbalances. Power differentials in supervisory relationships significantly influence the doctoral experience. However, cultural, institutional, and societal norms often prevent open discussions about these power structures, allowing them to persist unchallenged.

The English word "taboo" originates from the Polynesian term tabu, meaning "forbidden" or "to forbid" (Radcliff-Brown, 2014, p. 5). In doctoral education, taboos manifest as silences, unspoken rules, or culturally embedded prohibitions that structure how students and supervisors engage with knowledge, authority and with one another. In this review paper, we explore one such taboo, the silence around power in doctoral supervision.

The relationship between supervisee and their supervisor(s) is critical (Kamler & Thomson, 2014; Grant, 2003; Jones & Blass, 2019). It is often portrayed as a collegial relationship that supports scholarly growth, independence, and intellectual contribution. Yet this idealised framing can obscure the complex power dynamics embedded within supervisory relationships which are rarely acknowledged, let alone challenged. In many academic contexts, there is a persistent taboo around naming or challenging the authority embedded in supervisory relationships. When left unexamined, these unspoken norms can silence student voices, inhibit critique, and constrain the development of equitable and inclusive research cultures.

Adopting a cross-cultural perspective, this paper examines supervisory power relations across Australia, South Africa, the South Pacific region connected through a consortium in the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP), a Research England funded project. While Australian academic culture is often seen as egalitarian, hidden hierarchies persist. In South Africa, power asymmetries are deeply entangled with social and racial histories, while in the South Pacific region, respect for authority can inhibit dissent. Framed through the lens of taboo, this article highlights how silences around power impact doctoral education and calls for culturally attuned strategies to address them.

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Wednesday, 15 April
11:00am

The Vines

Supervision

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Supervison

## Coffee, "Small Favors," and Power: Where Should Doctoral Supervision Draw the Line? Evidence from Paired Surveys in Russia

**Danila Pavliuk** HSE University, **Nikita Smirnov**HSE University, **Evgeniy Terentev** HSE University

Doctoral education is not only about learning how to do research; it is about becoming a researcher—and at the center of that transition sits the supervisory relationship. While formal procedures are well documented, the informal dimensions of supervision remain underexamined, especially where hierarchical norms are strong.

This paper maps attitudes toward informality in doctoral supervision in Russia, focusing on two boundaries:

(1) whether relationships may move beyond strictly formal interaction to include friendly, wide-ranging discussions; and

(2) whether supervisors may ask doctoral students to perform tasks unrelated to the dissertation.

We draw on paired online surveys conducted in six Russian universities during the 2018/2019 academic year: doctoral students (N = 991 after cleaning) and their supervisors (N = 209). The questionnaires included bipolar five-point items capturing acceptance of informal relationships and unrelated tasks, alongside rich covariates on demographics, field, study format, career plans, and supervisor selection criteria (students), as well as supervision load and performance indicators (supervisors). Given ordinal outcomes and unbalanced groups, we use non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis H with Bonferroni adjustments) and Spearman correlations; analyses are run separately for students and supervisors.

First, both groups are, on average, near the midpoint—but lean slightly toward permitting friendly, non-formal interaction. Among students, acceptance of informality is higher for men, for those intending to remain in the university environment, and for those who chose their supervisor due to reputation, professional connections, or a strong publication record; positive pre-PhD collaboration with the supervisor is also associated with greater tolerance of informality. Among supervisors, higher supervision performance is modestly associated with lower acceptance of informality, suggesting that boundary-clear practices may coexist with effective supervision.

Second, views on unrelated tasks are more restrictive. Supervisors are noticeably less accepting of assigning non-dissertation work than of informal interaction. Students' acceptance varies by field (higher in mathematics/natural sciences than in social sciences) and is higher among those planning an academic career and those with prior collaboration with their supervisor. On the supervisor side, heavier lifetime supervision load and a greater number of successful defences are modestly associated with higher acceptance of unrelated tasks, potentially reflecting a normalization of "helping the lab" under workload pressure.

Third, the two boundaries are conceptually distinct: tolerance of friendly relations does not automatically translate into tolerance of unrelated tasks. The former aligns with belonging and identity-building; the latter risks hidden labor and unequal exchange.

## Managing abrasive and avoidant supervisors

**Neil Dodgson** Victoria University of Wellington

In the 2025 survey of Australian doctoral candidates [UNSW], 18% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their supervision experience. Across all candidates, 56% reported avoidant behaviour at least once: supervisors who did not give timely feedback, did not clearly communicate expectations, ignored emails or were unavailable for meetings. And 22% reported abrasive behaviour at least once: supervisors who made candidates feel belittled or humiliated, who were aggressive, intimidating, abusive, or insulting.

These statistics combined with anecdotal evidence show that there are supervisors who are consistently avoidant or abrasive. Such behaviour impacts candidates' performance, mental health, and ability to complete.

Such behaviour is often hidden: only half of affected candidates sought support or advice from anyone and fewer than 10% of affected candidates made a formal report or complaint. Of those who did seek advice, only 39% thought that university policies and procedures were effective and only 59% thought that university support services could provide the necessary assistance.

How should a Graduate Research School respond? What interventions are effective?

Problematic supervisors come in two types: those who are aware that they are causing problems and those who are unaware. It is a misconception to assume that all problematic supervisors are aware that they are having a detrimental effect on their supervisees; the evidence is that the majority are unaware of the impact of their behaviour [Cranshaw].

Those who are unaware must first be made aware. Cranshaw recommends one-on-one coaching to guide the supervisor in becoming aware of their inappropriate behaviour and its impact on candidates. Until the supervisor has accepted that there is a problem, there is little point sending them on a generic training course because they will not have the mindset to benefit from it. Intervention needs to be handled carefully because many "unaware" supervisors have a self-image that includes the belief that they are a good supervisor. Acknowledging that there is a problem threatens that identity. Anecdotal evidence shows that mishandling an intervention can provoke counter-claims of

being harassed by management. Careful consideration is needed of how to encourage behaviour modification while preserving good self-image.

More challenging are the supervisors who are well aware of the impact of their behaviour. These supervisors may be avoidant or abrasive or exhibit both behaviours.

Supervisors who are "aware" and avoidant may view supervision as an unwanted burden and may tend to be indifferent to how their candidates feel. These supervisors might be handled through setting expectations or empowering line managers to follow up on poor behaviour.

Supervisors who are "aware" and abrasive tend to exhibit traits associated with psychological problems: psychopathy or narcissism. Cranshaw estimates that one fifth of problematic managers fall into this category. For this category, most interventions are ineffective.

There are thus interventions that can work, but there are no easy interventions, and there are cases where intervention will fail. That should not stop us trying.

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# Presentation 06

## Empowerment and Care in Doctoral Oral Examinations

Rachel Spronken-Smith University of Otago, NZ, Gina WiskerUniversity of Bath, UK, Joseph Waghorn Sussex University, UK, Caroline Moss-Gibbons University of Gibraltar, Margaret Kiley Australian National University, Ludovic Highman University of Bath, UK, and Darren Fa University of Gibraltar

Given the expansion of oral examinations (or vivas) into countries like Australia and South Africa, coupled with an increasing emphasis globally on the wellbeing of doctoral candidates, it is timely to consider how best to create an ethic of empowerment and care in an oral. We conducted research on orals in three universities in three locations (Gibraltar, United Kingdom and New Zealand). Using semi-structured interviews, we captured the experiences of orals amongst stakeholders: 23 candidates, 21 examiners and 12 conveners.

Our questions probed the role of the oral, how everyone prepared, how the oral was conducted, perceptions of questioning, notions of achieving doctorateness in the oral, and differences in formats of orals (online, hybrid and in-person). Thematic analysis was undertaken to draw out the main themes for each stakeholder group, and then a cross-group analysis was done to determine which policies and practices could create an empowering and caring environment in the oral.

All stakeholders agreed on the purpose of the oral - to ensure candidates had mastery of their thesis - that it was their work (especially important given Gen AI now), to discuss their work with the examiners, respond to feedback, and for quality assurance. Preparing for the oral was similar for examiners - reading the thesis, preparing reports and generating possible questions. For conveners at UA, the internal was also the convener, providing a different dynamic to UB and UC, where the convener was an impartial facilitator of the exam, and more focused on creating a supportive environment for the candidate. Moreover, at UC, candidates received examiner reports two weeks ahead of the oral, allowing them time to prepare a response. They were also allowed to bring in support people, and some Indigenous candidates welcomed cultural elements in their oral.

Two universities required candidates to give a presentation at the start of the oral. At all universities, questioning proceeded in a similar way. Power imbalances were apparent, not only between the stakeholders, but within the examiner panel, where the external examiners were often held in the highest regard. Having an internal examiner as convener (UA) was problematic. Candidates enjoyed the oral if it was a collegial conversation and some welcomed the opportunity to discuss broader implications of their research, and next steps in their future. Although some examiners noted candidates demonstrating a sense of doctorateness in the oral, this was not common for candidates, with some reporting doctorateness was felt earlier through publishing, giving lectures and through the written thesis.

The stakeholders had similar experiences of the different formats, finding in-person orals as being easier to interpret social cues, promoting greater pastoral care and inclusion of cultural aspects, as well as allowing an important concluding celebratory aspect. Hybrid and online orals were valued to enable inclusion of external examiners, but some found fully online formats more superficial, and hybrid formats were more complex to manage. In the presentation we will elaborate our results and recommend actions to promote an ethic of empowerment and care in an oral.

# Presentation 07

## Four contrasting cases of doctoral candidate readiness for examiner comment

Allyson Holbrook SORTI The University of Newcastle

Doctoral students face significant challenges during candidature including learning adjustments that can be difficult to convey, and which give rise to a wellspring of emotions. Typically, candidates are prepared for being examined, but not necessarily in all its facets. This paper draws on the theories of psychological preparedness, engagement with feedback and epistemic emotions to gain deeper insights into learner reactions to examination processes post-submission, Psychological preparedness, as described by Carroll et al. (2022) is an adaptive state of readiness to respond to possible future outcomes. It involves recognising the need to be prepared for something that can be imagined, such as success in an exam.

Individuals demonstrate tendencies in relation to readiness, for example they may be more inclined toward action than to defer action and these tendencies in turn reflect and shape learning experiences. A student may feel ready for something because they expect it to play out a certain way, but if expectations are not met they may not adapt. Active motivation and positive adaptive states constitute complementary components of a cognitive-motivational system that is conditioned through learning over time, but not all preparedness necessarily leads to positive outcomes. While many studies document frustrations and concerns about examiner comments they rarely go further to examine these responses in learning terms.

The research reported in this paper draws on the data from an Australian Research Council Discovery funded project with the dual focus of investigating PhD examination and learning processes. The overall project involved three stakeholder groups, graduate deans, supervisors and students and volunteer doctoral graduates were recruited through Australian universities.

The student survey phase sought detail on candidate enrolment history, examination process, expectations, perceived readiness and reaction to examiner comment. The student interview phase comprised one-hour telephone interviews with 34 candidates from various fields of study post-award. The interviews focussed on expectations, emotions, examiner comment, student response and the type and source of decisions and actions taken to finalise the thesis.

What the findings underline is that while candidates are psychologically ready for completion, they are not necessarily, if at all, psychologically prepared for examiner comments. The 34 narratives were very different in detail, however four cases highlight two shared dimensions of response: autonomy in action and epistemic engagement. The nature of the emotions the individuals linked to their experience are also identified.

1. strong doctoral autonomy, diminished epistemic engagement frustration, boredom

2. strong doctoral autonomy, strong epistemic engagement - curiosity, joy

3. diminished doctoral autonomy, strong epistemic engagement - anger, disgust

4. weak doctoral autonomy, weak epistemic engagement - relief, passivity

Overall, lack of psychological preparedness for examiner comments can significantly impact candidate receptiveness to comment, impact their actions and undermine confidence. In addition, mismatch in expectations can continue to weigh on candidates even after graduation. Finally, there is evidence to suggest that when candidates conflate examination and completion tendencies to engage with, and learn from, examiner comments are impeded. This phenomenon can be contemplated as a form of maladaptive preparedness.

# Presentation 08

## Supervisor Experiences of Doctoral Thesis Resubmission or Rejection

**Kristin Solli** OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University, **Geir Afdal** Østfold University College,

**Annette Hessen Bjerke** OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University

The research interest in doctoral assessment is growing (Byram & Stoicheva, 2022; Kumar et al., 2022). Much of the existing literature focuses on the experiences of doctoral students, examiner perspectives or the assessment procedures themselves, with limited attention to supervisor perspectives (Dally et al., 2022). A few studies have explored doctoral thesis failure (Stigmar, 2019), but the supervisor perspectives in these situations remain underexplored.

We present preliminary findings from an ongoing study on the emotional, professional, and procedural challenges supervisors face in cases where their doctoral students' theses are rejected or require significant revisions. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with 15 supervisors from universities in Norway. Unlike in some national contexts where revisions are routine, Norwegian doctoral assessment regulations stipulate that if examiners request revisions, the thesis is not approved, and the student must resubmit the thesis. In this assessment system, revisions are not routine but associated with rejection and failure.

Our analysis of the interviews draws on existing literature on supervisor roles, institutional structures, and relational processes in supervision. Preliminary findings suggest that supervisors tend to experience a mix of professional responsibility and personal disappointment. Some report significant emotional strain and comment on gaps in institutional support mechanisms. The emotional strains are connected to issues of responsibility, trust, and academic reputation. Supervisors also experienced that thesis resubmission or rejection affected their relations with the PhD students, co-supervisors, colleagues, and PhD program administrators.

While our analysis is still ongoing, the findings so far point to the importance of inviting supervisors to share their strategies for responding to the challenges they face, including how they re-evaluate their supervisory practices and what they seek from institutional support mechanisms. Upon completion of this study, we hope it will provide a foundation for future research into how institutions can better support both supervisors and doctoral students in navigating the doctoral examination process.

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# Presentation 09

## Future-proofing Graduate Researchers

**Dr Asuntha Munasinghe** Monash University

Graduate research degrees have been around in Australia since 1948.[1] The world then was vastly different from the world we know today. The traditional norms need a rethink in academia in order to thrive in the ever-changing environment and society of today to make an impact on socio-economic growth tomorrow. Research translation is paramount in creating career pathways for our PhD students in order to be sustainable in this changing landscape. It encourages researchers to pursue commercialisation as a part of their academic journey. The Australian Government recognises this and is actively promoting the involvement of industry in the higher education sector to enhance graduate employability for ongoing economic growth.[2]

Meanwhile, the pathway from research to real-world impact has been challenging for graduate research students from HASS disciplines in comparison to their STEM counterparts.[3] Recognising this, the Graduate Research Team at the Monash Business School is taking steps to support PhD students to effectively translate research insights into meaningful actions for societal benefit. Initiatives include training for impactful research communication via a number of PhD events throughout the student journey. Examples include the annual PhD Symposium that focuses on real-world impact, training on impact, fostering student-industry engagement opportunities, and cultivating a culture centred on impactful research to empower PhD students.

The Monash Business School also provides strategic funding to excel and enhance students' global experience, for instance by supporting international experiences at high-quality international universities and manuscript submissions to prestigious international academic conferences in the field.

Through these approaches we hope to pave the path for our graduate research students for better employability in diverse sectors, to progress sustainably.

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# Presentation 10

## Training for Tomorrow: Doctoral Development for Successful Societal Impact

**Heidi Collins** Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland,
**Simon Martin** Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland

This presentation introduces a pilot development programme at Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland, designed to equip doctoral researchers with skills to translate their research into meaningful societal impact. Despite increasing global emphasis on discussions of research impact, few graduate schools offer structured, cohort-based training in public policy and social engagement. This leaves room to innovate and develop an integrated, practice-oriented programme for doctoral researchers.

Our initiative responds to this opportunity with a hybrid programme that draws on three existing approaches seen internationally: stand-alone workshops, policy-focused PhDs, and embedded impact programmes. Delivered over 10 months, the programme includes 40 contact hours combining open-access workshops and seminars with cohort-specific components such as structured networking, mentored engagement with external stakeholders, and a capstone project focused on real-world policy or community challenges.

By embedding skills in policy communication, stakeholder engagement, and impact planning during candidature, this programme aims to transform the doctoral experience, enhancing both the societal relevance of research and the career readiness of graduates, particularly for roles in government and the non-profit sector. Key design challenges include establishing recognition mechanisms, building sustainable partnerships with government and community organisations, and ensuring cross-disciplinary relevance. We invite discussion and the sharing of institutional strategies and experiences of embedding impact and engagement training in doctoral education as we explore ways to balance the breadth and depth of development pathways in our future doctoral programmes.

# Presentation 11

## Making a Mark: Doctoral Research Impact

**Diane Ruwhiu** Graduate Research School, University of Otago, **Rachel Spronken-Smith** Graduate Research School, University of Otago, **Sarah Myles** Research Integrity Office, University of Otago, **Romain Mirosa** Quality Advancement Unit, University of Otago

Doctoral researchers are integral to a university's performance and reputation, significantly bolstering research output and impact. They are often at the forefront of generating new knowledge, contributing substantially to the volume of peer-reviewed publications and the number of citations received by faculty research - key metrics in the 'Research citations per paper' and 'H-index' indicators. Their involvement in diverse research projects, collaboration with faculty, and the development of their theses further enhances a university's overall research productivity and visibility. This directly feeds into a university's academic reputation and international research network scores, attracting more top-tier academics and research funding, and creating a virtuous cycle of sustained impact for global rankings and research reputation.

Doctoral research candidates are vital to a vibrant and research-intensive culture, promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and interdisciplinary collaboration. They play a crucial role in enriching the teaching and learning environment as teaching assistants, leading tutorials, grading assignments, and providing invaluable support to undergraduate students. This offers undergraduates the benefit of instruction from emerging experts with fresh perspectives. Finally, the Doctoral cohort represents diverse talent from around the world, bringing new ideas and methodologies that enrich the University community.

At the University of Otago, research impact is defined by the Research Impact Framework (RIF) as "the beneficial and sustainable effects of our research and creative practice upon the quality of life across multiple dimensions, including the environment, health, the economy, and culture."

This project combines a survey and interviews to understand Doctoral candidates' perceptions of research impact, and illustrate the enabling factors and tangible outcomes of their research impact at the University of Otago. The broad aims of this research are to:

- Explore the contribution of doctoral candidates to the University of Otago research impact landscape.

- Evaluate the impact of interventions on awareness and activities related to doctoral research impact.

- Identify the support systems and resources that doctoral candidates need to maximise the impact of their research.

The survey explores if and how key dimensions of the RIF are being implemented. These dimensions are built around four pillars: awareness, culture and planning; enablers; knowledge exchange; and celebrating success. Questions probe the research impact culture, the types of impact candidates are making, how they create impact, what support is needed to develop or enhance their research impact, and how impact is celebrated. Survey data will be analysed using descriptive statistics, with analysis exploring possible correlations between key variables. The research includes up to 25 Doctoral candidate interviews to further investigate how they achieve research impact, what support is available, and where additional resources are required.

This presentation will provide the preliminary findings from the survey and interview analysis on Doctoral research impact at Otago University. We'll offer insight into the structured training and support PhD candidates need to effectively plan and achieve their research impact goals. The project's findings might lead to the development of new training and development initiatives, changes in policy, or general advancements in Doctoral researcher development.

# Presentation 12

## Supporting doctoral student skill development in research methodologies: Challenges and opportunities

**Lynn McAlpine** University of Oxford, **Karri Holley** University of Alabama

Given the rapidly changing knowledge landscape for doctoral education, attention to how doctoral students develop skills in research methodologies is needed. A confluence of factors drives the need for further attention to this aspect of the doctoral experience: the changing job market for doctoral graduates; massification, politicization, and globalization of the doctoral enterprise; the demand for innovation across sectors; and technological advances shaping pedagogy, engagement, and knowledge outcomes (Holley, Taylor, & Kiley, 2023).

This engagement moves beyond traditional dichotomies of the quantitative and qualitative research paradigm and instead equips students with methodological and content expertise relevant for contemporary and future research needs. The rapid evolution of methodological tools often outpaces the doctoral curriculum, raising questions as to how well-prepared doctoral graduates are to produce necessary knowledge across institutional settings (McAlpine, 2023). The slow nature of curriculum adaptation and the lack of faculty capacity and expertise bring further complications.

Here we reflect on longitudinal approaches, systematic literature reviews, and AI-assisted techniques as opportunities to expand doctoral student skill development. Longitudinal approaches allow researchers to study change over time, emphasizing the temporal nature of data. Through systematic literature reviews, researchers synthesize existing knowledge with an eye towards transparency and reproducibility. AI-assisted techniques offer opportunities to scale research efforts, particularly in terms of the volume and variety of big data.

Towards the skill development of future doctoral graduates, challenges and opportunities exist. First is curricular flexibility, where the measured nature of curricular development and implementation should be balanced with attention to the pace of knowledge evolution (Holley, 2015). Second is faculty capacity and expertise. Ensuring the faculty are equipped with necessary skills to deliver such learning requires that institutional investment in faculty capacity be of the same importance as investment in institutional infrastructure.

Further consideration should be given to issues of ethics (where doctoral graduates not only have the methodological expertise but also the ethical awareness associated with such techniques) and collaboration (allowing doctoral graduates to work across institutional settings as part of research partnerships). Across these issues are cultural dimensions such as academic discipline, race, gender, and nationality, which shape career trajectories and productivity (Corley, Bozeman, Zhang, & Tsai, 2019).

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# Presentation 13

## Aligning entrepreneurship Education with Postgraduate programmes for stimulating Third Stream Income in South African universities

**Thobeka Ncanywa** Walter Sisulu University

This paper explores the alignment of entrepreneurship education with postgraduate programmes as a strategic approach to stimulating third-stream income for universities. Leveraging the theory of planned behaviour, the study highlights how entrepreneurial activities can enhance non-traditional revenue streams, particularly in the context of higher education institutions.

By examining the success of previously advantaged institutions in South Africa in generating third-stream income, the paper uses a qualitative descriptive methodology to explore the disparities faced by previously disadvantaged universities. It argues that integrating entrepreneurial skills into postgraduate education not only positions universities to diversify their income sources but also contributes to their sustainability and growth in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Entrepreneurial universities have established structures to develop postgraduates, such as business schools, entrepreneurship hubs or centres, and other innovative initiatives within departments. This work aims to provide policymakers and educators with insights into adopting a culture of entrepreneurship in postgraduate studies within academic frameworks, ultimately benefiting both institutions and the communities they serve.

### Keywords

Entrepreneurship Education, Postgraduate Programmes, Entrepreneurial University, Third Stream Income

# Presentation 14

## Twice-Exceptionality in Doctoral Education: Rethinking Diversity in Graduate Research

**Inger Mewburn** The Australian National University

Doctoral cohorts now encompass a wider range of cultural, linguistic, behavioural and cognitive profiles than ever before. Yet, while we recognise diversity in terms of nationality, language, or disciplinary knowledge, one form of diversity remains underexplored: the intersection of giftedness and neurodivergence, often referred to as twice-exceptionality (2-e).

In gifted education, 2-e students are well-recognised: those whose exceptional abilities coexist with learning differences or neurodivergence such as autism, ADHD, or dyslexia. Their development is frequently asynchronous—advanced in some areas, fragile in others—and they may excel at creativity and conceptual reasoning while struggling with executive function or social belonging.

Although relatively well explored in relation to K-12 education, the concept of twice exceptionality has rarely been applied to doctoral education. Recent research on neurodivergent higher degree researchers (HDRs) also highlights strikingly similar dynamics: hyper-focus and originality alongside difficulties navigating candidature processes; intense motivation balanced against vulnerability to burnout; and feelings of being "out of step" with peers and the hidden curriculum (Tan et al, forthcoming).

This round table asks: What might doctoral education look like if we acknowledged twice-exceptionality as a dimension of diversity? By bringing together insights from gifted education and neurodivergence research, we will explore how this framing can extend ongoing conversations at QPR about diversity, inclusion, and doctoral identity.

### Key issues to be addressed include:

Transition to doctoral study: What skills and capabilities do 2-e candidates bring with them, and how might their uneven development challenge standard enrolment, induction and progression structures? Identity and belonging: How do 2-e candidates experience doctoral work, and what parallels exist with other equity groups who feel "out of step" in research cultures? Policy and practice: Could ideas from gifted education—such as enrichment, acceleration, or mentorship models—be reimagined in doctoral contexts to foster both excellence and inclusion? The format will begin with short provocations from panellists working in gifted education and neurodivergence research. Participants will then engage the audience in a conversation about:

What would it mean to conceptualise HDR cohorts not only as diverse in background and culture but also in cognitive and behavioural profile? How could doctoral programmes be redesigned to support asynchronous development as a strength rather than a deficit? How might we think about supporting 2-e candidates in terms of recruitment, retention and completion? By focusing on twice-exceptionality, we will invite participants to imagine doctoral programmes that more fully reflect the varied talents and trajectories of those who undertake them.

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Available in pre-print here

# Presentation 15

## A conceptual supervision framework for collaborative engagement: Considerations in supervising CALD HDR students online

**Yolandi Botha** Murdoch University, **Liana Luyt** Murdoch University

Online teaching is often not the preferred mode of tuition for students and supervisors (Jisc, 2022), due to the loss of structure, hands-on learning, and feelings of isolation and community loss. Given the international profile of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates, online supervision is, unfortunately, the primary mode of tuition for offshore candidates. Furthermore, international HDR students may also face cultural and language barriers, which underscores the need for simplification and clarity in online supervision methods (Martin, Wray & Krupa, 2025). Additionally, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) students often feel alienated and experience discrimination. To address these issues, this study focuses on exploring ways in which supervisors could support CALD HDR students in an online supervision environment.

Existing studies on HDR supervision tend to have a narrow focus, exploring higher education supervision in an online or technology-enabled context, cultural nuances associated with international HDR students, or online student engagement. To advance existing literature and address the limited appreciation for the distinctiveness of student engagement and [online] learning (Brown, 2024), this study proposes an integrated, all-encompassing supervision framework to build towards collaborative student engagement. Drawing from the ideas of intellectual humility in supervision (Albertyn et al., 2025), this framework considers the broader HDR, CALD, and online learning environments, the need for cultural competence (Wells, 2000), and critical introspection in supervision (Kolb, 1998) as a foundation for a threefold contextual approach (relational, diversity, and online) to collaborative student engagement.

The framework will be qualitatively explored among supervisors at a Western Australian university to determine its pragmatic relevance. The theoretical and empirical insights will culminate in a guiding supervision framework, providing offshore, HDR students with a sense of belonging and community, and a safe space for engagement. Moreover, the framework promotes lifelong learning through social and collaborative engagement beyond the university context, enabling students to co-create solutions and advancing society.

### Keywords:

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# Presentation 16

## Effective Graduate Supervision: Insights from Graduate Students and Supervisors in the Gulf Region

Frances Kalu Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar Foundation, Doha Qatar

The evolving landscape of higher education calls for greater attention to the quality and impact of graduate supervision. Supervision extends far beyond monitoring research progress as substantial evidence highlights its influence on graduate achievement and completion (Cardilini et al., 2021). Graduate supervision represents a complex educational and relational process between an experienced academic and a developing reseracher, aimed at inducting the student into the scholarly community while supporting their development into an autonomous, confident and self-directed researcher. In addition, growing student diversity, heightened expectations for timely completion, and increasing concerns about mental health further emphasize the importance of responsive and effective supervisory practices (Agolla & Seeletso, 2025). At the same time, the expanding presence of Generative AI in higher education necessitates closer examination of its implications for graduate supervision.

Lee's (2008) framework outlines five central approaches to supervision including, overseeing the research progress, fostering disciplinary socialization, strengthening critical thinking, cultivating independence, and fostering supportive supervisory relationships. The broader literature identifies effective supervision as characterized by consistent communication, constructive and timely feedback, sensitivity to power dynamics, and mutual trust and respect. Despite these insights, there remains limited empirical research on graduate supervision practices within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a region marked by highly diverse student populations.

To address this gap, a proposed study at a GCC-based institution will explore graduate supervision practices through the lens of Lee's (2008) framework and Gatfield's (2005) supervisory management model. Employing a mixed-methods design, the study will examine:

(i) supervisory approaches currently adopted by faculty;

(ii) students' perceptions of how these approaches influence their academic progress and success;

(iii) contextual barriers
to effective supervision within the institution; and

(iv) the ways supervisors and graduate students integrate Generative AI tools into the supervisory process.

Both supervisors and graduate students will reflect on their experiences, highlighting effective strategies and persistent challenges. The study aims to inform the enhancement of graduate supervision within the GCC context and contribute to broader international conversations on best practices in graduate supervision. The planned research project will be shared and discussed during the conference session.

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# Presentation 17

## Different journeys: cultivating doctoral researcher independence with professional doctorate students (DBA) at a distance, through cohorts, collegiality and effective intercultural research supervision practices.

Gina Wisker University of Bath

Much appropriate confidence and success with research during and after doctoral study depends on owned experience, ability to continue to explore, contest and construct knowledge, co-research, write and share research learning and outcomes. The understanding of and facility with this is seen as developed and shared through the hidden curriculum (Elliot et al., 2020, 2023). For internationally originated and based professional doctoral students such often serendipitous hidden curriculum insights are likely to be absent. Much work on intercultural online distance supervision and doctoral researchers from diverse contexts and cultures has largely concentrated on researchers settling into new research contexts and different practices, language and expression, and latterly their flourishing (McChesney et al, 2024; Burford et al, 2024) .

This early research and experience based work considers intercultural, distance based, (largely online) doctoral researcher and supervisor experiences, first exploring challenges for distanced supervision with culturally diverse professional doctoral students. Next, it explores and shares both current (and historical ) effective practices for doctoral students and supervisors , suggesting that specifically designed doctoral researcher development and cohort-based doctoral programmes augmenting supervision can help achieve major hidden curriculum aims, cultivating confidence, collegiality , engagement and independence with culturally diverse, distance doctoral students. The focus here is on doctoral researcher and supervisor experience , and the importance of collegiality and cohorts for international, distance based, professional doctorates.

# Presentation 18

## Taking stock: The need to reframe our research practices around PhD education

Lynn McAlpine University of Oxford, Karri Holley University of Alabama

Twenty-five years ago, PhD education prepared individuals for an academic career so individuals were gradually brought into full membership in an internal system. Research into PhD education and careers was largely divided into two strands: a) the individual (supervisor, PhD and graduate), largely context free; and b) institutional/ national structures (policies, funding, national comparisons), largely independent of individual experience within these structures.

Yet over time, societal shifts have upended this pattern: a) more than half of PhD graduates work beyond the academy (Boman et al., 2021); b) national governments increasingly expect universities to demonstrate societal engagement impacting what type of research is valued (Watermeyer 2015); and c) career paths are no longer institutionally-driven (Cañibano et al., 2019) but self-authored (McAlpine, 2024). These shifts raise questions about the appropriateness of 'traditional' PhD education (Boulos 2016) alongside how we frame and conduct our research.

During this time, we have researched PhD experiences and trajectories, principally in Canada and Europe and less so in Africa and South America. Our growing awareness of the societal shifts encouraged us to take stock - to do a meta-synthesis of our 20+ year research. The bad news: Not surprisingly, we were reminded how we had initially focused internally and on the individual with little reference to the structures. The good news: We had recognized this and gradually changed the way we framed and conducted our research.

The cumulative evidence highlighted that to understand the increasingly diverse career trajectories (and through this question 'traditional' PhD education), we need to examine the complex interactions within and across individual and structural factors. That is, to understand career trajectories, we need:

a) a conceptual framing that can capture this actor-structure interaction; and

b) aligned research designs that focus on this interaction.

Such an aligned conceptual-methodological lens allows clearly distinguishing the different structural contexts alongside the separability of the contexts from the actors (Archer, 2003).

Further, our meta-synthesis emphasized the research priorities should be around the diversity of the PhD career landscape, so examining a) how organizational size, location and mission influence interest in hiring PhDs, b) the nature of the hiring process including the roles of different decision-making actors, c) how job specifications around 'research' and 'communication' are enacted in actual work, and d) the structural conditions that influence more and less effective self-authoring career strategies. Stepping back, we also wonder to what extent we should frame PhD education and careers within the notion of broader societal expectations to view PhD education and PhD graduates as forms of societal engagement (Rossoni et al., 2024).

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# Presentation 19

## Is researcher development a radical act?

Meagan Tyler La Trobe University

Drawing on bell hooks' conceptualisations of education in Teaching to Transgress: Education as the practice of freedom (1994), this paper is an invitation to consider researcher development (RD) as a radical act within the neoliberal, patriarchal academy.

The origins of RD in contexts such as Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) can be seen as tied to concerns about doctoral graduates' transitions to employment (Reeves, 2022). This legacy echoes in neoliberal institutional language around capacity building and employability, where RD is characterised in largely instrumental terms, or positioned in support of research outputs, policy compliance, and career progression. Yet, as the field and practice of RD has grown, so too have more holistic and wide-ranging understandings of its purpose and aims (Sutherland, 2018). These framings move beyond institutional requirements to building communities of researchers, supporting ethical and sustainable research cultures, and encouraging reflective, creative, and critical practice.

Engaging with hooks pushes us further, to recognise this shift as a profound reorientation and to consider that RD, as with all forms of education, has liberatory potential. Researcher development has the power to scaffold learners in developing a critical consciousness, to recognise and potentially reshape structures of inequality, including those of institutions in which we are engaged. The work of RD offers a space to interrogate questions about how knowledge is produced and what values can and should underpin academic life - work hooks' frames as a political act that resists domination and hierarchy.

Moreover, this analysis highlights the way in which the very notion of RD challenges entrenched and deeply gendered constructions of the 'ideal academic'. The neoliberal academy remains tethered to its patriarchal roots and the masculinised figure of the unfeeling, autonomous, and naturally brilliant scholar continues to shape ideas of academic excellence (McRobbie, 2015). To admit a need for 'development' within this set-up is to confess a level of deficiency or dependence, perhaps even weakness. Against this narrative, RD enacts a radical alternative in affirming learning as ongoing and relational, situating growth within community, and valuing reflexivity and even emotion as vital parts of life as a researcher.

In this way, practices of RD, such as peer-learning, mentoring, supervision enhancement, writing groups, and reflective workshops, can be read as forms of transgressive pedagogy in hooks' sense. This lens can help us see RD as genuinely transformative, shaping not only the future research workforce but the kinds of research worlds we inhabit and create.

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# Presentation 20

## Reimagining Graduate Research and Leadership in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Advancing Inclusive, Ethical, and Safety-Conscious Scholarship in South Africa

**Elriza Esterhuyzen** University of South Africa, **Cheryl Rielander** University of South Africa

This paper explores how postgraduate research and doctoral education in South Africa can be reimagined in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI), with particular attention to the intersection between inclusive leadership, safety legislation, and research quality. The argument advanced is that the South African higher education sector must evolve in three interdependent domains:

(1) integrating AI capabilities into supervision, research methods, and academic leadership in ways that uphold human judgement, ethics, and contextual accountability;

(2) strengthening diversity, wellbeing, and leadership capacity among graduate researchers; and

(3) aligning research governance and institutional policy frameworks with national safety and compliance imperatives.

Using a qualitative review, this paper highlights that while the nation has made measurable progress in doctoral enrolment diversity and AI-readiness, there remain substantial gaps in supervisory support, digital infrastructure, and researcher wellbeing (Saidi, 2024; Van Schalkwyk, 2021). Moreover, the growing integration of AI within academic processes introduces new dimensions of safety leadership, including digital ethics, information security, and psychosocial wellbeing - areas that echo the emphasis on preparedness and risk management.

The study proposes a conceptual framework termed Future-Ready Graduate Research Leadership, which emphasises (a) AI literacy embedded in ethical decision-making; (b) compliance with South African safety legislation as a marker of institutional responsibility; (c) inclusion, equity, and wellbeing as quality indicators of doctoral research; and (d) leadership development oriented toward resilient, sustainable research cultures. The paper concludes that to safeguard integrity and excellence in an AI-driven academic environment, South Africa must cultivate graduate researchers who are not only technologically proficient but also grounded in safety-conscious, ethically informed leadership capable of navigating complex legislative and social contexts.

### Methodology

This study adopts a PRISMA-based systematic literature review methodology ensuring transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigour (Page, et al., 2021). The review covers literature published between 2018 and 2025, a period reflecting the global rise of AI in higher education. The systematic literature review is conducted across various databases, using key terms such as AI in postgraduate research, doctoral education South Africa, safety legislation in higher education, inclusive supervision, and AI ethics in research.

Inclusion criteria encompassed studies addressing doctoral supervision, AI integration, inclusive leadership, and inclusive policy in research training. Excluded are sources not aligned with higher education and those lacking empirical or conceptual depth.

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# Presentation 21

## A Short Course on GenAIs in Academic Writing and Research in an Open University: A Reflective Case Narrative

**Juliet Aleta R. Villanueva** University of the Philippines Open Univeristy

This reflective case narrative delves into the development of a short course titled "Collaborating with GenAIs in Academic Writing and Research" for graduate research students in an open university in the Philippines where I teach and mentor research students. I present the study's rationale and the design thinking process of the participative action research method utilized to come up with a prototype of this short course. I discuss initial survey results, the ETHICAL framework of Eacersall et al. (2025) and the AI Literacy framework by Pretorius & Cahusac De Caux (2024) which informed the development of the short course.

The course content outline and sample study guides with learning activities in the short course are presented. I share points for improvement, as well as my insights and reflections based on the outcomes of the short course review and feedback from selected research students and faculty members. I recommend a set of skills for critical literacy development and for integration in Villanueva et al.'s (2024) Researcher Development and Education framework for Open and Distance eLearning programs.

Further improvements may be undertaken so that the selected modules of the short course may be embedded by advisers in their research-related coursework and included in research supervision sessions to benefit distance education learners seeking to improve their research skills alongside application of AIs. The project's practical contribution emphasizes the value of participative research methods and an interactive approach to craft additional guidelines for GenAI use in graduate research for open universities in Asia.

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## Sharing is caring, or not? The implications of sharing examiner reports with doctoral students prior to the viva

**Liezel Frick** Stellenbosch University, **Carren Thom** Stellenbosch University

What is the purpose of the doctoral viva - is it there to 'catch out' the student, or is it a scholarly dialogue where the student has the opportunity to showcase their work and expertise in conversation with other experts? In both cases, doctoral students are examined on their ability to engage in a scholarly debate and on the qualities of the doctoral work itself. The distinction then becomes a matter of the style of examining the kinds of knowledge, skills and competencies that are being tested.

Considering the purpose of a viva, Lovat et al. (2021: 858) suggest that a viva voce, or doctoral oral defence, aligns with a notable shift in higher education processes that position learners to "co-construct their understanding through dialogue", and "take a proactive rather than a reactive role in generating and using feedback". Yet there seems to be a lack of consensus reported in the available (admittedly scant) research on this practice and related processes, while there are lively debates on the issue at (inter-)institutional levels.

This may indicate a lack of shared understanding on the purpose of the viva itself. While there seems to be no concrete evidence that the sharing of reports would (unfairly) enhance students' performance in the viva, this is often offered as a critique of sharing examiner reports with students prior to vivas. Research has shown that sharing the reports only with supervisors was not seen as a workaround to the perceived advantage students may gain in receiving the reports, as the practice could potentially result in issues much the same as when sharing reports with the student.

Those in favour of sharing reports, argue that it ensures a positive, dynamic, effective, fair and transparent doctoral assessment process. Although there seems to be consensus in literature on the topic that all stakeholders (including examiners) should be well informed of this practice if allowed, there remains much variance in policies and practices across (and even within) institutions that require doctoral vivas.

This paper reports on examiner experiences of a system that allows the sharing of examiner reports prior to the viva within one Faculty of Education at a South African university. While Faculty members who have experienced both approaches note the enhancement of the fairness and transparency of the process, as well as an enhancement of the level of conversation and dialogue possible at the viva, there is more variance in examiner experiences of the system. This paper explores the perspectives of examiners over the past two years to provide a nuanced and deliberate account of what the sharing of examiner reports prior to the viva means.

## Inclusion of published literature reviews in doctoral theses: a comparison of theses from four Australian Universities

**Jo Edmondston** The University of Western Australia

Since the mid 1980s, the publication of systematic, scoping and other forms of stand-alone review papers has risen substantially, with Scopus data suggesting the publication of reviews is increasing ten-fold every decade (Kraus, 2022). Many journals now routinely publish review papers, others dedicate special issues to this type of paper and there are many journals that mostly or exclusively publish reviews. In health-related disciplines such as medicine, nursing, and health policy, systematic reviews and meta-analyses are placed at the apex of the evidence hierarchy pyramid and the value of these reviews are increasingly being recognised in the social sciences in areas such as public administration, education and management.

As the opportunity to publish review papers has increased, suggestions that doctoral candidates publish their literature review early in candidature has also increased (for example Pickering & Byrne, 2014). Some of the proposed benefits of publication of a review paper in doctoral candidature include early experience of publication, greater insight into the subject, improvements in critical reasoning, problem-solving skills, and methodological expertise, a possible reduction in bias, and low financial costs. A number of possible disadvantages have also been noted including time constraints, insufficient scope, publication competition, long lead-times to publication, and concerns about candidate contribution when the methodology requires teamwork.

Despite the calls for doctoral students to consider publishing their literature review early in candidature, little is known about how many doctoral candidates include published review papers in their thesis. The only study we are aware of is an assessment of all theses published by doctoral candidates in Swedish medical faculties in 2021, which found ~5% (45/852) of theses included a published review paper, two thirds of which (31/852) were systematic reviews (Ringsten et al, 2025).

The present study explores the inclusion of published review papers in doctoral theses available in the research repositories of four Australian universities (two Go8 and two ATN) in 2020 and 2025. The study will determine what proportion of theses that include published review papers, the type of review, whether there are any differences across discipline and university, and whether there have been any increases over time. The results of this study will inform a broader study of the implications of publishing review papers for doctoral candidates and supervisors.

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# Presentation 24

Wednesday, 15 April
12:00pm

Broughton & Ferguson

Assessment and the
Graduate Research Degree

## The Right to Know: Rethinking Pre-Viva Release of Examiner Reports in Doctoral Examination

**Vijay Kumar** QUEST International University, Malaysia, **Farhana Bakar** Universiti Teknoloji, Malaysia,
**Nick Baker** University of Otago, New Zealand

Doctoral examination practices vary significantly across global systems, particularly in terms of the timing of examiner report release. While UK universities and institutions that follow the British examination model maintain confidentiality until after the viva, New Zealand, Germany, and the Czech Republic routinely share reports beforehand, reframing examination as scholarly dialogue rather than adversarial assessment.

Despite growing calls from convenors and examiners to consider pre-release as a duty of care (Kumar, Sanderson & Kaur, 2021), no systematic comparative study has examined stakeholder perspectives across these different models.

This qualitative study addresses this gap by investigating:

(1) How candidates, supervisors, and examiners perceive the benefits and risks of pre-viva report release;

(2) How views differ between Malaysia and New Zealand; and

(3) Whether stakeholders believe earlier release would enhance doctoral examination internationally.

Through online surveys (targeting 50 respondents) and semi-structured interviews (10-15 participants across both countries), the research employs thematic analysis to capture diverse perspectives on this under-researched policy dimension.

This presentation will share preliminary findings from the study, offering early insights into stakeholder perceptions and the potential implications for reforming doctoral examination practices. The research contributes to reimagining doctoral examination as a more transparent, developmental process aligned with contemporary calls for candidate wellbeing and procedural fairness in graduate research education.

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# Presentation 25

Wednesday, 15 April
2:00pm

Hickinbotham Hall

Roundtable

## Could improving psychosocial safety enhance research degree student success?

**Megan Prideaux** Adelaide University, **Hugh Kearns** iThinkwell

Providing a psychosocially safe workplace has recently been incorporated into Australian workplace health and safety legislation, acknowledging the critical role and potentially debilitating impacts of psychosocial risks in workplace injuries and the organisational responsibility to manage them.

While Universities must therefore manage psychosocial safety risks for their staff, the role of the institution in providing a psychosocially safe environment for students is unclear, particularly for graduate researchers where the boundary between staff and student is often blurred. Additionally, the unique characteristics, power dynamics and potential risks within the graduate researcher context require unique consideration, and potentially, a unique response.

Grounded in Australian-based research and legislative context, the roundtable will open by highlighting the imperative for conceptualising psychosocial safety within the graduate researcher context. A brief overview and discussion will further define our topic and the interrelated concepts of psychological safety, wellbeing and mental health.

Following these foundational components, the roundtable will continue to explore key factors, hazards, risks and potential solutions through a systems lens and using a world cafe approach that draws on participants experience. By collecting the resulting data, perspectives and information shared by participants, the roundtable could also form a foundation for further investigation and action.

# Presentation 26

## Writing ourselves into futures: A Collaborative Autoethnography of two East African Women's doctoral writing as transformation

**Wacango Kimani** University of Johannesburg

In this paper, we interrogate how writing can become a site of transformation in the development of one's identity. We look back on our doctoral journeys as two women from East Africa who pursued PhDs in South Africa and share how writing our doctoral theses became an act of both survival and becoming. In doing so, we explore the possibilities of doctoral writing as a deeply personal process of self-definition. We frame writing at the doctoral level not as a technical procedure but as a relational process in which language, power, and culture are constantly negotiated. Building on Wenger's (1998) theory of learning as social practice, we theorise our writing as situated within a Community of Practice underpinned by African philosophies of utu/ubuntu, which emphasise connection, care, and becoming together. This conceptual grounding enables us to view writing as an inherently communal act rather than an isolated scholarly task. Through reflective dialogue, we reveal how our friendship and collective reflexivity enabled us to unlearn colonial writing habits, re-story our scholarly identities, and cultivate a sense of belonging in transnational academic spaces.

Extending this perspective, we employ Collaborative Autoethnography as both methodology and epistemological stance to interrogate how doctoral writing intersects with culture, gender, and geography. Through dialogic reflection, we trace our movement across pre-doctoral educational histories, doctoral struggles, and postdoctoral transitions, showing how academic writing becomes a dynamic site where we negotiate who we were, who we were expected to be, and who we are becoming. The doctoral thesis, therefore, becomes more than a final document but a living text through which new scholarly selves are written into existence and sustained over time. Thus, our reflections reveal that learning to write in a South African university context required both intellectual and emotional labour.

As transnational doctoral candidates, we were simultaneously insiders and outsiders, navigating Eurocentric academic conventions while seeking to honour our East African epistemologies. Writing together allowed us to make visible the personal, linguistic, and cultural dimensions often erased in academic discourse, thus transforming vulnerability into a space of resistance and renewal.

Building on these insights, this collaborative inquiry speaks to the broader transformation agenda in graduate research. By positioning the self as a legitimate site of knowledge production, we challenge the lingering hierarchies of academic legitimacy that continue to marginalise non-Western voices. In doing so, we argue that doctoral writing can serve as a transformative pedagogical experience, one that reconstitutes both the scholars themselves and the regimes that define what counts as legitimate knowledge.

In conclusion, our study calls for graduate research structures and systems that recognise doctoral writing as an act of becoming rather than compliance. The future of doctoral education, we contend, depends on cultivating spaces in which scholars can write themselves into being where writing functions as a bridge from individual transformation to collective emancipation. Our collaborative autoethnograph, therefore, invites supervisors, writing tutors, mentors, and doctoral students to reimagine doctoral writing not merely as academic labour but as a radical and hopeful practice of rehumanisation.

# Presentation 27

## Who is a graduate researcher (GR) developer? Do GR administrators reflect on their own professional identity as bureaucratic or developmental?

**Katherine Firth** La Trobe University, **Rebecca Lubansky** La Trobe University, **Dan Bendrups** La Trobe University, **Raylee Pasalis** La Trobe University, **Sam Spiers** La Trobe University, **Claire McLoon** La Trobe University, **Rosina Prestia** La Trobe University, **Dana Swieca** La Trobe University.

While multiple studies have considered the question of graduate researcher (GR) developer identities from academic and educator perspectives (e.g. Kensington-Miller et al. 2012, Mori et al. 2021), few studies have explicitly included any professional administrative and managerial staff in graduate research (Freeman and Price, 2024), let alone focused solely on them.

Focussing on a small case study of administrators and managers in a mid-tier, medium-sized Australian university GR school, this paper lets administrators speak. A short, open survey was completed in 2023, followed up by a reflective conference paper at QPR 2024, together with unstructured interviews and detailed observations of presentations across 2024-25. The professional staff were consulted and included at every stage, collaborating with academic staff to author the paper using autoethnographic methods and reflexive practices. Theorising the findings was achieved by thinking with, but not through, Bourdieu and Foucault.

These graduate researcher administrators and managers see themselves as an integral and influential part of the GR journey. They believe their attitudes, experience, work setting, and interaction across the wider institution are important elements in graduate researcher success. Their care and carefulness are seen as significant determiners of candidates' success. The workplace, team work and positive in-team and beyond-team relations were also identified as important in making a positive candidate journey.

These administrators and managers, like educator and academics GR developers, identify themselves as having a set of attitudes and work environments that orient towards affective, developmental and sustained graduate researcher development. There was significant variation in experience and education backgrounds, with some staff proposing that these elements were less important than the personal characteristics and the institutional culture.

Building on the significant body of work to include 'professional' staff in the scholarship of teaching and learning, this paper is authored with professional administrative and management staff rather than by academics studying them. This paper makes space for expanding current 'third space' and 'alt-ac' conversations (Guerin, 2021), expanding the question 'who is a GR developer' and 'how are graduate researchers developed'?

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# Presentation 28

## Supervisors in Creating Independent Researchers

**Susan Gasson** James Cook University, **Abigail Winter** Queensland University of Technology

In response to the award-winning success of Confident Supervisors Vol 1, a second volume will be launched at QPR 2026. The open-access volume includes a Google Translate function so chapters can be translated and downloaded in numerous languages. A panel of authors who wrote chapters for the book will come together to discuss their experience of writing chapters, and the contributions their chapters and the book make to supervisory practice.

This volume features chapters from leading scholars in the US, UK , Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Indonesia, covering five topic areas. Supervising the changing faces of the higher degree research cohort includes chapters provided by Stan Taylor (Durham University), Margaret Kiley and Rachel Spronken-Smith (Otago University). Supervising practices for different phases includes a chapter by Karen Clegg (York University and the UK RSVP project) and Natasha Kitso (QUT, Australia). Supervising Diverse Methods and Methodologies includes chapters by David Silverman (Goldsmiths, UK) and Lesley Wood (North-West University, Zimbabwe). Technically informed supervision includes chapters from early career researchers Yuli Rohmiyati and Rifka Pratama from Diponego University in Indonesia. Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity in Higher Education includes chapters by Narelle Lemon (ECU, Australia) and Alan McKee (University of Sydney, Australia).

Through discussion the panel will reveal the diverse approaches and perspectives used to explore supervision, adoption of new practices and supervision in specific contexts. A chapter by Susan Gasson (JCU) and Christine Bruce on the Scholarship of Supervision celebrates the global community of supervisors. The chapter explores the potential for an action research cycle to be used by individuals and institutions to enable the development of supervisory capacity. A chapter by Virginia Tucker (San Jose University, USA) explores supervisors' navigation of thresholds as they build communities for higher degree researchers. Karen Dooley (QUT, Australia) and Michael Mu (University of South Australia) share their experiences of enabling higher degree researchers to capitalise on their linguistic-cultural resources.

Roundtable Panellists will explain how chapters speak directly to experienced and novice supervisors, sharing knowledge and ideas to build capacity and confidence, enabling the creation of independent researchers. Topics selected are a response to current and emerging supervisory contexts. Chapters share a common structure to allow easy reference. They open by answering the question "Why read this chapter". Then the reader is introduced to key literature and conceptual frameworks and models related to the topic. Case studies and hypothetical scenarios are used to explore practices and approaches. At the end of most chapters, authors provide some suggested activities or prompting questions that invite use of new practices and approaches introduced in the chapter.

You will hear from novice supervisors, informed by their recent experiences as doctoral candidates and from experienced supervisors sharing with you their years of experience building on their engagement with disciplinary and professional networks.

# Presentation 29

## Peer Power: Boosting the Graduate Research Experience through Mentorship

**Kellie Dyer** CQUniversity, **Melissa Smith** CQUniversity, **Edina Lobo** CQUniversity

Research Higher Degree (HDR) students often face a range of challenges, including feelings of isolation, uncertainty regarding research processes, and the difficulty of balancing multiple responsibilities across academic, personal and professional settings. These challenges can be further magnified for students who are enrolled at a regionally headquartered University operating both domestically and internationally. In response to these challenges, the School of Graduate Research (SGR) at CQUniversity established a Peer Mentoring program. This program is led by experienced graduate researchers currently enrolled at CQUniversity. The program started in 2018 and so far, has seen 29 mentors support HDR students across diverse disciplines and campus locations, including external students. The Mentors help to assist with cross-disciplinary collaboration, identify shared student concerns and, with a geographic spread of Mentors across Campus locations, they also help to ensure that any location specific trends and/or issues are identified and can be addressed, leading to greater inclusion and a sense of belonging. Utilising a spread of Mentors across disciplines and geographic locations also helps support the development of a shared and consistent University presence and messaging.

Mentors provide guidance on academic processes and systems, emotional, and practical support through a variety of channels including informal drop-in zoom meetings, dedicated email communication, 1:1 conversations, Shut up and Write workshops, attendance at HDR intensives and other informal interactions. The mentors address common student hurdles such as imposter syndrome, understanding and managing supervisor relationships, locating support resources and feelings of isolation.

By fostering safe spaces, utilising a confidential and respectful approach, the Mentors gather valuable insights that may not otherwise surface. Sharing these insights, appropriately, enables the SGR team to enhance services, address emerging trends and improve the student experience. This contributes to a more supportive and engaging environment for research students. Strong student engagement with mentor-led activities supports the program's aim to build confidence, academic engagement, and research satisfaction. Feedback from mentors and mentees, both written and verbal, highlights the transformative impact of relational support on the research experience. This feedback also provides support to the program aim of having peer mentoring recognised as a valuable complement to existing SGR services.

By leveraging personal experiences, the program creates authentic connections, building trust across the student cohort. This approach also reinforces CQUniversity's learner-centred approach and helps to create a sense of belonging amongst students. Combining the efforts of the Peer Mentors, with the activities and programs of the SGR team, helps to foster collaborative learning environments, leading to enhanced student well-being, engagement and success.

# Presentation 30

## Designing with Dialogue: Graduate researcher voice in program and policy development

**Dr Dani Milos** Flinders University, **Dr Alice Dunlop** Flinders University

Supporting graduate researchers for success requires more than delivering workshops or resources. It demands a sustained commitment to listening, learning, and leading through change. At Flinders University, our approach to Higher Degree by Research (HDR) support is grounded in the principle of responsiveness, where the graduate researcher voice is central to program design, delivery, and institutional decision-making.

From the outset, we engage graduate researchers through a structured induction process that invites them to share their backgrounds, aspirations, and perceived needs. This initial dialogue informs the development of tailored training and development pathways, ensuring that support is not only relevant but also aligned with individual and disciplinary trajectories. This practice reflects broader calls in higher education to move beyond tokenistic consultation and toward genuine partnership with students (Matthews & Dollinger, 2022).

Our Graduate Researcher Training Program exemplifies this ethos of co-creation. Rather than adhering to a fixed curriculum, the program is designed to evolve in response to student feedback. We collect input through session evaluations, annual satisfaction surveys, and informal channels, creating multiple opportunities for graduate researchers to shape their learning environment. This aligns with Lundy's (2007) framework for student voice, which emphasises space, voice, audience, and influence as essential conditions for meaningful engagement.

Feedback has led to tangible changes, including the introduction of modules on emerging research methods, enhanced digital resources, and flexible delivery formats. It has also prompted improvements in peer learning opportunities, supervisor engagement, and integration with other university platforms. These iterative enhancements demonstrate our commitment to listening and acting on what students say they need to succeed.

Importantly, this feedback-informed model positions graduate researchers not as passive recipients but as active partners in their own development. Research shows that when students perceive their voices as valued and impactful, their engagement, motivation, and sense of belonging increase (Briffett-Akta & Ying, 2025; Sun & Holt, 2022). This participatory approach also supports equity and inclusion, ensuring that diverse perspectives - including those of international, neurodivergent, and first-generation researchers - are heard and reflected in program design (Ouattara, 2025).

Beyond individual outcomes, our data-driven approach enables us to identify trends, anticipate challenges, and inform institutional policy. By sharing aggregated feedback with university leadership and colleges, we contribute to strategic planning and advocate for continued investment in researcher development. This aligns with broader sectoral shifts toward evidence-informed practice and accountability in graduate education (O'Connor, 2024).

In this presentation, we will outline our framework for embedding graduate researcher voice in HDR support, including practical strategies for feedback collection, analysis, and implementation. We invite participants to reflect on their own contexts and consider how listening to graduate researchers can drive meaningful change in training, supervision, and policy.

# Presentation 31

## Learning from and with each other: Partnering professional staff and research students in research training

**Sharon Matthews** Edith Cowan University, **Michael Stein** Edith Cowan University,
**Jo McFarlane** Edith Cowan University

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students face numerous challenges throughout their research journey, which can adversely affect their well-being and ability to complete their studies. Recent research points to a concerning level of challenges to mental health among doctoral candidates. Bergvall et al.'s findings (2025), for example, link doctoral study with substantial increases in receiving mental health care, particularly for students who relocate to study. At the same time, engaging with peer support is shown to alleviate the isolation often experienced during doctoral research and to foster resilience, helping students manage stress, imposter syndrome, and burnout (Lorenzetti et al., 2019).

This presentation outlines a 2025 initiative that purposefully integrates HDR peer support into research training workshops offered by the HDR Communication Adviser team at Edith Cowan University (ECU). Prioritising the student voice, the firsthand experiences of ECU's SOAR (Support - Opportunities - Advice -Resources) peer advisers are used to enrich the training environment. These peer advisers contribute to the development and refinement of workshop content by sharing their observations and suggestions based on their interactions with participants. This feedback loop ensures that the training remains relevant, responsive, and aligned with the evolving needs of HDR students. Additionally, by sharing practical insights and strategies for overcoming common research challenges with their fellow students, SOAR team members help to demystify aspects of the research journey that may appear opaque or intimidating to participants, fostering a sense of shared community as researchers.

We share reflections and outcomes emerging from this partnership, particularly how embedding peer-led perspectives has not only strengthened these workshops, but also aligns with broader institutional goals of fostering student agency, belonging and success in researcher development training. Incorporating peer perspectives in research training spaces allows research skills to be more accessible and contextually grounded, prompting preparedness and building supportive learning communities. Likewise, integrating peer advisers into our workshops has encouraged us, as educators, to reflect on our pedagogical approaches, while simultaneously supporting the SOAR team in developing their facilitation skills, creating a mutually beneficial partnership. This reciprocal arrangement emphasises the value of the 'human' dimension, an important consideration in the context of disruptions introduced by generative AI. Recognising the growing need for more support for research students to transition into their studies, and for more inclusive and student-centred pedagogies (Barraket, 2005), our approach embeds SOAR team members as active contributors to skill-building.

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# Presentation 32

## Scaling Graduate Research Industry Engagement: Reflections, Results, and Recalibrations

**Matt Atkins** The University of Melbourne

In recent years, a significant shift has occurred in graduate research policy and practice, driven by the introduction of a Research Training Program (RTP) funding incentive for universities whose doctoral candidates complete their degree having undertaken an eligible industry engagement. Universities had long recognised the developmental value of such experiences in enhancing candidates' research capability, employability, and impact, but the financial driver accelerated institutional efforts to systematise and scale industry engagement within doctoral education.

At the University of Melbourne, this shift catalysed the establishment of a centralised graduate research industry engagement function designed to coordinate an institution-wide framework for supporting, tracking, and reporting industry-engaged research experiences across all disciplines and at scale.

Three years on, this presentation reflects on the results, lessons, and recalibrations arising from this undertaking.

The framework was built from the ground up through a whole-of-university stocktake of existing practices, the development of streamlined administrative pathways, and the introduction of processes to capture engagements that might otherwise go unreported. Establishing systems that were both legislatively compliant and scalable required balancing agility with rigour.

Implementation has led to growth in industry-engaged research experiences across disciplines and the integration of engagement metrics into broader institutional strategy. A key learning has been the importance of visibility and active engagement with stakeholders, including candidates, academic and professional staff, and industry partners. Graduate research collaborations are inherently complex and can place additional administrative pressure on supervisors and faculty teams.

Securing buy-in has required a proactive and sustained approach: presenting to student cohorts and faculty committees wherever welcomed, developing comprehensive guidelines and supporting materials, and implementing administrative processes that make life easier for staff while ensuring compliance. Close collaboration with business development colleagues has also been critical to aligning graduate research initiatives with broader partnership strategies. Together, these efforts have improved institutional coordination, strengthened external partnerships, and enhanced the University's capacity to capture and demonstrate impact.

Scaling, however, has not been without challenges. The presentation will discuss barriers such as supervisor workload, cultural resistance, uneven discipline-level demand, and the limits of financial incentives as drivers of change.

Three years of implementation reveal that sustainable growth requires more than systems: it demands cultural alignment. Genuine supervisor buy-in, a clear articulation of value for candidates and partners, and adequate resourcing are indispensable to maintaining quality and ensuring that industry experiences remain meaningful, enriching, and educationally sound.

This case study offers reflections for institutions seeking to build or expand their graduate research industry programs. It highlights how early investment in infrastructure, continuous recalibration, and strong visibility across the university community can transform early momentum into embedded practice, with success defined not only by growth or funding outcomes but by the quality and pedagogical value of candidates experiences within and beyond academia.

# Presentation 33

## A Tale of Three Settings: Early Insights from the CSIRO Industry PhD Program

**Estelle Gaillard** CSIRO

There is growing interest in PhD programs that bridge academia and industry through structured engagement. Funded under the Australian Government's National Industry PhD Program as part of the University Research Commercialisation Action Plan, the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) Industry PhD (iPhD) Program brings together universities, CSIRO and industry partners to co-design and co-supervise industry-focused PhD projects. This three-sided PhD aims to build the next generation of 'industry-ready' research graduates, or bridge-builders, by combining professional development training with direct experience across three working environments. The program connects academic research to real-world challenges while exposing PhD students to diverse research and work cultures, priorities and practices, and offering insight into a range of career pathways within the research and innovation system.

In this mixed-methods evaluation of the iPhD Program, using yearly online surveys and follow-up interviews, we explore iPhD student experiences and outcomes. This presentation will share early results on how first-hand experiences across multiple settings shape or reshape iPhD students' career thinking and aspirations over the course of their PhD.

Early results suggest that students value the chance to "trial" three distinct settings—university, CSIRO/government and industry—which provides firsthand insights into workplace cultures, practices and expectations through direct experience and interactions with iPhD supervisors and colleagues. Students report that these experiences help them gain a clearer understanding of sector-specific job demands and skills, explore their interests and reflect on which environments and career paths might suit them best. Industry experience, in particular, appears to expand or refine students' views on working in industry, shaping their understanding of how research is conducted and applied in non-academic contexts. Building networks is highlighted as a key benefit of the multiple-settings design, with students valuing opportunities to connect with people from diverse organisations and potential future employers. Engagement and collaboration across multiple environments also appear to support the development of transferable skills, which students link to post-PhD employability.

This presentation aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion about what it means to prepare PhD candidates for the future. Early results suggest that PhD programs fostering research collaboration between universities, research organisations and industry can help broaden students' career thinking and support them in navigating both academic and non-academic futures.

# Presentation 34

## Reimagining Assessment of Doctoral Degrees to Promote Inclusivity, Authenticity and Relevance

**Rachel Spronken-Smith** University of Otago, **Diane Ruwhiu** University of Otago, NZ,
**Tracy Riley** Massey University, NZ

In recent decades, the assessment of doctoral candidates has been criticised internationally, as not being fit for purpose. Most PhD graduates do not enter jobs in academia, and both employers and graduates report a lack of preparation for career transitions. Moreover, our current assessment is not responsive to the needs of all students, especially Indigenous candidates, as well as those with neurodiversity.

We are commencing research to reimagine doctoral assessment in Aotearoa New Zealand, moving beyond the traditional thesis to embrace more authentic, relevant, and inclusive methods. Importantly, this shift must reflect contemporary societal aspirations, including addressing issues of equity, sustainability, and the broader impact of research. Whilst maintaining a rigorous academic core, an alternative such as a portfolio approach could encourage inclusivity, authenticity and relevance, as candidates tailor their portfolio items to reflect their background, research journey, and desired career pathway.

We are undertaking an exploratory qualitative study to capture the views of a wide range of stakeholders regarding doctoral assessment and alternative approaches. These stakeholders include: members of the Australian Council for Graduate Research, including New Zealand members; senior administrators in the Tertiary Education Commission and Ministry of Education; Universities New Zealand, especially the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) group; senior Māori academics; senior Pacific Island academics; supervisors (e.g., a cross-sectional sample consisting of both new, mid-career and later-career supervisors); doctoral candidates (e.g., representatives at each institution); Directors of Career Development Centres; and Directors of Disability Support Offices. We are using both semi-structured interviews and focus groups to capture the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding doctoral assessment. We are probing fitness of purpose of the current assessment and exploring alternatives.

By interviewing key stakeholders, we are getting a sense of any appetite and willingness to change. Moreover, we are becoming aware of the possibilities and pitfalls if we do promote pursuing an alternative approach such as portfolios. Although our research focuses on portfolios as a possible alternative, we are keen to explore other approaches such as micro-credentials or postgraduate certificates. Through discussing alternative approaches with stakeholders, we hope to identify a way forward that aligns with majority views.

In this round table session, we will briefly share some preliminary findings and facilitate a discussion about alternative doctoral assessment. The questions we will discuss with participants include:

Whether the current system of assessment for doctoral degrees is fit for purpose? Is the current assessment inclusive and responsive to Indigenous candidates and those with neurodiversity? What other ways could we assess doctoral outcomes? Should a written thesis be required as part of doctoral assessment? If we were to move to an alternative approach, what would be the benefits and challenges? By the end of this round table discussion, participants should have an enhanced awareness of some limitations of the current methods of doctoral assessment, as well as a broadened perspective of alternatives, which could promote inclusivity, authenticity and relevance.

# Presentation 35

## Disability and neurodivergence in HDR supervision: Transforming practice

**Dr Anna Szorenyi** Adelaide University, **Dr Tova Rozengarten** Flinders University,
**Dr Cambrey Payne** Adelaide University

Providing disability support to undergraduate students is an established institutional practice across Australian universities, however this support is often not well tailored to the differing context of Higher Degree Research (HDR). The needs of neurodivergent HDR students are similarly absent from discussion on neurodiversity in higher education (van Ommen et al 2023, p. 537). Our own previous research shows that many HDR candidates do not disclose their disability or seek support, stating that no-one seems to know what adjustments can be made at the HDR level (Szorenyi & Payne 2025). The reliance of adjustment policies on medical diagnoses is often a further barrier to seeking support. There is an evident need for suggestions on how disability support can be applied in the HDR context.

In this presentation we offer practical resources based on a relational theoretical model of HDR supervision and of disability. In this model we draw on Alison Kafer's political-relational model of disability (2024, p. 4) and Karen Barad's (2007) onto-ethico-epistemological concept of intra-action, understanding that disability and divergence are outcomes of layered and entangled social and embodied processes. This approach draws our attention both to the intrinsically relational process of research supervision, and also to the environmental factors that impact on the research process. We look for ways in which these relations can be configured to allow flexibility and attention to individual needs and contexts, enabling the research team to establish working relationships that support positive and open discussion of needs and contributions, as a counter to the isolation created by expectations that 'self-advocacy' is entirely up to HDR candidates.

To practically support this process we present a newly-developed 'guide' for supervisors and HDR candidates, and a checklist to begin supervision conversations in ways that facilitate shared exploration of needs and potentials. These resources are designed so that they can be used by all HDR research teams, without the need for official diagnoses. Our hope is to foster a culture in which listening to one another's needs is standard practice, not an exceptional 'adjustment'.

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# Presentation 36

Wednesday, 15 April 3:30pm | The Vines | Supervision

## Towards trauma-informed postgraduate research supervision

**Katrina McChesney** University of Waikato, New Zealand

Postgraduate student cohorts are more diverse than ever before. In responding to this diversity, a group that has not been adequately considered comprises students who are living with the effects of trauma. Trauma arises as a natural human response to events outside one's control that lead to feeling deeply unsafe (SAMHSA, 2014). Trauma-informed approaches anticipate the presence of trauma within any group of people and seek to create safe, inclusive environments that resist retraumatisation, discrimination, or exclusion (SAMHSA, 2014). With over 70% of people being exposed to one or more potentially traumatic events during their lifetimes, it is crucial to equity and inclusion efforts that we develop trauma-informed approaches at all levels, including postgraduate research (McChesney, 2024a).

To date, however, attention to trauma and trauma-informed practices in higher education has been almost exclusively situated in undergraduate and postgraduate coursework contexts. Postgraduate research is a distinct pedagogical undertaking that differs in important ways from the taught components of higher education. Postgraduate research students work largely individually, with supervisory oversight but without a set curriculum to guide their learning, and must engage in the challenging work of creating new knowledge while transitioning into a new scholarly (rather than student) identity. So what might it look like for the unique context of postgraduate supervision, and surrounding postgraduate research environments, to become trauma-informed? And what research is needed to support that endeavour?

This conceptual presentation considers starting points for trauma-informed postgraduate supervisory and associated institutional practices, as well as priorities for future research on trauma-informed postgraduate research education and supervision. The presentation is informed by work on trauma-informed approaches in other educational (e.g. L'Estrange, in press) and social (e.g. SAMHSA, 2014) contexts, as well as my early empirical work capturing lived experience accounts from doctoral students living with the effects of trauma (McChesney, 2024b). In terms of practice, common principles of trauma-informed approaches are applied to the specific context of postgraduate research education and systemic, intersectional, and social justice considerations are highlighted. In terms of research, both conceptual and methodological priorities are proposed to guide ongoing research, and the centrality of student voice is emphasised.

Work in the area of trauma-informed postgraduate supervision is as yet in its infancy, but is urgently needed as part of wider equity and inclusion efforts. Providing robust starting points for research and practice, this presentation will be of interest to both scholars and practitioners (supervisors, graduate research school staff, and policymakers) interested in trauma-informed approaches to postgraduate research supervision.

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# Presentation 37

Wednesday, 15 April 3:30pm | The Vines | Supevision

## The PhD relationship: following and leading

**Ruth Sims** CWeX, UniSA

Supervisory relationships are vital to doctoral success. While followership is gaining prominence in leadership research and leadership development the implications of both partners' ability to follow and lead effectively have yet to be explored in the relationship between PhD candidates and advisors. Drawing on research into good PhD supervisory practice and leadership and followership in workplace relationships this presentation will introduce followership in the context of the PhD relationship. It will challenge participants to identify actions they can take to engage in both followership and leadership in this important relationship with the goal of successful PhD completion.

The PhD relationship is unusual. It is not an employee relationship or a student / teacher relationship; it is both collegial and hierarchical. There are power and status differentials throughout the relationship, even as the candidate develops subject matter expertise beyond that of their advisor. The relational nature has been noted but PhD supervisors tend to take on a superior and candidates a subordinate role within the relationship (Vähämäki et al., 2021). A less hierarchical is reflected in advice to students and supervisors. However, development programs are often aimed at supervisors, not both parties, implicitly or explicitly promoting the view that the supervisor has the leadership role in the relationship.

Leadership relies on interactions and relationships (Eva et al., 2024). Both partners engage in followership and leadership to accomplish goals (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Individuals' leading and following behaviors are influenced by their expectations (Sims & Weinberg, 2024). This presentation will explore implicit theories in relation to followership and leadership, as well as supervisor and candidate roles. It will introduce the construct of followership before considering the implications for the PhD relationship if a followership perspective is taken.

This presentation could also be delivered as an interactive workshop

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# Presentation 38

## Unpacking the Neoliberal Knapsack: Reimagining Doctoral Education in Clinical Medicine Through Disciplinary and Contextual Lenses

**Colleen Aldous** University of KwaZulu-Natal, **Elly Grossman** Walter Sisulu University

Over the past half-century, neoliberal ideologies have influenced higher education, producing a global PhD system defined by standardisation, accountability, and market-driven metrics of productivity. As neoliberalism wanes and new socio-economic paradigms emerge, doctoral education stands at a crossroads. This paper examines how these shifting forces have influenced the PhD experience in clinical medicine. This field resists universal frameworks due to its unique professional culture, research priorities, and disciplinary norms. Drawing on our experience as supervisors of clinical medicine PhDs in South Africa, we explore the paradoxes, tensions, and possibilities that arise when globalised models of "doctorateness" intersect with the clinical imperative to improve patient care.

We begin by unpacking the legacy of neoliberal higher education policy and its translation into doctoral frameworks such as South Africa's National Qualifications Framework (NQF10) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) Standard for Doctoral Degrees. While these frameworks align with global standards that emphasise transferable skills, interdisciplinarity, and accountability, they often fail to recognise disciplinary peculiarities. Clinical medicine, as both a profession and a research domain, is characterised by an apprenticeship model of learning, situated knowledge production, and outcome-oriented research that serves patients rather than abstract theory. These features challenge the relevance of standardised doctoral attributes derived largely from education and social science perspectives.

We then examine disciplinarity as a cultural and epistemological construct. Drawing on Becher's notion of academic "tribes" and Turners's depiction of disciplinary "cartels," we illustrate how clinical medicine operates as a fragmented yet insular field that privileges practical expertise, experiential knowledge, and professional autonomy. Unlike traditional academic trajectories, clinical PhD candidates are typically practising doctors who pursue research to enhance their clinical competence rather than to advance academic careers. This reality disrupts conventional understandings of doctoral socialisation and the linear progression from coursework to research. The result is a mismatch between institutional expectations of scholarly development and clinicians' professional motivations.

A central tension lies in doctoral assessment. Despite recognition that examination practices are deeply disciplinary, global PhD policy continues to promote uniform assessment standards. Studies consistently demonstrate that examiners' criteria for originality, contribution, and presentation vary across fields, yet institutional guidelines often ignore this. We propose an alternative assessment approach for clinical medicine that integrates two complementary rubrics: one derived from the NQF and CHE frameworks to ensure alignment with global standards, and another discipline-specific rubric modelled on the EQUATOR health research reporting guidelines. Together, these rubrics provide a transparent, context-sensitive tool that accommodates both universal benchmarks and clinical realities.

Our argument calls for a paradigm shift in how doctoral education is conceptualised, managed, and evaluated. Rather than universalising the PhD through homogenised criteria, we advocate a pluralistic, discipline-responsive model that values context, professional culture, and purpose. In doing so, we aim to contribute to a broader reimagining of doctoral education beyond neoliberal metrics, toward a system that is inclusive, reflexive, and transformative for the future of graduate research.

# Presentation 39

## An Analysis of Neoliberalism's Effects on the quality of Postgraduate Education in South Africa

**Sybert Mutereko** Rhodes University, South Africa

Many scholars have warned of a dystopian future for higher education worldwide, shaped by the pervasive influence of neoliberalism, marketisation,, and managerialism. The ethos of higher education as a public good has been eroded and trivialised, with financial outcomes increasingly dictating pedagogical processes and priorities. The social and developmental responsibilities of higher education have been sidelined in favour of its economic functions, both for individuals and the state. Consequently, all stakeholders in higher education are compelled to act as rational "homo-economicus," prioritising economic gain above all other values. While the impact of neoliberalism on higher education, has been extensively studied, its specific effects on the quality of postgraduate education have received limited scholarly attention. This gap may stem from the tendency to subsume postgraduate education within the broader category of higher education. Although this categorisation is valid, it overlooks the unique nuances of postgraduate study that warrant separate and comprehensive analysis. Given this background, the purpose of this study sought to understand the impacts of managerialism on postgraduate education in South Africa.

A systematic literature review, guided by a six-stage framework, was conducted to identify studies examining the influence of neoliberalism on the quality of postgraduate education. Following the identification and screening phases, 73 studies were selected for review from a total of 1,871 potential studies identified across various databases.

On one hand, this study demonstrates how, in some institutions, postgraduate supervision has become a central metric for measuring academic performance, often tied to financial incentives. On the other hand, it highlights how public higher education institutions have increased the number of postgraduate students to capitalise on funding models (such as input and output grants) and improve their academic rankings. This expansion frequently occurs against the backdrop of limited supervisory capacity and reduced state funding for postgraduate education. Both have serious ramifications for the final graduate attributes.

These findings have profound implications for South Africa's higher education system. The paper questions the agency of South African scholars in resisting powerful vested interests groups and aligning their work with public interests. Rather than attempting to "fit in" and conform to the neoliberal framework of higher education, the paper challenges scholars to act as critical and engaged intellectuals, using their resources to promote independent and transformative thought. This can be achieved through engagement with policy makers and developing global networks to share resources and strategies to resit neoliberalism. Critical instances of protests against neoliberalism in the South African higher education include the 2015 student-led #FeesMustFall movement which demanded free and decolonised quality higher education. While free higher education goal was not achieved, studies have shown that movement led to successful policy changes and increased funding for less privileged students.

# Presentation 40

## From Research to Impact: Launching New Zealand's Applied Doctorate Scheme

Tracy Riley Massey University, **Prof JR Rowland**, University of Auckland, **Prof Neil Dodgson**, Victoria University Wellington, **Prof Diane Ruwhiu**, University of Otago

In 2025, New Zealand launched the Applied Doctorate Scheme—a national initiative designed to bridge doctoral research and industry impact. Funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), the Scheme is hosted by four universities: the University of Auckland, Massey University, the University of Otago, and Victoria University of Wellington. It aims to enable doctoral researchers to contribute directly to innovation and development within New Zealand industry.

The Scheme responds to a growing national and global demand for research that delivers tangible, real-world outcomes. It addresses the gap between academic research and industry application, ensuring that doctoral graduates are equipped with the skills, networks, and experience to contribute meaningfully to innovation ecosystems. It also reflects a broader shift in doctoral education toward relevance, responsiveness, and impact.

The scheme has three features that distinguish it from traditional doctoral programmes: a requirement to have a partnership with industry, with the student embedded in the industry partner; a professional development strand; and a partnership between multiple universities to cooperate rather than compete.

The Scheme supports cohorts of doctoral students to explore broad research themes. Students are selected through a competitive process that assesses academic excellence, alignment with the research theme, and potential for industry impact. Each student is supported by a supervisory team comprising academic and industry mentors, ensuring that research is both rigorous and relevant. The Scheme's structured professional development, mentoring, and networking opportunities enhance career readiness, and include an annual conference for all participants.

Over the three-year programme, each student will spend at least six months embedded with an industry partner, with the potential to complete their entire doctorate in an industry setting. This embedded model is designed to foster deep collaboration, mutual learning, and the co-creation of knowledge that is both academically robust and practically useful.

Each cohort is themed to provide a subject-relevant peer group for candidates and their supervisors. The inaugural theme of "energy" encompasses a wide range of research areas. Projects span engineering, environmental science, economics, and social sciences, reflecting a commitment to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. This thematic breadth encourages collaboration across disciplines and sectors, and supports the development of renewable, equitable, and resilient energy solutions.

As the Scheme evolves, it has the potential to reshape the landscape of doctoral education in Aotearoa New Zealand by embedding applied research pathways, strengthening university-industry partnerships, enhancing the societal relevance of doctoral work, and improving professional development. It also offers a model that could inform similar initiatives internationally, particularly in small, innovation-driven economies.

This session will share the implementation processes, early insights, and lessons learned from this emerging model of doctoral education. It will also reflect the challenges of establishing a national scheme across multiple institutions and sectors, and the opportunities it presents for reimagining doctoral education. We invite dialogue with colleagues exploring similar innovations in postgraduate research and welcome discussion on how applied doctorates can contribute to quality, equity, and impact in doctoral education.

# Presentation 41

## Unequal Pathways: Diversity and Structural Barriers in Global Researcher Careers

Crista Weise Autonomous University of Barcelona, **Montserrat Castelló** Universitat Ramon Llull, Barcelona, **Cassandra Loeser** Adelaide University, **Alistair McCulloch** Adelaide University

Over the past decade, the landscape of researcher careers has undergone a profound transformation, driven by the expansion of professional opportunities beyond academia, intensified competition for academic positions, and increased expectations for internationalisation and interdisciplinarity. These shifts have brought heightened attention to issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in Higher Degree Researcher Studies (HDRS), particularly concerning access, progression, and recognition within the research ecosystem. Previous research on researcher identity and trajectories has shown that career development is shaped by nested contextual factors, where institutional structures, disciplinary cultures, and individual agency interact in complex ways.

This paper reports results from a systematic literature review, undertaken following the PRISMA protocol, mapping how bias and inequity have been conceptualised and examined in HDRS over the last fifteen years. The review pursued four interrelated objectives: to identify the types of bias most frequently addressed in the literature; to analyse the theoretical and methodological perspectives through which these inequities are studied; to determine the career stages and dimensions in which they are most salient; and to examine the consequences these biases have for participation, well-being, and career advancement among researchers.

The search, undertaken using the Web of Science database, identified empirical journal articles published in English or Spanish between 2013 and 2024 that were focused on doctoral students, PhD holders, and researchers at early, mid, and late career stages. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 443 studies were retained for full analysis. Quantitative mapping identified temporal and thematic patterns, while qualitative coding classified the works according to bias type, ambit, level, and theoretical approach (e.g. feminist, intersectional, decolonial, critical, or policy-oriented).

Our analysis reveals clear asymmetries in the attention devoted to different types of inequity. Gender bias remains the dominant focus, followed by race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability, and age. Racial and ethnic inequities appear as another recurring theme, with evidence of systemic underrepresentation and limited access to supportive networks in predominantly Eurocentric academic environments, as does the impact of socio-economic background on entry and persistence in doctoral programmes, showing that students from working-class or first-generation backgrounds are disproportionately affected by financial pressures, debt, and reduced access to institutional support. While studies addressing disability, age, or sexual orientation are less numerous, they collectively point to exclusionary academic norms that privilege productivity, mobility, and uninterrupted trajectories—criteria that disadvantage researchers whose circumstances deviate from this model.

In sum, the literature portrays an academic landscape where multiple forms of bias intersect, shaping access, participation, and progression in complex ways. The persistence of gender disparities remains a unifying concern, yet the growing attention to other dimensions—such as class, race, and ableism—signals an expanding recognition of structural inequities in research systems. The reviewed studies demonstrate that these forms of exclusion not only affect representation but also influence researchers' well-being, productivity, and sense of identity within the scholarly community.

# Presentation 42

## From Milestone to momentum:
## Translating doctoral learning into sustainable careers

Karen Cavu JCU, Dr Natalia VelesJCU, Dr Sujin Kim JCU

Research into the effectiveness of career development learning (CDL) in traditional doctorates reframes enduring questions - is the PhD fit for purpose beyond the new knowledge it generates, and does the PhD meet the future needs of its candidates. The Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) review of research training inserted debate, government agendas, and industry pressures into doctoral education (McGagh et al., 2016). Review findings initiated reforms to align the modern PhD with industry expectations including Industry PhDs, professional doctorates, and changes to Research Training Program (RTP) funding for internships.

Existing research has examined employability outcomes for doctoral students, crisis discourses in traditional programs, and the impact of new hybrid doctorates grounded in both industry and scholarship. While innovative adaptations to certain doctoral programs are bringing industry and academia into better alignment and paving the way for graduating researchers into career pathways, the traditional doctorate still lags behind, and there is little research that explicitly examines whether the implicit career development learning inside traditional PhD programs is visible, accessible, and considered urgent enough to make an impact for those students whose research interests do not easily adapt to industry.

Justification for education's oldest academic accolade can draw on the wisdom of classical Greek philosophy while adopting modern theoretical frameworks. For the PhD to survive, doctoral candidates must thrive, not only throughout their program but as they move into sustainable post-PhD careers. Using indicators from the sustainable career theory framework, this research investigates how embedding CDL in the hidden curriculum of traditional doctorates enhances candidate health, happiness, and productivity during and beyond their studies. This situates Aristotle's eudaimonia - flourishing through virtue, reason, and contribution to others - within the sustainable career theory framework (De Vos et al., 2020), explaining doctoral career development as a dynamic, contextually grounded process integrating personal values, agency, and societal impact.

Early findings from new research demonstrate the uneven visibility of CDL in doctoral programs. Publicly available information on career development frameworks, graduate attribute frameworks, and informal curriculum design is inconsistent across Australian public universities. While significant resources support milestone completion, career planning and job market investigation are seen as extraneous to research, distracting from progression and timely completion. We argue, conversely, that CDL is integral to research training and should be embedded in a Milestone Reflection Phase, where candidates retrospectively appraise acquired competencies and map future career trajectories. This research sits at the intersection of academia and industry, theory and practice, tradition and innovation. It adopts a hybrid conceptual model overlaying Aristotle's philosophy with sustainable career theory, resulting in a philosophically grounded, pragmatically focused conceptual framework underpinning new research into CDL and the evolving purpose of the PhD.

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# Presentation 43

## Early Career Researcher Pathways, Tensions and Stories

Susan Gasson James Cook University

The challenges faced by Early Career Researchers are the topic of this presentation. Focusing on a series of tensions identified (Gasson, 2023), the session explores strategies for their navigation and management by the early career researchers, academic supervisors, institutions and policy makers.

Building on book chapters co-authored by the presenter with researchers at varying stages of development along their career pathways globally, the session will examine how tensions emerged and how they may be navigated and managed. This discussion is based on a book (Gasson, 2025) published by Emerald.

The work is informed by a narrative inquiry conducted as part of a doctoral study. The tensions discussed were found to align strongly with one of the commonplaces - time, place and society - that inform the analysis of early career researchers' narratives captured as the data set for the research. Tensions were found to align more closely with one of the commonplaces, demonstrating the strength of the method and adding resonance to the exploration of the tension.

The tension between the enduring and evolving doctorate resonated with notions of time. Discussion related to this tension revealed the challenges for the individual and the institution in determining if there are too many doctoral graduates or not enough suitably prepared doctoral graduates. This tension arose with the birth of doctoral studies and continues to feature in discussions of doctoral studies globally. Narratives analysed revealed current concerns about rankings, quality metrics, and graduate employability confirming the relevance of this tension to the current context.

The choice of a career in academia or industry was strongly aligned with notions of place. It provided a perspective for exploring the development of graduates researchers and their positioning for employability into the future. Extending on this a closer focus on mid-career professionals engaging in doctoral studies revealed another tension most strongly informed by place. This informative discussion of a tension between the pracademic and prosearcher. A familiar term, the pracademic moves from the professions into the academy. The newly coined term prosearcher gives attention to graduates moving back into industry, government and the professions after graduation from doctoral studies.

The tension between Open and Closed research cultures was explored through deeper consideration of society . Consideration of this tension leads to discussion of open access publishing, and on the differing values and beliefs that the researcher is exposed to and must comply with in occupying open and closed research environments.

Analysis of the tension workload and well-being was informed by consideration of the use of time. Stories shared provided a window into differing pressures and tensions. Analysis of these examinations of strategies used to set priorities as a first step in achieving a better use of time to meet workload demands and maintain wellbeing.

Strategies for responding to each tension will be revealed in the discussion of researchers' experiences of each tension.

# Presentation 44

## Unlearning is the highest form of learning: negotiating knowledge and the open fields of curiosity via the building of the doctoral proposal in research preparatory coursework.

**Rose Lucas** Victoria University, Melbourne

In the initial period of doctoral candidature, students transition from a preliminary proposal for their research to a refined and tested version, ready for confirmation of candidature. At Victoria University, students are supported in this challenging transition both by disciplinary supervision and by research preparatory coursework units. These units articulate research expectations and use iterative written and spoken tasks to scaffold the conceptual, methodological and structural development of a robust proposal as a foundation for the doctoral project.

In the development of this extended research proposal, the student encounters the crux of what it is to learn within the scholarly space in cumulative ways and to contribute to the web of existing knowledge and the discourses which contain and shape them. As the poet Rumi described, this process of radical learning involves recognition of what we already know (or think we know) as well as what is (as yet) unknown - more prosaically, it is an encounter between the student's current knowledge and their willingness to challenge themselves by thinking beyond those comfortable spaces.

The development of the research proposal - through iterations and a dialogic encounter with a scholarly world of ideas - fosters a growing confidence and sense of authority in knowledge and experience. However, I argue it also requires an epistemological humility, an openness to the richness of a critical thinking that is prepared to unsettle previously held 'truths' and a receptivity to any unexpected syntheses which might arise. To assume that what is already known is sufficient, especially in the initial phases, will inevitably foreclose on the possibilities of the new - and the sometimes disconcerting but always productive spaces of not knowing which are part of the doctorate's radical learning journey.

The research preparatory coursework units at VU provide a supported space in which to undertake these encounters: to continue the cultivation of disciplinary competency while also exercising a capacity to think with genuine curiosity into the terrain of the exploratory. The situating framework of the contemporary doctoral degree provides a clear container in which to undertake such an exercise in creative and lateral thinking (whatever the discipline), offering an anchor point of expectation and criteria enabling navigation of what Kiley[ii] has described as the liminal space which precedes any paradigm-shifting evolution.

This discussion considers the impact of such 'unknowing' in relation to the assessment task of the research proposal within preparatory coursework, as a scaffolded space in which the radical learning required for doctoral success might be both recognised and managed.

### References

[i] *A phrase attributed to the Sufi poet Rumi, cf The Essential Rumi trans Coleman Barks*, Harper Collins, 2004.

[ii] Margaret Kiley and Gina Wisker, '*Threshold concepts in research education and evidence of threshold crossing*,' Higher Education Research & Development. Vol 28, No. 4, (August 2009), 431-441.

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# Presentation 45

## Supporting development of foundational research skills and capabilities in research higher degree candidates

**Barbra Zupan** CQUniversity, **Susan Kinnear** CQUniversity

Independent learning is central to higher degree by research (HDR) study, but the transition to the unique demands and autonomous and self-directed learning required within HDR study can leave candidates feeling unprepared. HDR candidates also need to grapple with uncertainty about how to seek guidance from supervisors while simultaneously exuding competence and independence (Liardet, 2024). This challenge is amplified for adult learners who are re-adjusting to being in a higher education learning environment (Meuleman et al., 2015).

At CQUniversity, our HDR cohort includes a high proportion of non-traditional HDR candidates; over 60% over 40 years or older far exceeded sector averages. In addition, more than 70% of our domestic candidates study part-time while simultaneously balancing employment and personal responsibilities. Research has highlighted the value of providing HDR candidates with foundational educational programming to support development of research capabilities. From 2015, when the School of Graduate Research was initiated, we provided foundational training via completion of a mandatory coursework unit during candidates first year of study. While candidates and supervisors reported the unit provided rigour and opportunity for feedback from an academic external to the research team, there were increasing tensions inherent in the coursework structure. The term-based timing of the coursework was central to these tensions. Supervisors indicated the pace at which candidates were required to finalise work negatively impacted learning and also created tension in the candidate-supervisor relationship. Formal grading by a non-disciplinary expert (i.e., coursework lecturer) resulting in a pass/fail outcome further exacerbated these tensions.

Structured training has been shown to be particularly beneficial for non-traditional HDR cohorts (Garcia & Yao, 2019). Therefore, despite the unintended tensions reported by candidates and supervisors, we saw a need to continue to provide foundational research skills programming. However, we recognised a change was needed. In 2024, the School of Graduate Research adapted our programming to introduce a flexible education model aimed to increase student agency. With this flexible design, candidates independently engage with the content and resources they (and their supervisors) identify as most valuable in developing their research skills, in any sequence, and at the time and pace needed to maximise their learning. Most importantly, the model eliminates the focus on assessment in favour of more authentic learning and feedback mechanisms. It embeds meaningful supervisor engagement and collaborative dialogue while supporting candidates to develop their Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) portfolio.

To date, we have received 85 responses from candidates about their learning experience with this adapted education model. Satisfaction ratings average 4.29 out of 5. Overall comments are also positive with constructive feedback also provided toward ongoing improvements. The flexible nature of the model ensures that our School of Graduate Research can continue to respond to candidate and supervisor feedback to continue to meet the meet the needs of HDR community. This presentation will provide an overview of the model, including learning requirements, and report a summary of HDR candidates feedback on their learning experience to date.

# Presentation 46

## How we developed scenarios for dialogical training in research integrity for HDR candidates who are using generative artificial intelligence.

**Dr Sylvia Mackie** Swinburne University of Technology, **Dr Navneet Soin** Swinburne University of Technology

Uses for generative artificial intelligence (AI) in research are still evolving, but already researchers have found many applications, from text correction to coding solutions to analysis of large and complex datasets, including bodies of literature.

However, as well as the potential to accelerate research, the rapid proliferation of generative AI tools has brought challenges, many of which impact on research integrity (ACGR, 2024). Aside from deliberate misuse, challenges include risks to data security and issues of provenance regarding the training of generative AI technology. In addition, the capacity of generative AI to indirectly alter, obscure or obviate research knowledge poses various risks, up to and including community diminution of trust in research results (UKRIO, 2025). Updating research integrity training has therefore become a pressing need.

This practice-based presentation describes how Swinburne University's researcher development team developed a series of dialogical scenarios to augment training about challenges to research integrity posed by generative AI tools.

Like most Australian universities, Swinburne had already developed general guidelines for appropriate use of generative AI in research; however, focus groups with HDR candidates revealed a need for more nuanced guidance around complexities and ethically grey areas. These included issues of over-reliance, interpretation of policy and risk assessment in sensitive research and problems ensuring rigor and methodological transparency. A rapid realist literature review suggested that a discussion-based series using dialogical scenarios could meet this need (Koterwas, Dwojak-Matras & Kalinowska, 2021).

Dialogical training emphasises capability rather than compliance - in this case the capability to discuss and critically reflect on complex and emerging issues of research integrity, as well as perceiving and acting on problems encountered in research practice (Löfström et al., 2025). By drawing on our candidates' focus group contributions, we were able to tap into their authentic experiences and concerns, to inform our training design.

We conclude the presentation with some recommendations about fostering research integrity with respect to generative AI, emphasising pedagogies that move beyond general guidelines.

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# Presentation 47

## Supporting and Recognising Team Supervision

**Natasha Kitano** Queensland University of Technology, **Karen Clegg** University of York

In 2018, the Australian Council of Graduate Research (AGCR) published their Graduate Research Good Practice Principles which mandated the appointment of at least two supervisors (ACGR, 2018, Sect. 5). These principles replaced the traditional single-supervisor model with multi-supervisor arrangements that are intended to enhance quality, reduce risk, and support graduate research students more effectively. While compliance with this requirement is widespread, the practices of team supervision vary considerably, with supervisors and candidates alike navigating questions of authority, responsibility, and collaboration.

Our presentation asks: how can supervisory teams move beyond a compliance mindset to embrace team supervision as an intentional, developmental practice that prioritises the success of graduate research students?

Drawing on our extensive experience and on the preliminary data from the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP), we maintain that supervision is most effective when approached as a collective enterprise. This requires all stakeholders in the supervisory team to understand their contribution and role, and reflect on that role and their supervisory practice. Our presentation will introduce two new interventions designed to enable and amplify these two key aspects of supervision.

Drawing on our book chapter, 'Enabling Effective Team Supervision' in Confident Supervisors- Creating Independent Researchers Volume 2, we will introduce our newly developed Team Supervision Checklist. This practical tool is designed to foster open and ongoing dialogue within and across supervisory teams. It prompts all those with a vested interest in the success of the research and the professional development of the graduate research student, to consider their contribution and role within the team. It supports the whole doctoral cycle enabling supervisors to consider the needs of the project and person and to clarify areas of expertise, establish expectations for workload and communication, agree on processes for feedback and authorship, and anticipate potential conflicts.

Through our reflective practice as supervisor developers, we illustrate how the checklist can be used by supervisors to surface assumptions, strengthen collegiality, and keep the graduate research students' success at the centre of the process.

We will then introduce the RSVP designed Reflective Practice and Recognition Programme. This provides a structure for supervisors to reflect, in cross disciplinary peer mentoring groups, on their supervisory practice and to use what they have learnt about themselves as professional practitioners to support applications for internal and external recognition.

We will argue that enabling effective team supervision requires both a shift in practice and a cultural shift in the way we plan, structure and support graduate research students. By recognising the breadth of communities contributing to doctoral education and by adopting practical strategies for shared supervision, we believe that universities can create a form of team supervision that enriches the candidate experience and strengthens research quality.

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# Presentation 48

## Enhancing Supervision Excellence in Graduate Research: A Collaborative Approach

**Helen Ross** University of Sydney, **Rebecca Whitcomb** University of Sydney

Quality supervision is a cornerstone of successful PhD programs, particularly given the highly individualised nature of doctoral research. The supervisory team plays a pivotal role in shaping the student experience, with the potential to significantly influence outcomes both positively and negatively. However, supervision challenges are often difficult to identify and even harder to address. Many supervisors still rely solely on the model that they themselves experienced and may be resistant to evolving their practice. As graduate research adapts to shifting student motivations and expectations, institutions must find new ways to foster a culture of supervision excellence.

This presentation outlines recent work undertaken at a large university where administrative and academic leadership have partnered to proactively identify supervision issues and implement targeted interventions. Through collaborative efforts, the initiative has aimed to improve supervisory practices across a diverse cohort of students and supervisors. We will share insights into the strategies used to surface hidden challenges, the mechanisms for change, and the outcomes observed in building a more supportive and effective supervision culture.

# Presentation 49

## Making tech work for you: Tools, Tips, and Real-World Practice

**Juliet Lum** Macquarie University, **Cally Guerin** La Trobe University

Curious about how AI and other software might transform your work as a doctoral writing specialist? This year the Doctoral Writing SIG will focus on the practices of researcher developers, academic literacy staff and research writing experts in using AI tools and other software in our work. While generative AI is changing the ways many people work, in this session we will broaden our discussion to include other software that has aided our work. What has been helpful or efficient in getting the job done? What has been useful for generating new ideas or solutions to long-standing problems?

Practitioners will deliver Pecha Kucha-style presentations to introduce a tool they have found useful, its capabilities, and practical applications in researcher development and doctoral writing education, as well as potential pitfalls. This can relate to preparing teaching materials, designing learning activities, producing advertising text, managing registrations, or analysing attendance and feedback data as just a few examples.

Participants will then have the opportunity to join small group discussions for deeper exploration of issues, solutions, and experiences. The session emphasizes collegial sharing of practices and strategies for productive, ethical use of technologies. We aren't expecting anyone to be an absolute expert in any of the tools or areas discussed; rather, we invite colleagues to contribute what they have found useful that may enhance and facilitate the work of others in the same field.

No need to be an experts just bring your curiosity and ideas. We'll wrap up with actionable insights you can take back to your practice.

# Presentation 50

## Graduate completion rates what can be learned from a comparison of Australian and South African data

**Dani Milos** Flinders University, **Andrew Leitch** University of Fort Hare

The time for a cohort of students to complete their higher degree by research studies, known as the completion rate or throughput rate, is an important parameter to reflect on when considering efforts to transform graduate research for the future. The increasing demand for places in Master's and doctoral programmes brings to the fore the urgent need to challenge existing practices with regards to graduate supervision and promotion.

When considering the situation for South Africa, the national statistics paint what could be described as a dismal picture. After three years of study, only 15% of an original cohort will have completed the doctoral qualification; after six years the percentage will have increased to 50% (CHE, 2022). This means that half of those who eventually complete take longer than six years, placing significant strain on university resources, including academic staff, infrastructure, and funding.

Even more alarming are the dropout rates: over 25% of doctoral candidates discontinue their studies within the first three years (CHE, 2022). These figures represent not only wasted resources but also personal and economic loss for students who have already succeeded in earlier academic stages. Studies such as Van Lill (2024) and Maguraushe & Gumede (2025) highlight contributing factors including underpreparedness, limited supervision capacity, and financial hardship issues exacerbated by the fact that over half of South African doctoral students now study part-time, reflecting broader economic pressures.

In contrast, the situation in Australia is more encouraging. Most doctoral candidates complete within four years, supported by institutional and government-level interventions aimed at improving completion rates (Torka, 2020). However, Australia lacks a consistent national tracking system for doctoral completions. While universities such as Flinders report high on-time completion rates-"up to 90%"there is no centralised mechanism for benchmarking or longitudinal analysis (Department of Education, 2024).

Australia could benefit from adopting a coordinated national cohort tracking system similar to South Africa's. Such a system would enable targeted policy interventions and provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of current support structures. It would also allow for more nuanced insights into the impact of part-time study, supervision quality, and financial pressures on doctoral outcomes, that could also improve the South African survey (Chen, Mewburn & Suominen, 2024).

In this presentation, we share findings from a comparative investigation into graduate training in South Africa and Australia, examining financial models, support structures, and the potential for national-level data tracking to inform future policy and practice. By learning from each other's systems, both countries can better support graduate researchers and improve completion outcomes.

# Presentation 51

## Enabling an engaged research culture and community for contemporary HDR programs

**Kylie Shaw** University of Newcastle, **Brigid Clancy** University of Newcastle

Despite decades of research into the doctorate and increased emphasis on new directions needed for research training, the focus of many universities is still centralised to the supervisor/student relationship and research skill development. For contemporary higher degree research programs, there are wider expectations required of Australian institutions. Under Standard 4.2 of the Threshold Standards, TEQSA expects a vibrant research culture to be evident through policies, resources, and institutional supports. Additionally, there is a shift towards projects that cross disciplinary boundaries and translate to research impact. Universities need new ways of delivering research training and support, particularly with the advent of GenAI. A survey of 12,123 postgraduate research students undertaken in 2024 found that 80% of HDR students are satisfied with their overall experience, with key strengths identified by students being supervision (88%) and research skills development (87%). However, research culture (61%) and community (60%) are key areas needing improvement (Advance HE, 2024).

This paper explores the enablers and challenges of providing a quality research environment at the institutional level to support students across all HDR programs. A key initiative reported in this paper is a whole of institution approach to the development of institutional programs, including a mandatory annual HDR Festival designed to build communication skills, research culture and community across and between discipline areas. This paper will explore the enablers of the approach and present evaluation from students where 87% agreed that the HDR Festival provided opportunities to discuss and receive feedback from the wider research community and increased their sense of belonging to the University HDR community (91%). Participants also reported increased confidence in communicating their research (90%).

There have been rapid changes to the HDR landscape with increased focus on multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches and engagement with industry. Coupled with this is the imperative to improve the nation's productivity through research translation to improve research impact. It is difficult to cultivate interdisciplinary collaboration across academic communities in a university setting (Newman, 2025), nonetheless, researchers of the future will need to have experience in navigating and communicating within these complex environments to solve challenging real-world problems. This paper presents an innovative and collaborative approach to enabling a more vibrant, diverse research culture and engaged learning community.

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# Presentation 52

## Fail. Learn. Share. Win! The Value of #Academic.Fail

**Issiah Burckhardt-Bedeau** Deakin University/Genius.Tools

In higher education (HE) most of us can relate, that failures are too often the hidden turds of our careers whose accompanying stories are characteristically messy and unpleasant. Embracing this metaphor, Academic.Fail presents an eco-system of pedagogical tools for graduate researchers and their advisers which furnishes an intellectual safe space where sharing experiences of failure is not only acknowledged but celebrated as an invaluable source of potential wisdom. Academic.Fail fosters a community, publishes a blog, board-game and chat-bot all of which offer a structured pathway to reflexivity and humour around "failure", without trivialising it, guiding individuals towards research expertise and a holistic understanding of not only the personal, but the emergent systemic failures we encounter in HE.

Where Academic.Fail facilitates this constructive sharing of academic setbacks through its modern pedagogical toolset, this presentation will detail the rationale for its proposed health and academic benefits. Grounded in a conceptual framework that integrates principles of anti-fragility (Taleb, 2013), emotional processing (Pennebaker & Evans, 2014), and Education as Freedom (Freire, 1967), Academic.Fail aims to cultivate resilience, reduce rumination, and enhance psychological health while promoting academic success and satisfaction.

This is a graduate research praxis and technical philosophy borne of necessity, based on designing a system of constructive engagement around anecdotal lessons of setbacks; where education, sociology and technology converge into a new form, in sometimes amusing ways, because some turds are golden, and worth polishing.



# PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS DAY 2

## Thursday, 16 April 2026

# Presentation 53

## Transforming Graduate Supervision for the Future: creating and curating change.

Dr Karen Clegg Co-Director/Principal Investigator RSVP and Reader in Doctoral Education and Practice, School for Arts and Creative Technologies, University of York,

Underpinning the themes of QPR 2026 is a recognition that change in graduate education is needed. We are invited to collectively re-imagine the size, scope, scale and accessibility of doctoral research for the next generation of researchers.

In this keynote address I'll explore the vital role that research (HDR) research supervision plays in providing the environment and culture(s) in which researchers can thrive and flourish as individuals and who can contribute to society by conducting research that embraces modernity, welcomes complexity and invites challenge.

The Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP), aims to transform the culture and practice of research supervision. Working with 58 practitioner partners from across the globe, RSVP is believed to be the largest project focussed on disrupting, celebrating and recognising supervision practice.

Drawing on focus groups with academic and industry based supervisors, Deans and Directors of Doctoral Schools and higher degree researchers and empirical evidence from the UK Research Supervision Survey 2024 we will take stock of what we know about the supervisory experience. We'll then explore how team supervision can provide the context in which the creativity, collegiality, collaboration, communication and compassion needed for effective and world enhancing research can grow.

In conclusion, we'll look at the future of supervision practice as a vehicle for culture change and how we, as educators, creators and curators of researcher development can effect sustainable change.

# Presentation 54

## Transforming Doctoral Wellbeing Through Collective Writing Practices: The Shut Up & Write! Ecosystem

Narelle Lemon Edith Cowan University, Inger Mewburn Australian National University, Abigail Winter Queensland University of Technology, Katherine Firth La Trobe University, Aaron Bolzle Writing Partners.

The doctoral writing journey has long been characterized by isolation, anxiety, and precarity—experiences that significantly undermine candidate wellbeing and completion rates. As we transform graduate research for the future, reimagining academic writing as a communal rather than solitary endeavour offers transformative potential for doctoral education. This roundtable brings together diverse voices to explore how Shut Up and Write! (SUAW) practices are reshaping doctoral wellbeing by creating what we term "regenerative writing spaces"—environments where the act of writing together replenishes rather than depletes energy.

Originating in 2007, SUAW has evolved from a simple productivity technique into a global movement spanning over 60 countries, fostering supportive writing communities in universities, libraries, and virtual spaces. At its core, SUAW utilizes time-boxed writing sprints (typically 25-60 minutes), absolute silence during writing periods, and community accountability to create structured, distraction-free environments. However, recent scholarship reveals SUAW's deeper significance as a wellbeing intervention grounded in positive psychology, connection theory, and self-determination theory.

Two companion volumes—Cultivating Wellbeing and Community through Writing in Academia and Fostering Wellbeing through Collective Writing Practices—examine SUAW through the lens of wellbeing science, demonstrating how these sessions function as professional self-care strategies that combat the isolation endemic to doctoral candidature. Research shows SUAW cultivates belonging, resilience, and positive emotions while supporting sustainable writing practices. Unlike traditional writing groups focused on critique and feedback, SUAW creates what researchers identify as an "ecosystem" approach—a self-sustaining environment where different writing styles, energy patterns, and productivity approaches coexist and cross-pollinate.

This roundtable addresses critical questions for transforming graduate research education:

- How can collective writing practices shift institutional cultures that perpetuate doctoral isolation and overwork?

- What evidence exists for SUAW's impact on doctoral wellbeing, completion rates, and writing productivity?

- How do SUAW sessions create communities of practice that support diverse candidates across geographical, cultural, and neurodivergent contexts?

- What implementation models work across different institutional structures, from research-intensive universities to regional campuses?

- How can SUAW principles inform broader discussions about wellbeing-centred doctoral pedagogy?

Our panel brings together researchers, writing centre professionals, and doctoral candidates who have studied and implemented SUAW across multiple contexts. Drawing on empirical research, lived experiences, and wellbeing frameworks, we examine SUAW's role in fostering belonging, reducing burnout, and developing sustainable writing habits essential for doctoral success. We explore both face-to-face and virtual SUAW adaptations, accessibility considerations for neurodivergent writers, and the tension between productivity metrics and genuine wellbeing in performative higher education systems.

The roundtable engages participants in critical dialogue about scaling SUAW principles to transform doctoral education. Rather than treating wellbeing as an individual responsibility, SUAW demonstrates how institutional commitment to collective writing practices can create systemic change. As doctoral education faces unprecedented uncertainty, evidence-based interventions that nurture both productivity and human flourishing become essential. This discussion offers practical strategies and theoretical insights for supervisors, administrators, and policy-makers seeking to embed wellbeing at the heart of graduate research culture.

# Presentation 55

## Do thesis topics matter? How thesis topic characteristics relate to doctoral experience and self-confidence in defence

**Danila Pavliuk** HSE University

Research on doctoral education seldom examines whether characteristics of the thesis topic—one of the earliest and most consequential choices in a doctorate—shape students' experience and confidence. Using data from a nationwide survey of Russian doctoral students (MEMO; N = 1,539), this study investigates four topic characteristics (personal choice, alignment with the supervisor's research, strong personal interest, and continuation of prior research) and their associations with five dimensions of doctoral experience and with self-assessed lack of confidence in a future defense.

Doctoral experience was measured with 19 items and grouped via categorical principal component analysis (six-component solution). Prior studies using the same dataset report a similar structure, and our procedure follows that approach. The analyses focus on five components: interaction with the supervisor, interaction with the department, interaction with peers, international activities, and research activities. Lack of confidence was modeled as a single component extracted from five "I am afraid…" items. Linear regressions with standardized coefficients were estimated in Python/statsmodels.

Two findings stand out. First, strong personal interest in the topic is the most consistent and strongest predictor across outcomes. Its standardized effects are roughly two to three times those of alignment in the models for research activities and lack of confidence, indicating that topic-specific intrinsic motivation is a central resource during the doctorate. Second, alignment with the supervisor's research shows small-to-moderate positive associations with all experience dimensions and with reduced lack of confidence—consistent with a resource-and-access mechanism—yet its magnitude is systematically smaller than that of interest.

Personal choice matters primarily for socially embedded aspects (interaction with department and peers, and international activities). Continuation of prior research is not a significant predictor in any model. As expected, pre-doctoral research experience related to the topic and employment in a university research position remain robust positive correlates of research activity and confidence even after accounting for topic characteristics.

These results suggest that programs should encourage topics that balance student interest and supervisory alignment, with greater weight on interest especially in contexts where topics are approved at entry and adjustment costs are high. Practical steps include brief interest-alignment statements prior to topic approval and targeted placement in topic-relevant research roles that embed students in active subgroups.

The study is associative and cross-sectional; resource endowments and supervisor quality are not observed directly. Future work should use longitudinal designs, include objective and perceived resource measures, and disentangle alignment with the supervisor versus the department. Overall, the findings provide a large-scale, systematic examination linking thesis topic characteristics to doctoral experience and confidence, clarifying mechanisms long hypothesized in the literature.

# Presentation 56

## From Evidence to Action: Developing a Digital Peer Support Ecosystem for PhD Student Wellbeing

**Ryan Edwards** Monash Graduate Association

PhD students face unprecedented wellbeing challenges, with isolation and imposter syndrome emerging as critical factors undermining both academic success and mental health. Universities can often undervalue PhD students, overlooking that many are experienced professionals with substantial skills and expertise to share. This presentation shares the development of the Monash Graduate Association's PhD Peer Support Hub—an evidence-based online community platform addressing systematic gaps in peer connection whilst leveraging students' existing capabilities and potentially reducing supervisory workload through peer-to-peer guidance.

**The Evidence Base:** A 2025 survey of 1,014 Monash PhD students revealed critical wellbeing challenges. Isolation was pervasive: 72% experienced it in the past month, with 22% at high levels. Isolation showed strong correlations with mental health severity—students experiencing "extremely severe" depression reported high isolation at rates nearly six times higher than those with "normal" mental health. Imposter syndrome affected 80% of students (up from 69% in 2024) and correlated with consideration of leaving, depression and stress.

Peer connection gaps were substantial: 31% reported insufficient peer contact. Since COVID, fewer students and staff attend campus regularly, particularly in HASS disciplines, exacerbating isolation. Domestic students experienced higher peer isolation (37%) than international students (26%), largely due to part-time and off-campus study patterns. Qualitative responses captured the experience: "Nobody comes to campus...there is no PhD community at all"; "Everyone is very busy so I don't want to interrupt them".

**The Intervention: A Third Space for PhD Community**

At the MGA, we are developing a dedicated online community platform serving as a "third space" where Monash's 5,000 PhD students can access three integrated support layers:

1. Research Skills Exchange: Peer help requests, skills marketplace, study buddy matching and practice opportunities. This addresses imposter syndrome by normalising struggles and validating students' expertise through peer-to-peer teaching.

2. Social Connections: Cross-faculty interest groups, campus location networks and event coordination enabling students to build relationships around shared interests, reducing isolation whilst building supportive networks.

3. Resource Sharing: Collaboratively built template libraries, experience guides and institutional knowledge bases demystifying university systems.

**Current Status and Implementation:** The hub is currently in development with student consultation across all faculties underway. The platform will trial in Semester 1 2026 with select faculties and 20-50 student champions before launching institution-wide in Semester 2 2026.

**Implications for the Sector:** This initiative represents a shift from viewing peer connection as a desirable add-on to recognising it as essential infrastructure for PhD success and wellbeing. The hub complements rather than replaces professional support services—creating protective factors through community whilst facilitating pathways to counselling and career services. By enabling students to access peer guidance for common challenges, the hub may also alleviate supervisory workload, allowing supervisors to focus on research-specific mentoring.

This presentation will share implementation insights, early evaluation data from the Semester 1 trial, challenges encountered and transferable principles for other institutions seeking to address PhD isolation and imposter syndrome systematically.

# Presentation 57

## Orienting the Journal in the Graduate Researcher Experience

**Donna-Lee Frieze** Deakin University, **Rebecca Croser** Deakin University

Using a journal as a reflective space in research has long been supported in the literature, with discussion of the practice's value gaining more traction over the last two decades. Notably vocal in health, specifically in nursing and similar practice-based disciplines, scholarship on journal writing depicts the practice as a means for understanding and debriefing student nurses on clinical and personal cases of crisis and trauma. For instance, Taliaferro and Diesel find journalling helpful for a group of U.S. student nurses involved in an immersion program in West Africa, as it facilitates 'the identification of their feelings related to being a minority within another country' (2016, p.155). Mosurska likewise recommends the use of journalling for disaster researchers, specifically naming this tool as a 'reflective research diary' (2022, p.52). These illustrate the uses of a reflective research journal by students as a thinking and meditative tool.

Possibly due to the usage of the journal at crisis points, the focus of reflective writing is often introduced into candidature long after the writing of the dissertation has begun. While it is recognised through the literature that journalling during a PhD is productive, especially for documenting research activities, reviewing work completed and most commonly, a reflective space, we contend that new temporal and developmental pedagogies are also effective in the journalling process. Rather than deploying journalling as only a reflective tool in times of crisis, we argue that, aligned with researcher development, journal writing practice can be seen as an illuminator into candidature, from Orientation through to thesis submission. In other words, viewing journalling only as a crisis clutch, limits its potential.

We argue that the research journal should be implemented early in candidature as a pedagogical tool for understanding researcher development, clasping the narrative of a research story and knowledge acquisition. Thus, as an effective tool for understanding sustained research, the journal would best be integrated into the first weeks of candidature. Throughout 2025, we introduced journalling as a key component of our Graduate Researcher Orientation program at Deakin University and this paper will discuss its incorporation into this event. The paper will affirm the importance of familiarising candidates with the benefits of journal writing at the beginning of candidature and discuss the practice in relation to researcher development, storytelling in research and knowledge acquisition.

### References

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# Presentation 58

## Centering the student voice: Understanding the academic and research literacy needs of international HDR students

**Lesley Andrew** Edith Cowan University, **Carmela De Maio** Edith Cowan University, **Michael Stein** Edith Cowan University, **Sharon Matthews** Edith Cowan University, **Jo McFarlane** Edith Cowan University

It is easy to assume that international Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students arrive in their host institution already equipped with the academic and research literacies necessary for success. But is this really the case? Research shows that these students often come from educational systems with markedly different academic, cultural, and social expectations, a misalignment that can disadvantage them within the Australian higher education environment (Ma, 2021). English language proficiency, for example, can be a significant challenge for international HDR students, complicating not only their ability to effectively communicate their research, but also how they develop key research literacies: locating and critically evaluating literature, understanding ethics requirements, and navigating digital platforms. Developing these literacies is especially urgent in the face of the disruptions posed by generative AI tools to research overall, and particularly to thesis writing. While extensive research has explored undergraduate students academic literacy, a notable gap remains in understanding the experiences and support needs of international HDR students in Australia. We ask: how can we reimagine and enhance their academic journey in the face of current uncertainty in the research degree landscape?

This presentation reports on the findings of an interpretivist, qualitative research project that uses semi-structured interviews to examine the academic and research literacy needs of international research students at Edith Cowan University (ECU) and explores what resources and support might be needed toenable them to successfully complete their degree. As a method of collecting information, semi-structured interviewing provides meaningful and unpromptedaccounts of lived experience, while also being flexible and structured enough to explorekey research themes (Ruslin et al., 2022). The researchersapplied reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to identify patterned meanings across the dataset. Coding and theme development were iterative, informed by established approaches to academic literacies, and supported by an audit trail.

Our findings are organised under four overarching themes: academic acculturation, social acculturation, student identity, and student autonomy. Our interpretation of these findings draw on Lea and Street's (1998) model to conceptualise academic literacies as socially and culturally situated activities, heavily embedded in power, identity and disciplinary norms.

We argue that understanding the experiences of Australasian international doctoral students is crucial to identifying fresh ways of shaping doctoral education. The findings of this research project further indicate the need for targeted academic and research literacy support to bridge pedagogical cultural gaps, extending into an understanding of the social and cultural differences that can impact the international HDR student experience. Recommendations include the need for explicit student guidance, acculturation activities, and supervisor cultural awareness training. A more holistic, strengths-based approach to researcher development training is called for, where research and academic literacy are understood to be more than just acquiring research skills.

### References

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# Presentation 59

## What are the attributes one would expect of the Masters graduate?

Andrew Leitch Nelson Mandela University, **Stephanie Burton** University of Pretoria, **Francis Faller** University of the Witwatersrand, **Isaac Ntshoe** Central University of Technology.

The purpose and status of the Master's degree has recently come under increasing scrutiny, given that its end goal can be very diverse. For example, in some instances it is considered to be essentially an exit level qualification that is necessary for entry into many professions, while in other instances the Master's is expected to provide preparative training which becomes the minimum entry requirement for acceptance into a doctoral programme - a necessary stepping stone to gain entry into doctoral studies.

In general, a Master's graduate would be expected to have achieved knowledge and skills at an advanced level, and in many cases, to have completed some research. The differences are manifest in the extent to which a Master's programme requires coursework, and in the scope of the research component (with some programmes requiring a relatively short treatise while others require a full research dissertation or thesis). Of course, these requirements vary from discipline to discipline, and also from country to country.

The Master's degree is also, at the academic level, where significant international student mobility often occurs. Indeed, the opportunities for students to enroll for joint Master's degrees, offered in a collaborative manner by two or more institutions from different countries, are growing and gaining in popularity. In such cases, the expectations of the Master's student would need to be agreed by the collaborating institutions.

All these reasons make it imperative that academic standards are regularly questioned and reviewed and, for South Africa, this is no exception. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that one of the significant outcomes emanating from the recently completed South African national review of doctoral qualifications [1] was the recommendation for a review of all Master's qualifications that are offered in the country.

To conduct a review of Master's qualifications requires an accepted Master's qualification Standard. The Standard focuses on the purpose of the qualification and places great emphasis on the attributes a graduate is expected to achieve and demonstrate, irrespective of the programme structure. It also stresses the conditions under which those graduate attributes will be assessed.

The attributes of a Master's graduate should refer to the extent to which the blend of learning domains (knowledge, skill and applied competence) reflect the purpose of the qualification type, and the extent to which the blend is reflected in the competence of the graduate. Furthermore, it is recognized that the acquiring of the graduate attributes is a process that should commence during the proposal development phase and be monitored as the Master's student progresses towards completion.

As four contributors to the South African Doctoral Degrees National Report [1], we have given much thought to what attributes one would expect of the Master's graduate, recognizing that these are likely to depend on the (widely varying) purpose of the qualification from the perspective of the academic discipline or profession served by a particular Master's programme. These reflections will form the basis of our presentation.

### References

[1] https://www.che.ac.za/publications/programme-reviews/release-doctoral-degrees-national-report-march-2022A.

# Presentation 60

## Things Can Only Get Better: Reimagining Changes in Supervisory Relationships Through Speculative and Playful Practices

**Luca Morini** Coventry University, **Heather Sears** Coventry University, **Victoria Rios Castano** Coventry University

In a context of growing instability across the higher education sector and rapidly shifting research funding landscapes globally, one under researched consequence with extensive implications for the future of doctoral pathways is the growing precarity of supervisory relationships. The majority of supervisors (57%) have experienced taking on a doctoral candidate who had previously worked with a different supervisor, rising to 72% of later career respondents (UKCGE, 2024). Such disruptions carry significant implications: they affect the resilience and wellbeing of PGRs, shape research direction and access to specialised knowledge, and deeply influence how researchers conceptualise teamwork and relationality in knowledge production processes. Previous work shows that the quality of supervisor/postgraduate relationships correlates negatively with perceived stress, mediated by self-efficacy and moderated by psychological resilience. Becoming a replacement supervisor can affect academic identity, induce anxiety and their sense of well-being.

This contribution explores these dynamics through a series of speculative and playful workshops involving both supervisors and PGRs. Drawing on speculative design (Dunne & Raby, 2024) and the TRIZ facilitation structure (Hatting, 2025), participants were invited to imagine "worst practices" in supervisory change as a way to surface underlying tensions, frustrations and systemic patterns of dysfunction. Through collective sense-making, these negative scenarios became a foundation for identifying practical and systemic strategies to interrupt harmful dynamics and foster more resilient, adaptive, and just supervisory relationships.

We situate our approach in relation to literature on supervisory "ways of being" (empathy, openness, trust, etc.) as foundational to relational supervisory relationships (Buirski, 2022). Additionally, through these workshops we have engaged with participatory action learning and action research approaches that democratise power relations in supervision and promote relationality.

The workshops were designed not only as spaces of safe reflection but also as sites of imaginative action, enabling participants to use hypothetical scenarios to safely articulate lived experiences of instability, and to co-create future-facing responses. Early insights suggest that this approach can strengthen trust, reveal invisible power relations, and support institutional learning in times of uncertainty. We argue that integrating playful, speculative methods into doctoral education offers a powerful means to reimagine supervision beyond regulatory compliance and towards relational, resilient, and transformative research cultures.

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# Presentation 61

Thursday, 16 April
11:00am

The Gallery

Improving
Supervision

## …and the winners are… outstanding! Harnessing an institutional award scheme to explore understanding of excellence in supervisory teams

**Heather Sears** Coventry University, **Victoria Castaño** Coventry University, **Carolyn Wynne** Coventry University

Taylor and McCulloch (2017) mapped out the landscape of awards which recognise supervisor excellence or good practice in the UK and Australia. They concluded that: "the way forward is to unite the best features of institution-led and student-led awards through joint partnerships combining the rigour and validity associated with the former with the student engagement promoted by the latter."

In 2018, we responded to the Taylor and McCulloch's recommendations when developing an annual award for research supervision at Coventry University. The development of an Outstanding Supervisor Team of the Year Award brought together the strands of the value that staff awards have in enhancing and supporting the research environment while also seeking to raise the profile and importance of team supervision across Coventry University and beyond both nationally and internationally. The award was distinguished from others by being for innovative and exceptional practice in team supervision and Coventry University were the first institution internationally to offer awards for Team Supervision.

Doctoral candidate nominations and peer supporting statements are considered by an internal independent panel to select the finalists. The finalists make a presentation addressing their approach to research supervision and its impact and answer questions from an audience of research students and peers. An independent panel considers the presentations, nomination and supporting statements to select a winner against the criteria.

Doctoral candidates are encouraged to make a nomination where they consider that their team has: "gone above and beyond the standard of excellence in supervision expected of Coventry University supervisors."

The finalists and the winner of the 'Outstanding Research Supervisory Team of the Year' award are selected against the following criteria:

i) the extent to which their nomination demonstrates "Outstanding" Supervisory Practice;

ii) the range and depth of examples given; and

iii) the impact demonstrated by the nomination.

In this paper we will present a preliminary analysis of the doctoral candidate nominations, peer supporting statements, interviews with panel members, finalists and winners of the Outstanding Supervisory Team of the Year Award to better understand the meanings attached by different stakeholders to 'outstanding' and 'excellence' as they apply to supervision. We will then consider what this means in terms of exploring the role of team supervision, one of the four core aims of the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP) – a four-year project funded by Research England aiming to transform the culture and practice of research supervision.

### References

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# Presentation 62

Thursday, 16 April
11:00am

The Gallery

Improving
Supervision

## (Supervisors) keeping up with doctoral change: a community of practice

**Geof Hill** The Investigative Practitioner

Doctoral inquiry has experienced many change since its traditional inception (Taylor, 2023). The varied changes can be considered under a range of categories including

technological innovations, emergence of creative faculties, student diversity, and new modes of inquiry. Research supervision has been a mainstay in doctoral inquiry providing the predominant pedagogy to support candidates. It has also been the subject of constant investigation and support, and like doctoral inquiry has been subject to change. One of the popular methods of keeping research supervision practice relevant and timely is the communities of practice (Hill and Vaughan, 2018).

This paper discusses development and implementation of a Community of Practice for research supervisors, specifically focussed on the emergence of change surrounding doctoral inquiry. Through a series of discourse examples, members of an on-line community of practice explored and discussed the development of their repertoire of practice to support the host of changes that have become evident as a consequence of changing elements of doctoral inquiry.

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# Presentation 63

## Dont Want to Kill Any More Mice: Taboo and Silence in PhD Education

**Saule Bekova** University of Technology Sydney, **Ivan Smirnov**University of Technology Sydney

Doctoral students face a range of challenges during their PhD journey, many of which are informal, unspoken, and embedded in everyday academic life rather than written into policy. Among these, taboo topics that feel inappropriate or risky to raise remain particularly difficult to address. These are the questions students hesitate to ask, the concerns they do not voice to supervisors or peers, and the doubts they carry quietly. While rarely acknowledged in formal settings, such taboos may shape what students feel able to express, pursue, or even think about during their doctoral training.

Although some research has explored controversial topics in doctoral education (Evans et al., 2000) or examined institutional attitudes toward sensitive issues (Grandey et al., 2020; Walker, 2023), the idea of taboo as a social constraint that silences discussion remains underexplored. This study addresses that gap by examining what doctoral students avoid discussing, not because of formal restrictions, but because of perceived social risks. Following Nerad (2015), taboo is understood here as a topic that is considered inappropriate, embarrassing, or risky to talk about, and therefore remains unspoken in everyday academic life.

While research on doctoral education has investigated many emotionally or psychologically complex topics, much of this work is based on interviews or surveys, settings where some experiences may still be left unsaid. This study takes a different approach by analysing content shared in relatively anonymous and informal online spaces. Doctoral students increasingly use social media and online platforms to share experiences, seek support, and navigate uncertainty, often around topics they cannot discuss elsewhere (Sheldon & Sheppard, 2021). Platforms such as WhatsApp (Abdulatief & Guzula, 2018; Chandler, 2025) and Facebook (Satchwell et al., 2015) have emerged as important forms of informal peer support.

This study focuses on two public platforms where students actively discuss academic life: X (formerly Twitter), and Academia Stack Exchange, a moderated Q&A site structured around academic problem-solving. These platforms offer access to academic concerns that often remain invisible, including the informal norms, unspoken expectations, and forms of silence that shape doctoral experience. In these spaces, taboo topics frequently surface and their emergence helps us understand not only what students struggle with, but what they cannot say out loud.

Our results highlight the prevalence of questions related to the taboo in academia, particularly concerning mental health and supervision. This suggests that many students lack access to this crucial knowledge as they potentially consider it a taboo topic to raise with their supervisors.

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# Presentation 64

## High on emotion: Seeing (un)belonging and in/exclusion through the lens of doctoral candidates emotional labour

**Sherran Clarence** Nottingham Trent University

Inclusive doctoral admission work has widened participation in PhD study across the UK and in other contexts. But for many doctoral candidates considered "non-traditional" (i.e., mature, working class), 'conforming' to the dominant ways of being a researcher in their fields means they may spend too much time struggling to work out where they fit, and how to fit. This emotional labour is time-consuming and risks these candidates feeling excluded, at a deficit and unable to perform 'normal' ways of being and doing in research.

Research in doctoral education has shown us that candidates' experiences are 'raced', gendered and 'classed' (Aitchison and Mowbray, 2013; Posselt, 2018), as well as 'abled' (Brown and Leigh, 2018). Much of the work in these areas increasingly implies or focuses on emotions. Understanding the role of emotions in inscribing institutional cultures that impact on doctoral identity and belonging is a gap that we still need to fill, and this study aims to contribute to this by looking at the kinds of emotions different candidates experience, and what the emotional labour they do signals about how inclusive and socially just doctoral study really is (or still isn't).

Emotional labour is work we do to manage emotions during our engagement with others (Russell Hochschild, 1979). We do this work in relation to internalised sets of 'feeling rules'. 'Feeling rules' tell us, through social norms and conventions, what the 'right' kinds of emotions and related behaviours are in any given situation. These 'rules' are part of how any institution polices behaviour, and by extension, belonging. In trying to belong, or resist, we engage in emotional labour, which can give us insights into what feeling rules are operating, tacitly and overtly.

Using poetic analysis on transcripts of wide-ranging conversations with doctoral candidates in South Africa and the UK, I have created found poems that share their experiences of different regimes of 'feeling rules' during their candidature, in their own words. I will read a few poems, using them to explore the kinds of emotional labour the candidates have engaged in, and the effect this has had on them. I hope this paper will demonstrate how we can use a sociological understanding of emotions to think more deeply about what inclusion and belonging mean to researchers, and how to co-create more inclusive university research environments.

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# Presentation 65

## Reimagining Doctoral Success: A Comparative Case Study Beyond Prescriptive Advice

**Wei Wei** College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University, **Shuhan Yang** Future Education Institute, Yunnan Normal University, **Che Guo** School of Arts, Yunnan Normal University

There is an increasing enrolment of PhD candidates, and universities aim to train successful PhD (McAlpine et al., 2020). What is considered a successful PhD? Is it research output and citations, completion of PhD within three years with high satisfaction, or an academic career? How can a PhD candidate achieve success?

### Research method

Based on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of Status Passage (Elsey, 2025), Nested Contexts (McAlpine & Norton, 2006) and Management and Skill Development (Huizingh, 2023), we question the universal applicability of the formulated seven secrets. Through a multiple case study methodology, we reflect on our own PhD experiences across three distinct tertiary education systems, China, Malaysia and Australia. Using thematic analysis, we compare our diverse experiences with the seven secrets and other literature to identify factors that genuinely contribute to successful PhD completion.

### Findings and discussions

The findings indicate that mental health and financial stability are the actual foundations. Working closely with supervisors is important, but we are aware that supervisory styles can vary widely. Moreover, other than the knowledge of research, some specific skills are essential, such as time management and collaboration skills. We also find that although two participants secured academic employment, there is a shift toward industry and public sector after graduation. Meanwhile, the understanding of PhD success is divergent and can be personalised.

### Conclusion

Our comparative thematic analysis goes beyond prescriptive advice to redefine what constitutes a successful PhD. The study also proposes a redefinition of success within the doctoral journey, questioning whether metrics like a three-year completion or securing a tenure-track position are sufficient. The findings highlight the nuanced needs of contemporary PhD candidates and identify essential resources, support, and services for their development from the micro (individual), meso (institute and research term) and macro (global recognition and national policy) levels. As part of a participatory action research, we hope to use the findings to improve our PhD supervision practice. Our future study can evaluate the practice for better PhD training experience and outcomes.

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# Presentation 66

## Transforming the External Doctorate Experience: Agency, Connection and Success in a Distributed Research World

**Melissa Smith** CQUniversity

The traditional model of doctoral education, anchored in campus-based supervision and local scholarly communities, has been reshaped by the growth of external, online, and part-time modes of study. While these models expand access and flexibility, external candidates frequently navigate their candidature in relative isolation, negotiating access to networks, professional development, and scholarly identity formation through largely self-directed means. As universities continue to expand distributed doctoral programs, there is a growing need to reconsider how success is defined and supported for candidates working beyond the physical campus.

Drawing on my experience as an external Doctor of Education (EdD) candidate and Research Higher Degree (RHD) mentor at Central Queensland University, this presentation explores what constitutes a successful doctorate when success is understood not only as completion, but as connection, contribution, and personal growth within a distributed research environment. Using a reflexive account grounded in lived experience, the presentation examines how candidate agency interacts with institutional opportunities to shape the external doctorate journey.

The presentation identifies key ways external candidates exercise agency, including actively constructing scholarly networks, seeking targeted research training, participating in academic communication initiatives, and contributing to peer communities. My EdD research, completed entirely as an external candidate, explored literacy and wellbeing through reading-to-dog programs using reflexive thematic analysis. Alongside this research, I participated in initiatives such as Visualise Your Thesis and Three Minute Thesis, attended residential research intensives, and undertook specialist research training including a thematic analysis masterclass. These activities enabled sustained connection to scholarly communities despite geographic distance.

Building on these experiences, I propose the concept of an ecology of engagement as a way of understanding successful external candidature. This ecology includes formal institutional supports such as supervision and structured development opportunities, alongside informal and grassroots forms of engagement including peer mentoring, online communities, and professional networks. As a CQUniversity RHD mentor and moderator of the PhD Australia online community, I have observed how these interconnected forms of engagement support persistence, confidence, and scholarly identity among distributed candidates.

Rather than positioning external candidature primarily in terms of risk or deficit, this presentation reframes it as a legitimate and generative model of doctoral study that can cultivate independence, reflexivity, and collaborative knowledge-building across distance. It argues that successful external candidature emerges through the interaction between candidate agency and accessible engagement opportunities. The presentation concludes by identifying practical implications for institutions seeking to support distributed doctoral cohorts, including the importance of visible pathways into scholarly communities, structured opportunities for peer connection, and recognition of mentoring and community-building as meaningful indicators of doctoral success.

# Presentation 67

## Surveying the needs of our members:
## A Higher Degree Research (HDR) Supervision Community
## of Practice (CoP) in a Changing Landscape

**Tania Narelle Crotti** Adelaide University, **Anna Fragkoudi** Adelaide University, **Anna Szorenyi** Adelaide University

A Higher Degree Research (HDR) Supervision Community of Practice (CoP) was established at the University of Adelaide in 2021 for supervisors, HDRs and professional staff to share experiences and knowledge across all disciplines and stages of the journey. By 2025 the HDR CoP membership included 157 researchers, academics and professional staff from across 3 Faculties and 7 precincts. With the merger of the University of Adelaide and University of SA (2025/2026) our staff and supervisors faced major structural change and considerable uncertainty. To act as an effective CoP, it was even more critical to understand our current memberships background and experience. In line with Wenger-Trayner 2021, this pilot study was designed to identify the impacts on and needs of our members in a changing landscape.

**Aims:**

1. To investigate the membership composition of a HDR CoP.

2. Identify the supervisor's perceived impacts to timely completions.

3. Investigate the current needs of supervisors

**Methodology:**

An anonymous online survey was designed in Qualtrics and disseminated via emails to the HDR CoP membership during 2025. Participants were queried about their stage and experience in supervision, perceived impacts to student progress, impacts to their availability to students and engagement with resources provided via the HDR CoP online platform. Participants were also able to select topics they would like more support in through sessions from a pre-populated list (in line with Wenger-Trayner 2021). HREC low risk ethics 40108. Supervisors were also offered the opportunity to complete a separate identifiable survey for mentorship.

**Results:**

25 participants of which 24 were academics and 1 in management. Supervisor experience ranged from <3 years (3%) to 10-19 years (42%) with completions spread evenly across the spectrum 0-1: 2-5: 6-10: 10+ (25% each). The most common reasons for joining the CoP were to build supervision skills (26%) and expand troubleshooting options (20%). The supervisor-student relationship was identified as extremely important (grade 5 on a Likert scale 1 to 5) for 80% of responders. The most common impacts on student progress identified were critical writing skills (19%) and personal/health issues (19%). A few supervisors noted institutional barriers including delays in ethics review and inefficient administrative processes. Workload was identified as the most common factor (34%) impacting supervisor availability to their students with 86% wanting the CoP to advocate on their behalf.

**Conclusions:**

This survey offers a replicable, time-efficient model that can be delivered at multiple timepoints across times of transition to identify the needs of supervisors and put in place resources to support them. Our results highlight the effectiveness of a CoP for building supervisor practice, but also show a need for the institution to help develop HDR writing skills, and provide support for students facing personal or health issues.

**Future plans:**

To establish special interest groups, register HDR interests & expertise and provide contacts to foster mentor/mentee relationships to support our supervisor, professional staff and HDR community.

**Funding:**

Support provided by the Adelaide Graduate Research School, Learning and Teaching, University of Adelaide (2025).

# Presentation 68

## Doctoral Supervision as Servant Leadership:
## Towards a Relational Understanding of Supervisory Excellence

**Génesis Guarimata Salinas** Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Spain, **Mireia Valverde** Universitat i Virgili, Spain

Excellence in research degree supervision requires rethinking not only what supervisors do, but also how they lead. As doctoral education becomes increasingly complex and diverse, supervisors are expected to combine intellectual guidance with ethical awareness, empathy, and professional integrity. Within this evolving landscape, servant leadership provides a relational and values-based framework to reconceptualise supervisory excellence through care, authenticity, and ethical responsibility.

Despite their central importance to doctoral success, supervisors are increasingly expected to meet institutional demands for productivity while providing inclusive, supportive, and developmentally rich environments for diverse candidates. This dual expectation highlights the tension between accountability and care, emphasising the need to redefine supervisory excellence to encompass not only academic achievement but also the human, reflective, and ethical dimensions.

This research provides an integrative review of leadership models from higher education and organisational studies to assess their relevance to doctoral supervision. The analysis examines how various approaches conceptualise leadership in educational contexts and how these perspectives correspond with the professional, relational, and ethical dimensions of supervision. Among these, servant leadership is particularly relevant as it emphasises service, care, and shared responsibility within academic relationships. From this synthesis, twenty supervisory practices were identified and adapted to the doctoral context. These practices are grouped into three interrelated dimensions of supervisory excellence: supporting the wellbeing and development of doctoral researchers; modelling authenticity and ethical integrity; and exercising responsible leadership and stewardship.

Building on these dimensions, the study provides a foundation for developing instruments that enable systematic analysis of supervisory practices across contexts. Furthermore, incorporating servant leadership principles into supervisor development programmes and institutional policy can strengthen quality assurance frameworks, promote researcher wellbeing, and support a sustainable culture of ethical supervision aligned with the ongoing transformation of graduate research for the future. Together, these directions position excellence and humanity as interdependent elements within doctoral education, fostering environments in which future researchers can develop both academically and personally.

# Presentation 69

Thursday, 16 April
12:00pm

Exhibition Hall

Supervision

## Co-supervision in applied doctorates:
## Supervision training across the university and industry divide

**Navé Wald** Graduate Research School, University of Otago, **Rachel Spronken-Smith** Graduate Research School, University of Otago, **Nick Baker** Graduate Research School, University of Otago

The New Zealand government has launched a new Applied Doctorate Scheme to stimulate science commercialisation, boost industry-academic partnerships, and diversify career pathways for PhD graduates. By doing so, it seeks to unlock greater economic and social value from the country's research system, driving innovation through start-ups, patents, and leadership roles across industry and society.

Achieving this vision, however, requires more than equipping candidates alone with relevant knowledge and skills; it also depends on the quality of supervision they receive. Academic supervisors, while experienced in guiding candidates through scholarly research, must adjust to supporting candidates whose projects and aspirations extend beyond academia. Industry supervisors, meanwhile, bring invaluable practical expertise but may be less familiar with the structures, expectations, and rigour of doctoral study. The aim of this study is to develop research-informed supervision training for future university and industry supervisors involved in the scheme.

Despite concerns regarding academic freedom, standards, and potential conflicts of interest along institutional lines, joint, or co-supervision, remains an underexplored theme in the literature on industrial doctorate programmes. The training needs of supervisors are likely to differ given their prior knowledge and experience in this area. This research seeks to identify the challenges of this form of co-supervision, highlight pedagogical gaps, and, importantly, develop best-practice strategies to inform supervision training for both academic and industry supervisors. This is particularly important for ensuring that candidates are well supported and not left 'in-between' their supervisors.

To inform supervision training, this qualitative study seeks experiences and insight from both university and industry supervisors who are already engaged in doctoral projects across this institutional divide, as well as from their respective doctoral candidates. This research-in-progress presentation will report early findings and preliminary directions for structured co-supervision training for an industrial doctorate programme.

# Presentation 70

Thursday, 16 April
12:00pm

The Gallery

Creative Ways of Working
With Graduate Researchers

## Using metaphor, analogy, and storytelling to illustrate career development learning concepts with researchers

**Karen Cavu** QUT, **Rachael Pitt** Training Manager, SMART CRC.

Higher degree by research (HDR) programs typically require significant hidden identity work on the part of the learner. The casting off, modifying, and integrating of various pre-existing and pre-conceived identities can be complex and confronting (Castelló et al., 2021). Overlaid on this is the challenge of constructing a new, emerging researcher identity that may not yet be fully imagined (Sweitzer, 2009) but prompts questions such as 'who am I becoming?'

Engaging with career and employability support services can assist HDR candidates to explore these questions through a career development learning lens. This highlights that in addition to developing research expertise through completion of a research project adding new knowledge to a field, for many, the HDR program is also establishing the foundations of their future career. Yet, while we can provide HDR candidates with career development learning strategies and information, they often struggle to connect this to their own experience and potential. For example, providing information that more PhD graduates work in non-academic than in academic roles is one thing - but what does that mean for the individual? How does that relate to their own situation? And how can those supporting HDR candidates' career development convey strategies and information in a way tangible for diverse individuals?

Complexity is added from the intense disciplinary and research focus of the HDR program, where individuals are enculturated into specific environments and become hyper-specialised. When paired with ongoing catastrophising narratives of postdoctoral employment (Molla & Cuthbert, 2019), HDR candidates can struggle to realistically engage with their own career development. Career engagement then becomes a stressor instead of a positive exploration of the myriad ways in which researchers are eminently employable.

This session focusses on the use of metaphors, analogy, and storytelling as pedagogical approaches that enable HDR candidates to let go of the panic, to set aside disciplinary silos, and to embrace imagination to rediscover what is possible (Liu & Noppe-Brandon, 2011). Balancing expertise and expectation, stories and analogies help to reimagine futures across different contexts. Example metaphors and stories will be outlined in the context of how these narrative techniques can shift researcher career development from anxiety to agency, while making tangible for the learner important career development learning concepts and information. Together the examples demonstrate a creative pedagogy that reframes career development learning as identity work, offering practical strategies for helping candidates construct sustainable, confident professional selves beyond the HDR program.

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# Presentation 71

## So you think you can meme?
## Creating spaces for doctoral researcher solidarity and vulnerability

Tseen Khoo Deakin University, Meagan Tyler La Trobe University

As researcher developers and dedicated lovers of memes, we've often discussed how to embed them in our teaching, and even have whole sessions devoted to what memes can teach researchers as part of our programs. We were inspired by Pat Thomson's keynote at QPR 2024 and her subsequent paper, "Doctoral memes as public pedagogy" (2024), to think more about the connections we see between researcher experiences, the hidden curriculum, and teaching through memes.

The holistic work of researcher developers gauges, and engages with, our researchers' experiences and wellbeing, which includes varied instances of teaching the hidden curriculum within our development programs. For the researchers we work with, knowing the hidden curriculum is vital for them to understand their surrounding research cultures as it's frequently the informal or norms-based aspects that can determine if a culture is healthy and functional. A large part of researcher development work is to provide support and opportunity for researchers to participate in, and build, the quality of research culture and their scholarly communities. By extension, this agency within and practical improvement in their research environment enhances their doctoral experiences and those of the broader cohort. Finding effective, flexible ways to teach about these aspects, so that researchers can know and adapt them to their own contexts is crucial for their ability to navigate academic spaces.

The aim of our teaching is to encourage reflection and hone researchers' own judgement rather than offering didactic advice. Using memes to do the work of this teaching can be both effective and challenging. We can think of using memes as part of a Ludic pedagogical approach, privileging fun, playfulness and peer-learning. Memes can be highly effective because of their informality and relatability, use of humour, and recognisable visuals. Yet, the ways in which they can be challenging to use are the flipside of why they may be effective: the humour might not work, the cultural texts referenced might not be recognisable to all, or the issue highlighted isn't broadly relatable. Using memes to teach requires a complex blend of knowledge about the appropriate cultural touchstones being referenced. Developers need to ensure the memes aren't too niche, or that they can still be meaningful even if the textual reference is not recognised.

Drawing on Thomson's work for specific resonance in the postgraduate researcher context, we find memes valuable to teach with because they:

- offer a view into what's being said in a larger context about certain expectations around, or aspects of, research culture and doctoral experiences;

- provide jumping off points for discussion in ways that are not judgemental and make space for talking about vulnerabilities or difficult feelings (because memes are commonly negative, and work with dark humour or sarcasm); and

- provide invitations to think critically about perceptions and norms in research identity and practices.

That is, even if the memes are negative, we do not have to accept them as telling 'the truth'. They offer an opportunity, not an answer.

# Presentation 72

## Doctoral Liminality and Psychological Safety

Jayne Carruthers SORTI-The University of Newcastle, Allyson Holbrook SORTI-The University of Newcastle, Erika Spray SORTI-The University of Newcastle

The doctoral journey is widely recognised as a non-linear trajectory, typically characterised by experiences that amplify uncertainty, confusion, and distress. This research is situated within the critical academic discourse concerning doctoral liminality—the disorienting "in-between" psychological space wherein scholars negotiate knowledge uncertainty—encompassing epistemic and ontological ambiguity—alongside a fundamental shift in affect and identity (Keefer, 2015). Existing models of doctoral advancement often overlook the subjective psychological crises that accompany this transition. This paper endeavours to validate psychological safety, both conceptually and empirically, as a fundamental prerequisite for managing the psychological challenges associated with doctoral liminality.

This study delineates and substantiates the concept of intrapersonal psychological safety—the individual's capacity to operate autonomously while proactively engaging with the epistemic and ontological uncertainties inherent in doctoral liminality by adopting a heutagogical rather than an andragogical approach to learning. The research addresses a dual conceptual gap: firstly, the existing literature on psychological safety, primarily centred on organisational and team contexts, is not directly applicable to highly autonomous doctoral environments; secondly, the current body of doctoral scholarship on learning and development lacks a unified and comprehensive conceptual framework that incorporates the fundamental elements of knowledge uncertainty—epistemic, ontological, and affective uncertainties—within the integrated psychological reality of the autonomous doctoral journey.

The findings reported are based on novel insights gathered from comprehensive, semi-structured interviews with six candidates in the final stage of their doctoral programme, supplemented by intentionally designed vignettes. The analysis utilises reflexive thematic analysis to ensure that the conclusions are well-founded in the data while recognising the researcher's reflexivity.

The analysis reveals three key findings concerning liminal experiences:

1. **The Crisis of Intersecting Uncertainty:** All participants encountered knowledge uncertainty and liminal spaces, with many experiencing the profound impact of intersecting epistemic, ontological, and affective uncertainty.

2. **Management Strategies:** Two primary approaches have been identified: restricted reflexivity—utilising existing schemas derived from lived experience to manage emotional distress—and meta-reflexivity, involving cognitive reframing to facilitate internal reappraisal (Kahn, 2014). This distinction determines whether a candidate merely maintains psychological stability or advances their intrapersonal psychological safety, thereby supporting meaningful psychological transformation.

3. **Framework Endorsement:** The influence of psychological safety is evident across three interconnected dimensions—the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systemic—with participants affirming the accessibility and relevance of this broadened psychological safety framework within the doctoral environment. The primary assertion of this paper is that effective progression through doctoral liminality—from unconscious incompetence to conscious competence—relies on the cultivation and active application of intrapersonal psychological safety. The proposed framework offers essential language and conceptual understanding to transform the vulnerability stemming from knowledge uncertainty into personal agency, thus rendering the transformative doctoral journey more explicit and manageable.

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# Presentation 73

## The Wheels on the MBUS: What Drives PhD Student Wellbeing at the Monash Business School

**Amanda Hanna** Amanda Hanna, Monash Business School, **Maria Davidenko** Monash Business School,

Australian research demonstrates that poor wellbeing among graduate research students can not only result in prolonged candidature timeframes and increased attrition rates, but also in lasting negative impacts on mental health after graduation (Mills et al., 2024; Beasy et al., 2021). While some studies examine factors contributing to student wellbeing (Dhirasasna et al., 2021), others focus on possible interventions (Kavanagh et al., 2025). This latter work highlights the importance of university-wide cultures that promote wellbeing, along with support services, supervision practices, and peer engagement and networking (Ryan et al., 2022).

Within the Monash Business School (MBUS), the prioritisation of PhD student wellbeing emerged in early 2024, following key findings from an internal student survey in which 62.5% of respondents reported feeling "sad, depressed or hopeless" in the past month (2024 Graduate Research Student Survey). In response, the MBUS Graduate Research Team (GRT) has developed a renewed focus on strengthening PhD student wellbeing through a range of initiatives. These initiatives are informed by wellbeing antecedents identified in the literature, the demographic characteristics of the MBUS PhD cohort, and PhD course elements related to academic and career skill development.

In this presentation, we will discuss two initiatives. The first is a series of events providing students and supervisors with practical guidance on managing their relationships, including a research supervisor session on supporting HDR students' mental health and a session on communicating about publication authorship. The second initiative is an internship program for PhD students titled Research Impact Projects, promoted through a faculty-wide event on engaging with industry during the PhD.

The work of our team on these initiatives is ongoing, and we hope this presentation sparks meaningful conversation about PhD student wellbeing and helps us learn from one another as we work to transform graduate research for the future.

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# Presentation 74

## Building Resilient Researchers: Embedding Wellbeing Plans in Graduate Research

**Dasuni Alwis** Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences, Monash University, **Mio Ihashi** Counselling and Psychological Services, Monash University, **Millie McCabe** Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health, School of Psychological Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences, Monash University, **Priscilla Johanesen** Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences, Monash University

The mental health and wellbeing of graduate research (GR) students is an increasing concern in higher education, with evidence showing elevated rates of stress, anxiety, and depression compared to the general population[1]. GR candidature is a demanding, sustained process that places significant pressure on students' academic, professional, and personal lives. To provide proactive support, the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University, in collaboration with Monash Counselling and Psychological Services and the Monash Graduate Association, piloted the myWellbeing Plan, an initiative designed to equip newly commencing GR students with tools and strategies to manage their mental health throughout their PhD journey.

Promoting resilience and cultivating a mentally healthy student cohort are essential to success and wellbeing[2]. To support this, we developed and implemented the myWellbeing Plan, a structured tool to help students reflect on their wellbeing, anticipate challenges, adopt coping strategies and identify sources of support to build resilience throughout their research journey[2,3]. Delivered via a one-hour interactive workshop facilitated by a University psychologist, the tool is framed around the 'PhD Journey', with a fillable document divided into three sections: Maintenance, Stressful Periods, and Crises. In Maintenance, students identify everyday practices that support physical and mental wellbeing. Stressful Periods prompts students to consider potential stressors, recognize warning signs, and develop coping strategies, while identifying support sources. Crises prompts students to define what a crisis might look like and create a tailored management plan addressing mental health and research responsibilities, including contacting health professionals and communicating with supervisors.

The myWellbeing plan was piloted in sessions conducted between 2024 and 2025, engaging over 200 students across the University. Evaluation surveys revealed a measurable impact on students' knowledge, awareness, and attitudes. Before the workshop, 53% of participants (n=68) rated their mental health knowledge as high (4-5 on a five-point scale); this increased to 80% (n=71) post-workshop. Awareness of University support services rose from 38% to 82%. Notably, 93% of students agreed the workshop increased their likelihood of seeking help, and 90% intended to use their wellbeing plan throughout candidature. Longitudinal data collection is underway to assess the lasting impact on students' confidence and ability to manage their wellbeing.

Embedding wellbeing planning into candidature processes demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to student success and helps normalise mental health conversations within research culture. It signals that students' mental health is taken seriously and ensures they are informed about available support services and resources. By equipping students with strategies and supports from the outset, initiatives like the myWellbeing Plan can reduce risk, enhance resilience, and contribute to healthier, more sustainable research environments.

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# Presentation 75

Thursday, 16 April
2:00pm

Hickinbotham Hall

Roundtable

## Academic support and potential pedagogical debt

**Pat Thomson** Adelaide University

Universities are concerned to ensure that HDR students complete their awards in a timely fashion. In Australia, this ensures payment from government. HDR students also want to complete in good time, although life circumstances often get in the way. Academic support for HDR students can thus be seen as a way to manage both financial and reputational risk for universities, as well as helping HDR students to secure their doctoral dreams. However, academic support may be about more than timely completions. Complementary aims include the formation of scholars in disciplinary, institutional and global communities and induction into knowledge production and communication practices.

This workshop asks whether the press for productivity creates pedagogical debt, that is, whether the necessary short-term focus on timely completion, via the use of productivity hacks, boot camps, hidden curriculum workshops and pomodoro-focused SUAW sessions, has undesirable outcomes.

Do we inadvertently prime the production of the good neoliberal scholar and fast scholarship, which in turn (re)produces exploitative working conditions and publication churn?

Do we, to borrow from Stephen Ball (2003), help to create terrors of performativity which take over the very soul(s) of scholarship?

And if that is a clear and present danger, is it possible to work against this productivity paradox?

Can academic support create a 'third space' (Lefebvre, 1991) that works with/against the corporate managerialist university, harking back to the ideal of a university contributing both to the collective good and the cultivation of critical thinking and lifelong/lifewide learning? If so, how?

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# Presentation 76

Thursday, 16 April
2:00pm

The Vines

Supervision

## It Takes a Village: A Visual Mapping Tool to Empower PhD Candidates and Strengthen Their Support Communities

**Dr Nick Baker** The University of Otago, **Professor Rachel Spronken-Smith** The University of Otago, **Associate Professor Barbra Zupan** CQUniversity, **Senior Lecturer Kim Brown** The University of Otago

Building a successful and meaningful doctoral experience depends on a candidate's individual effort but also on the strength of the community that surrounds them. As Nerad (2022) reminds us, "it takes a village to raise a PhD." Without a well-formed support community, candidates are more likely to struggle with key aspects of the doctoral journey, such as navigating common pitfalls, developing holistic skill sets and maintaining wellbeing. Many of these challenges arise because candidates are unaware of the support, opportunities, and resources available to them. A diverse and connected community can provide that support. Yet, despite the well-established importance of community, there remains a lack of practical, research-informed tools to help candidates identify, build, and lead their own support communities.

In response to this concern, the Graduate Research Schools at the University of Otago and CQUniversity co-developed the Village Formation Tool. The tool is delivered as a guided activity in which candidates are prompted with reflective questions and provided with a visual mapping space to identify and explore the people, services, and resources that form their support community. Through this process, candidates identify, understand, and strengthen their villages of support, encouraging them to move beyond reliance on their supervisors. The tool helps foster reciprocal responsibilities between the academic and personal communities involved in their doctoral experience.

Over a 6-month period in 2025, we piloted the Village Formation Tool with doctoral and master's candidates at both institutions. Participants watched an introductory video or attended workshops or presentations on the tool, then used the tool to reflect on and map their support communities. Participants shared their experiences through a voluntary anonymous questionnaire (n = 65) and follow-up, semi-structured interviews (n = 11).

Initial analysis of the data highlights the tool's potential to reshape how candidates conceptualise their support community and their role and responsibilities within it. Several participants described the process as "powerful," noting that it helped them "think about people and mutual responsibility" and "consider what support, where it comes from and how it helps." However, participants also identified limitations, such as feeling overwhelmed by the number of reflective questions and unsure about how to map their village. Some also reported struggling to identify gaps in their own village when they were uncertain what those gaps might be. Consequently, we are revising the tool, and recommend using it in workshops, where facilitators can help candidates identify and explore potential gaps.

The Village Formation Tool, in providing a guided visual mapping of a candidate's support community, emphasises the importance of connections to people, services and resources during doctoral study. Our aim is to enable candidates to build stronger, more resilient support communities and, ultimately, become more confident researchers, while cultivating their role as village leaders. In this session, we will introduce the Village Formation Tool, present key findings from the pilot study, and share examples of participant-generated maps to illustrate how visualisation fosters awareness, connection, and agency. We will also outline plans to further develop and share the tool.

Thursday, 16 April
2:00pm

The Vines

Supervision

# From Supervisors to Supervision:
# Exploring Distributed Supervision in Doctoral Education

**Kristin Solli** OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University, **Geir Afdal** Østfold University College.

Doctoral supervisors are understood as key to the success of doctoral candidates (González-Ocampo & Castello, 2019). An important development in recent years is the movement from a dyadic apprentice model between one supervisor and one doctoral candidate towards supervisory teams (McKenna & van Schalkwyk, 2023). Even though recent work stresses the importance of more collective forms of supervision and complex supervisory arrangements, most of the current research has focused on the role of formal supervisors (Bastalich, 2015). Yet, in an era when doctoral education is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial (Cardoso, 2024), formal doctoral supervisors allocated by the PhD programs may not be the only providers of supervision for doctoral candidates. This study explores supervising actors beyond formal supervisors by asking: 1) What is the role of supervising actors beyond formal supervisors? 2) How do doctoral candidates make use of such actors?

To answer these questions, we draw on in-depth interviews with 10 recently graduated doctoral candidates, associated with an interdisciplinary Nordic research school. The participants in the study describe what we characterize as highly distributed forms of supervision, where supervision takes place in heterogeneous networks of supervising actors that include, but are not limited to, formal supervisors. Our analysis suggests that doctoral candidates are tasked with both constructing and navigating these complex networks.

Based on these findings, we propose the concept distributed supervision as one that allows a shift in focus from individual supervisors to supervision as a dynamic, decentralized process. Such an approach to supervision requires that doctoral candidates are equipped to both orchestrate and navigate the kind of supervision they need. Similarly, in such a perspective, a key competence for supervisors is to support the candidate in negotiating advice and input from other people than themselves. Finally, this understanding of supervision requires institutions that provide doctoral education to rethink the current emphasis on individual supervisors in favor of a broader model of supervising agents working together.

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Thursday, 16 April
2:00pm

The Vines

Supervision

# The Triadic stakeholder imbalances in postgraduate research a case for re-imagining stakeholder intentions

**Ivan Govender** Durban University of Technology

The study aims to highlight the trends and tensions in postgraduate research at a selected university of technology in South Africa amongst the triad of stakeholders, namely, the students, supervisors and institutions. South Africa is a young democracy with the majority of black first-time university entry students originating from impoverished socio-economic background and poor secondary school education who must be absorbed by the universities to promote the national transformation agenda. This adds another challenge to universities that are noticing the increase in poor governance, reduction in state funding, poor throughput and graduation rates.

Many students that graduate register for the postgraduate qualification hoping for better jobs and a future out of poverty. However, many students are not fully competent or possess the necessary skills for postgraduate research. This places pressures on the supervisor as students expectations of the supervisor may not be realistic due to the time and workload constraints of the supervisor. Students then tend to take longer to complete their studies, utilizing more of the universities resources. On the other hand, the university requires the student to graduate in the shortest time period so as to become financially viable through the graduation grants and monies from the publications. This introduces additional tension due to the supervisor feels compelled to push the students to graduate as they need to jointly publish their work or "perish" as academics.

These trends for quick graduations and publications versus the poorly equipped students create relational, resource and quality tensions amongst the institution, supervisors, and students. The challenge is to create a balance by re-imagining the intentions of the triad and develop alternate means to obtain additional revenue, capacitate students and promote professional development of the supervisors. This requires a collaborative, inclusive and socially impactful approach to monitoring and evaluating postgraduate research. This article is significant as it highlights the need for policy and practice revisions through the development of a holistic approach to managing key post graduate research stakeholder intentions.

# Presentation 79

## A Redcard, Choice or Necessity?
## Moving forward with AI in a qualitative PhD project

**Yuran Wang** Adelaide University, **Edward Palmer** Adelaide University, **Simon Walsh** Adelaide University

For many graduate research students, the pressures of accelerated timelines, heavy workloads, and the demands of independent, multitask-oriented learning are a constant reality. A recent survey indicates that graduate students sleep significantly less than the recommended seven hours per night, reflecting the intensity of their academic routines (Allen et al., 2021). This trend is expected to continue throughout their later academic careers. In such an environment, the ongoing emergence and sophistication of artificial intelligence (AI) research tools prompt a timely question: can these technologies relieve research pressure, or relocate it to new domains of epistemic legitimacy and accountability? In this process, how do researchers define the role of AI, and how does AI, in turn, reshape researchers' roles and responsibilities?

This inquiry becomes particularly relevant in qualitative research, where data can easily become overwhelming and difficult to manage. While charts and statistical models are well established in quantitative inquiry, qualitative studies continue to face challenges when it comes to visually representing and communicating their findings.

Taking an intensive design-based PhD project as an example, this presentation explores how AI was integrated into the management of complex qualitative inquiry. This cross-national study investigates the opportunities that AI offers in language learning and brings together diverse data sources, including classroom observations, AI-student chat histories, interview transcripts, and documentary materials. The project generated far more data than anticipated, including multimodal and multilingual materials that quickly exceeded the manageable scope of conventional qualitative analysis. This extreme case provided an opportunity to explore how AI tools could assist in navigating, organising, and making sense of such overwhelming qualitative data.

This presentation draws on personal experiences of integrating AI-assisted methods into a qualitative PhD project. It will illustrate how AI was used to support literature searches, reference management, and the organisation of complex, multilingual data, highlighting the opportunities these tools create in reducing research pressure. At the same time, it will reflect on the new pressures that emerged, particularly concerns around authorship, legitimacy, and the boundaries of acceptable AI use. Through these examples, the presentation considers how AI may appear as a necessity in the face of overwhelming workload, a methodological choice, or even a potential "red card" within contemporary doctoral research.

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# Presentation 80

## Supervisory conversations about gen AI:
## navigating the new taboo topic

**Jing Qi** RMIT University, **Jiao Tuxworth** RMIT University

Gen AI technologies have disrupted the longstanding norms and practices of education and research in universities, which has sparked intense discussions across HASS disciplines including in the community of doctoral education. This qualitative study examines the communication that takes place in doctoral supervision meetings around the use of gen AI, and the ways that HASS doctoral supervisors and students navigate these conversations.

This paper draws on the HASS-related dataset of a larger study, which includes interviews with 12 doctoral supervisors and managers and 11 international doctoral candidates. They come from diverse HASS disciplines including Music Studies, Urban Planning, Cultural Studies, Education, Psychology, Public Health, Business, Media Studies, Communication Studies, Art and Fashion, Interior Design, Sociology and Social Work. Many of them conduct interdisciplinary research. The doctoral supervisors and managers include five females and seven males. The doctoral managers include doctoral course coordinators and doctoral administrators who hold university leadership positions in doctoral management.

Data was analysed thematically through iterative coding (Saldana, 2025). We first conducted descriptive coding to understand how doctoral supervisors and students address the topic of gen AI in their meetings. Focused coding in the second round assisted distilling the salient categories of findings which showed varied modes of communication between doctoral supervisors and students about gen AI. We then used theoretical coding to critically apply the lens of taboos to develop the main themes and interpret the rationales for the modes of communication.

Thematic analysis of interviews with doctoral students and supervisors show varied modes of communication between doctoral supervisors and students about gen AI. Insights from our data have led us to draw on the theoretical lens of taboos which, as a feature of social system, function to maintain social order. We define taboos as topics or instances of behaviours viewed as harmful for doctoral education and may lead to educational, social or legal sanctions. We draw on the theoretical lens of taboos and evolving taboos to interpret the rationales for these modes of communication and make recommendations for supervisory communication strategies to critically facilitate the AI transition in doctoral education.

# Embedding Coding and AI Literacy in Biomedical Science Education

**Meg Taylor** Walter and Eliza Hall Institute and University of Melbourne, **Jessica Borger** Monash University

The rapid expansion of high-throughput technologies in biomedicine has led to an unprecedented volume of biological data, making coding and computational analysis indispensable skills for modern researchers. Coding proficiency enables researchers to conduct reproducible and transparent analyses, collaborate effectively across disciplines and pursue diverse career paths in both academia and industry. While generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Claude promise to democratise coding education, foundational coding knowledge and the ability to assess AI-generated outputs remains critical. Despite these growing demands for coding expertise, biomedical science curricula often lack comprehensive training in coding and data analysis, leaving graduates underprepared for the evolving demands of the field (Barone et al., 2017; Wilson Sayres et al., 2018).

To bridge this educational gap, we designed and implemented a new elective subject BIOL90042 Coding and Data Analysis in Biomedicine, for Master of Biomedical Science students at the University of Melbourne. The subject aims to equip students with practical R coding skills, foster student confidence in using and evaluating generative AI tools and enhance awareness of biomedical career opportunities that integrate coding and data analysis.

The curriculum comprises twelve online lectures, eight hands-on coding workshops, and twelve in-person tutorials, with assessments including weekly quizzes, a mid-semester test, and a coding group project where AI use is encouraged and the findings are presented in an oral presentation. Student outcomes were evaluated using a mixed-methods approach, including pre- and post-semester surveys, in-class pulse surveys, and focus groups.

Post-semester surveys (35% response rate) revealed that 66% of student's self-rate their R coding expertise as moderate-to-advanced. The most valued experiences were coding in R, data visualisation and the group coding project where the students applied their coding expertise to a biomedical dataset. While 87% of students used generative AI tools, most students reported neutral perceptions of their usefulness, indicating that effective integration of AI support may require more structured guidance. Notably, 10 students rated R coding skills as very or extremely important for their future careers, underscoring the relevance of computational literacy in biomedical pathways.

This study highlights how embedding coding and AI literacy into biomedical education can strengthen student confidence, practical skills, and awareness of the role of computational analysis in biomedicine. These findings provide an evidence-based model for integrating programming and AI into biomedical curricula to meet the evolving needs of a data-driven discipline.

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# Evolving HDR Administration Through Automation: From Grassroots Innovation to Institutional Transformation

**Michael Xavier** RMIT University, **Nabila Hamed** RMIT University, **Jacelyn Tan** RMIT University, **Katarina Prince** RMIT University

Since 2020, RMIT University's School of Graduate Research (SGR) has led a transformative shift in Higher Degree by Research (HDR) administration through the design and implementation of bespoke automation solutions. What began as grassroots innovation—low-code tools built by administrative staff using Microsoft Power Automate, has evolved into a strategic, enterprise-level digital transformation initiative. These early automations addressed long-standing inefficiencies in high-volume manual processes such as leave of absence requests, supervisor changes, and milestone deferrals, delivering measurable gains in accuracy, consistency, and processing time.

As the value of these initiatives became evident, SGR's approach matured from isolated, team-developed workflows to institutionally funded projects co-delivered with RMIT's Information Technology Services. This evolution reflects a deliberate transition from local problem-solving to system-wide integration, embedding automation as a core enabler of service excellence and operational resilience across the HDR lifecycle.

**Automation Case Studies:** Each example demonstrates a distinct stage in SGR's digital evolution, progressing from localised workflow improvements to cross-system integrations that enhance efficiency and candidate experience.

**Scholarships Admissions Weekly Approvals:** Integrates SharePoint and the admissions system StudyLink to automatically compile documentation and generate weekly approvals for staff review, eliminating manual collation and saving an estimated 6 staff hours per week.

**Candidate Milestone Scheduling:** Automates the entry of milestone dates and panel details directly into the Student Administration Management System (SAMS), reducing workload and enabling staff to focus on candidate engagement (saving 70 hours annually).

**Candidate Milestone Email Notifications:** Automatically detects milestone records, extracts data, and generates personalised communications for candidates and supervisors, ensuring timely and consistent messaging (saving 150 hours annually).

**Project and Scholarship Advertisement Publishing:** Publishes PhD project and scholarship details directly from service tickets to the university website, reducing turnaround times and administrative delays (saving 140 hours annually).

**Conflict of Interest Checks for Examiners:** Validates candidate and examiner details and conducts automated searches to identify potential conflicts. Particularly valuable during peak examination periods, saving up to 300 staff hours annually.

**Future Directions:** SGR plans to extend automation to additional processes, including leave of absence data entry and admissions assessment. Beyond efficiency, automation is a catalyst for cultural change, enabling staff to redirect effort from repetitive administrative tasks to higher-value, analytical, and service-oriented work. This shift fosters skill development in data literacy, systems thinking, and design-led problem solving, strengthening institutional capability.

**Conclusion:** This paper illustrates how institutionally supported, staff-led automation can transform HDR administration and redefine the role of professional staff within the digital university. The SGR model demonstrates that when staff are empowered to co-design digital solutions, automation becomes a driver of both operational excellence and workforce development. By evolving from grassroots innovation to enterprise-level transformation, SGR has created a scalable roadmap for embedding human-centred automation across the university, delivering sustainable improvements in accuracy, consistency, candidate experience, and institutional agility.

## Keywords

# Presentation 83

## Tracking Student Engagement Using Learning Analytics: Insights from a South Africa Research Intensive University

**Paul Othusitse Dipitso** University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

Online learning fosters self-directed learning and enhances skills development among graduate students. Student engagement in online learning environments can be complex and ultimately affect student success. Data analytics provide insightful evidence for improving teaching and learning, particularly student engagement in an online learning context. Learning analytics are pivotal in analysing student performance using key statistics, data visualization, predictive models, and ultimately making decisions concerning education delivery (Wong, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to assess students' engagement with the Graduate Online Learning and Development (GOLD) platform at Wits using Google Analytics data. GOLD courses are offered to Wits registered postgraduate students, both part-time and full-time. These students have free access to course content and linked external resources. Scholars argue that learning analytics are useful for tracking student engagement, particularly in online platforms (Gardner, Jones & Jefferis, 2020; Martin & Ndoye, 2016; Ferguson, 2012). Learning online is associated with challenges such as isolation, lack of motivation, and disorientation in the online space. Postgraduate students often struggle to strike a balance between study and personal life, particularly in online learning environments. As such, analytics are useful in analysing students' online behaviour. Based on the analytics data, characteristics of students and learning behaviours will be analysed and reported.

In this study, the students' log data will be analysed to determine behavioral engagement patterns. Google Analytics offers comprehensive insights into how users interact with the platform. Behaviour data provides an overview of visitors interacting with the platform, average time on page and behaviour flow (Chen, Deng, Huang & Luo, 2021). The aspects of engagement will be measured in terms of quantitative data using time-related engagement indicators, geolocation and temporal patterns. Arguably, analytics collected by an instructional system provide student engagement profiles in real-time, thus eliminating the need to interrupt instruction to collect survey data.

The results will provide valuable insights into designing and developing GOLD courses. Effective student engagement strategies will be developed to provide effective support for Wits postgraduate students. The platform will be modified in line with student engagement patterns with a particular emphasis on the provision of timely feedback and customised support.

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# Presentation 84

## Professional Support for Professional Students - Aligning administrative support with the changing needs of professional doctoral students

**Sarah Carr** University of Otago, **Aggie O'Leary** University of Otago, **Jane Carroll** University of Otago

As professional doctorates increase internationally, the nature of doctoral students has shifted. Traditionally, PhD students entered doctoral studies shortly after completing prior qualifications, studying full-time on-campus, embedded within their departments, and often involved in teaching. Their PhD is their primary occupation.

More recently, growing numbers of mature students are undertaking doctoral studies alongside professional responsibilities. This is particularly evident in education, medicine, and business, where universities now offer field-specific professional doctorates. Yet many administrative and support processes remain designed around the full-time, on-campus PhD student. These standardised processes can appear bureaucratic and inflexible (Tennant, 20090, failing to accommodate the scheduling, practical, and work-life balance needs of professional doctoral students, making the administration of their studies a significant source of stress.

This paper uses a professional doctoral degree at the University of Otago, New Zealand, as a case study to explore how university administrative requirements can better recognise and support mature, working professionals—students with competing priorities not faced by traditional PhD students—while still meeting institutional quality assurance standards.

Much research into professional doctorates has raised concerns about quality. Taylor's (2008) review highlights issues around the relative standing of these degrees alongside the PhD, the standard of research training provided, and high drop-out rates. Abukari and David (2019) found that a lack of clarity in academic rigour and the expected impact of research outcomes left quality assurance provisions inadequate. Tennant (2009) similarly suggests that uniformity of processes and procedures has become perceived as essential to assuring qualification quality. These concerns likely contribute to perceptions of professional doctorates as lesser than PhDs—perceptions driven in part by ongoing uncertainty about the nature of these degrees.

Critically examining the case for centralised administration (Tennant, 2009; Poultney, 2010) over school or faculty-based models, this paper argues that a fundamental lack of understanding—among academic staff and the broader university—about how professional doctorates differ from a traditional PhD sits at the heart of the problem. Lessons drawn from nearly a decade of experience highlight the importance of carefully navigating the integration of these degrees into well-established university processes. Equally important are open communication, a degree of flexibility, and regular review of existing practices to ensure the needs of professional doctoral students are genuinely met—without compromising transparency, equity, or quality assurance.

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# Presentation 85

## Fostering a sense of belonging for doctoral candidates: Insights from a literature review

**Ai Tam Le** Deakin University, **Claudia A. Rivera Munoz** University of Melbourne

Fostering students' sense of belonging has been one of the key concerns for many universities as it is associated with improvement in engagement, retention and academic outcomes (for a review see Allen et al., 2021; Crawford et al., 2024). However, most research in belonging has focused on undergraduate students rather than those at the postgraduate research level, particularly at the doctoral level. In this presentation, we report findings from a review of belonging in doctoral education, drawing from data from major search databases and journals in higher education.

After screening, the review of 24 relevant studies indicates that factors associated with sense of belonging fall into five themes: academic factors, social connections and experiences, physical location and space, personal factors and culture.

A sense of belonging is reported to have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing, engagement and satisfaction with PhD studies, course retention, academic self-concept and teaching career aspirations. We then explore how these findings can inform us in designing programs and developing a research culture that cultivates a sense of belonging for doctoral candidates.

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# Presentation 86

## Enacting an ethic of care: creating a deliberate doctoral community within a UK-based doctoral programme

**Sherran Clarence** Nottingham Trent University, **Lauren Nixon** Nottingham Trent University, **Bing Lu** Nottingham Trent University.

Two words that are too-often attached to doctoral study are 'lonely' and 'isolating'. Edited collections offering advice on how to combat loneliness and isolation and 'survive' the doctoral journey, written by postgraduate researchers (PGR) and doctoral educators, are plentiful (see, for example, McMaster et al. 2017). More recent collections have focused on specific groups of doctoral candidates, such as Black students (Ackah et al. 2024) and international students (Eliot 2023). These texts all have in common the experience of PGR as being unique compared to other levels of study, because of the nature of research, and uniquely lonely and difficult, because of the way doctorates are undertaken. These texts also have in common community as an antidote to loneliness and isolation.

At Nottingham Trent University, since 2022, we have been working on different strands of research community building, with the idea of creating and sustaining doctoral communities deliberately. We use the term 'deliberate' because we want to infuse the communities that are created for and with PGR with the values of equity, social justice, and care, which we cannot take for granted or assume will organically be part of groups or events. We are also deliberate in how we consider neurodiversity, in how we take into account the specific context of NTU, and in how we listen to the candidates who are part of our wider doctoral programme and the needs they have shared with us in local and national surveys and evaluations.

We use a two-pronged approach: working for PGR, through events we create and fund to bring them together with peers, and working with PGR to co-create events. Our work is guided by Joan Tronto's ethic of care, which focuses on five phases of care, from recognising the need for care and providing it, to integrating care into institutions in visible, formal and recognised ways (Tronto 1998). We take Tronto's ethic of care as a prompt to reflect on how we can work with and for PGR to challenge institutional narratives of care that appear insincere to many PGR, notably female and disabled PGR. We will focus on key events we have created for and with PGR, sharing the design and PGRs' evaluation of these events, which we have reflected on using the lens provided by Tronto. The paper will close with a critique and reflection on our approach to deliberate community-making and consider ways forward into the future.

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# Presentation 87

Thursday, 16 April
2:00pm

Broughton & Ferguson

Graduate Researcher
Wellbeing

## Beyond administration: professional staff as wellbeing support providers in doctoral education

**Mr Mitchell Piscioneri Smyth** University of Melbourne

The landscape of doctoral education has evolved significantly in recent years, with increasing attention being paid to the wellbeing of doctoral students. While much research has focused on the role of academic supervisors in providing pastoral care (wellbeing support), there is a growing recognition of the importance of professional staff in the doctoral student experience.

Current literature highlights the complex challenges faced by doctoral students, including mental health issues, isolation, and difficulties in supervisor relationships. However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the role of professional staff in mitigating these challenges. While some studies have touched on the importance of professional staff support in doctoral programs, few have specifically examined the wellbeing support responsibilities that often fall to these staff members.

Recent discourse in higher education has begun to acknowledge the 'hidden work' of professional staff in supporting students. This includes their role as 'first responders' to student issues and their involvement in mediating issues in student-supervisor relationships.

The literature points to a gap between the actual responsibilities of professional staff in doctoral education and the recognition, training, and support they receive to respond to student wellbeing issues. This is concerning given the increasing focus on student wellbeing and the push for more comprehensive support systems in higher education.

This presentation will explore this gap by presenting findings on the wellbeing support responsibilities and perspectives of professional staff in doctoral education across multiple universities. It recognises that doctoral students, with their extended campus presence, more mature age ranges, dual roles as employees and students, and deep embedment in scholarly communities, have distinct support needs.

The research aims to uncover the realities of professional staff serving as first points of contact, their involvement in navigating complex trust and power dynamics, and their readiness to handle situations beyond increasingly complex administrative queries.

Through a comprehensive survey of professional staff working in doctoral education across Australia, and a desktop analysis of institutional policies, we aim to uncover:

The types and frequency of wellbeing support issues encountered, including recognising signs of distress and handling disclosures Staff members' perceived readiness to address these issues The informal, yet critical, nature of their support role Institutional recognition and support for their wellbeing support responsibilities and how this compares to the support provided to academic supervisors This research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on doctoral student wellbeing by highlighting the unique position of professional staff and the need for their inclusion in support programs and strategies. By addressing these issues, universities can create more robust and responsive support ecosystems for doctoral students.

The implications extend beyond improving staff training; they point towards developing integrated support networks that effectively combine the roles of professional staff and academic supervisors. As the higher education sector continues to grapple with student mental health and wellbeing, this research offers a timely perspective on an often-overlooked component of the support system.

# Presentation 88

Thursday, 16 April
3:30pm

Hickinbotham Hall

Diversity in
Graduate Research

## Who is the International Student?

**William Ericsson Eulatth Vidal** Victoria University of Wellington, Faculty of Graduate Research

International student mobility has become a defining feature of global higher education, with enrolments reaching millions and steadily increasing over recent decades (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2024). This growth was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the reopening of borders has since prompted a recovery, reflected in rising international student visa applications.

While enrolment figures remain central to understanding international student mobility, scholarly interest has broadened to encompass academic and social experiences, cultural adaptation, and post-study trajectories, as well as the challenges students encounter. Studies further explore global mobility patterns and decision-making processes. In New Zealand, research on international students has expanded, yet commentators highlight its fragmentation and the need for a more comprehensive evidence base to inform policy and practice (Doyle et al., 2020).

Governments globally, including New Zealand, have intensified efforts to attract and retain international students. This commitment is reflected in New Zealand's International Education Strategy 2022-2030, which promotes a resilient, high-value international education system. Complementing this, recent policy developments emphasize student wellbeing and holistic support, reinforced by the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

Despite increased efforts, concerns persist about how international students are defined. Reliance on mobility or visa status frames them solely as individuals who relocate for study, reinforcing a homogenised category that obscures diversity. The interchangeable use of terms such as 'international' and 'foreign' further complicates data collection and policy. Institutional binaries—international versus domestic—also simplify complex identities, while challenge-focused research reinforces deficit narratives and marginalises student voices. Together, these reductive framings hinder meaningful responses to students' diverse needs.

This presentation draws on scholarship in international education and the author's previous work, including a phenomenological qualitative study conducted with international students at a university in Aotearoa New Zealand. The study explored their lived experiences and self-perceptions as "international students." Building on these insights, the presentation highlights the multifaceted identities of international students, including those in postgraduate study, and the diverse factors shaping their experiences. While often adopting a collective identity shaped by visa status, shared challenges, and external perceptions, their lived experiences span diverse backgrounds, motivations, and values that defy simplistic categorization.

Factors such as language proficiency, cultural affinity, expectations, and university readiness all shape self-perception, while discrimination and "othering" can lead to alienation. Through the lens of self-categorization theory, social identity theory, and intersectionality, the discussion argues that international students collectively form a rich tapestry of unique identities, highlighting the need to move beyond monolithic definitions (Eulatth & Kamp, 2024). Although grounded primarily in Aotearoa New Zealand, the argument resonates internationally by showing how lived understandings of being "international" challenge bureaucratic simplifications and point toward more inclusive, evidence-informed approaches to research, policy, and practice.

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# Presentation 89

## Exploring Māori and Pasifika Doctoral Allyship on Country to Grow First Nations Research Capacity

**Hinekura Smith** University of Queensland

Indigenous sovereignty movements across the globe are deeply interconnected through shared histories of colonisation, dispossession, and marginalisation. Within higher education, Indigenous doctoral researchers are central to resisting colonial paradigms and advancing transformative knowledge futures. This presentation shares early insights from a seeding study that explores the practices, responsibilities, and possibilities of Māori and Pasifika doctoral students in Australia acting as Indigenous allies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty. It examines how trans-Indigenous solidarities can contribute to growing First Nations research capacity while reimagining the future of graduate research.

Māori and Pasifika doctoral students studying on unceded Aboriginal lands occupy a complex positionality: as Indigenous peoples themselves, yet as manuhiri (visitors) and non-First Nations in the Australian context (Enari & Haua, 2021). This study recognises the privilege and responsibility embedded in 'being visitor'(Haua, 2023) particularly the responsibility to enact conscious allyship that strengthens First Nations sovereignty, knowledge, and self-determination. By focusing on doctoral students, the project contributes to discussions on graduate research as one context where Indigenous allyship through ethical, relational, and Indigenous-led practices can work to unsettle dominant academic structures and support Closing the Gap priorities.

Methodologically, the study is grounded in Vā-Kā (Smith and Wolfgramm-Foliaki, 2020; Wolfgramm-Foliaki and Smith, 2020), an innovative Māori-Pasifika methodology theorised to activate the relational space (vā/wā) between Māori and Pasifika researchers. Drawing on Kaupapa Māori principles of mana motuhake (self-determination) and Pacific philosophies such as Moanaroa and fa'aaloalo (respect), Vā-Kā positions allyship as a reciprocal and deliberate practice of "lashing together" vaka (research vessels) to share resources, knowledge, and responsibility. This approach foregrounds the integrity of Indigenous knowledge systems while enabling a relational, trans-Indigenous framework for collaboration whilst resisting homogenisation.

Using semi-structured interviews, I spoke with nine doctoral participants: three Māori, three Pasifika, and three First Nations, through in-depth interviews. Māori and Pasifika participants share how they understand and enact allyship as they live and study on Country in Australia, while First Nations participants reflect on their expectations and experiences of Indigenous allyship. Thematic analysis is underway and is beginning to highlight both enablers and barriers to effective allyship, including institutional racism, trans-Indigenous entitlement, mentoring relationships, and Indigenous-led research networks.

This presentation offers early themes from the study-in-progress, providing preliminary insights into the ways Indigenous doctoral students navigate allyship in higher education contexts. In alignment with the QPR 2026 theme, Transforming Graduate Research for the Future, this study highlights how graduate research can be a site of Indigenous innovation, solidarity, and transformation. By situating Māori and Pasifika doctoral students not as passive observers but as active allies, the research reframes graduate research as a collective, relational, and decolonising practice.

# Presentation 90

## The Meaning of Qualified: Student Experiences with Doctoral Admission Processes in China

**Jisun Jung** The University of Hong Kong

Chinese doctoral education's selection criteria and admission system have unique historical and cultural contexts that are significantly different from many other higher education systems. It has a complex decision-making process among universities, departments, and individual academics, and it also requires multiple processes with standardized tests and interviews. The Ministry of Education in China introduced reforms in recent years to the doctoral selection system, aiming at stabilising enrolment numbers while granting institutions autonomy to diversify admission methods (Zheng et al., 2018).

Currently, there are three types of admission methods, including undergraduate-straight-to-doctoral students ("straight through students"), successive postgraduate-doctoral students ("successive students"), and doctoral students from public admission ("public students"). Although there are specific variances across institutions and disciplines, there is an ongoing discussion about what the meaning of 'qualified' is and whether the current admission system meets the demands of future researchers' training (Zhao, 2024). Thus, this study aims to explore how doctoral students experience the admission process—from preparation to acceptance—and how they perceive the alignment or misalignment between the admission criteria and the skills required in doctoral studies.

The study is based on semi-structured interviews with twenty-five doctoral students from elite Chinese universities across various disciplines. Our interviewees come from different admission schemes, providing insights into how they selected specific schemes and prepared for the admission process. For the analysis, the study used three key aspects of admission: procedure, criteria, and decision-making (Jung et al., 2023). The preliminary findings indicate that students hold diverse perceptions of the admission criteria and procedures. First, they question what it means to be 'qualified'—whether it should be based on past achievements or potential as future research talent.

Additionally, they have varying understandings of fairness in the process, with some perceiving the procedure as primarily focused on procedural efficiency. Second, doctoral students in China observe an inflation of selection criteria in today's competitive environment, which has intensified the preparation process, including an increased emphasis on publishing records. These perceptions varied across disciplines and their admission schemes. The findings will offer insights into how to design and implement more rigorous, fair, and diverse doctoral admission practices in mainland Chinese universities, from students' perspectives.

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# Presentation 91

Thursday, 16 April
3:30pm

The Vines

Roundtable

## Excellence and experience: developing senior supervisors

**Anna Wallace** UNSW Sydney

It has long been recognised that the quality of HDR supervision has a direct impact on the HDR student experience and research outcomes. One of the ways universities can ensure supervisors are prepared for their task is through mandatory professional development. To this end, many Australian universities have established foundational development programs for new supervisors, and are now turning attention to the ongoing development of more experienced supervisors, as advised by the ACGR in their Good Practice Guidelines for Quality Graduate Research Supervision.

In their 2010 report on research supervision and training, Hammond et al found that "while there was broad agreement amongst all interviewees on the need for some formal structure in the induction of new supervisors, there was considerable disagreement on the need for, and nature of, any ongoing professional development of experienced supervisors" (p. 68). The challenge of how to best engage a cohort of supervisors who may consider that their experience is enough persists today.

Whereas new supervisors need to learn about institutional policies and processes as well as the fundamentals of supervising doctoral candidates, the needs of experienced supervisors can be many and varied. Some will be eager to grow in their supervision practice, while others feel that their abilities and agendas are set. The differences attributed to disciplines, contexts, and candidates may become more pronounced as supervisors gain experience. Local communities of practice - at the school or faculty level - can be perceived as higher value by supervisors than interdisciplinary or centralised activities.

This roundtable will bring together representatives from four Australian universities to discuss their respective institutional approaches to the development and engagement of experienced supervisors. Approaches vary in the frequency, structure, topics, and formats of training. Some require yearly refresher training while others embed opportunities on a longer time cycle.

Each panellist will speak for approximately 5 minutes about experienced supervisor development at their institution, before a group discussion on the following themes:

Why this format 'works' for their institutional context Anything that might not be working or that might change in the future Feedback received and results observed The relative merits of carrots and sticks to encourage active participation The value of senior supervisors passing on their experience The topics supervisors want and the topics they need How to balance central and local approaches to take account of disciplinary differences while also encouraging collaboration The discussion time will include questions from the audience.

This roundtable comparison of development formats will contribute to the ongoing discussion of best practices for experienced supervisor development, grounded in experience, and provide guidance for other practitioners in this space.

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# Presentation 92

Thursday, 16 April
3:30pm

Exhibition Hall

Research
Training SIG

## From Conversation to Collaboration: Co-Creating HDR Research Training Frameworks

**Dr Dani Milos** Flinders University, **Karen Cavu** Queensland University of Technology

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students are entering an increasingly diverse range of career pathways within academia, industry, government, and the not-for-profit sector. In response, the Australian Universities Accord Final Report calls for institutions to take a more active role in preparing HDR candidates for this diversity by embedding transferable skills into research training. While traditional programs have focused on disciplinary depth and research capability, the Accord emphasises the need for structured development of skills such as communication, collaboration, project management, and the ability to apply research in real-world settings. The recommendation point to the need for structured internships, interdisciplinary research environments, and stronger alignment between research training and end-user needs. These experiences are essential for ensuring HDR graduates are equipped to contribute meaningfully across sectors and adapt to evolving workforce demands.

Efforts to embed transferable skills into HDR training are not new. The ACOLA Review in 2016 highlighted the need for flexible, student-centred approaches to skills development, recognising the diversity of HDR candidates and their career trajectories. The review recommended that training be tailored to individual needs and include mechanisms for students to reflect on and map their skill development throughout candidature.

While universities across Australia have responded with the establishment of various training programs, implementation across universities remains inconsistent. There is no shared framework guiding the integration of transferable skills, and institutions vary in how they define, assess, deliver, and evaluate training. This roundtable presents a collaborative initiative by researcher developers from multiple universities who formed a community of practice to address this gap. Their shared goal: to support HDR students in recognising the portability of their skills and preparing for a broad spectrum of careers.

Through case studies, the session will showcase how different institutions collect data on HDR students career aspirations and training needs; design and implement training programs aligned with both academic and non-academic pathways; and evaluate the impact of these programs on student outcomes and career readiness. The discussion will be framed by national policy and good practice guidelines, including the ACGR Good Practice Principles and the AQF levels, which outline key requirements for research and transferrable skills training.

To foster cross-institutional dialogue, we invite participants to reflect on and discuss the following:

How do you encourage HDR students to reflect on their research training-past, present, and future?

Is there value in developing a shared framework for HDR research training? Does your institution currently use one?

What aspects of your current training provision work well, and what could be improved?

How do you support HDR students to recognise the portability of their research skills across career contexts?

How do you evaluate the effectiveness and impact of your HDR training programs?

This session aims to generate practical insights and foster collaboration across institutions. By sharing strategies and experiences, we hope to identify actionable ways to embed meaningful, portable research training into the HDR student journey, ultimately ensuring graduates are equipped for career success in a rapidly changing world.

# Presentation 93

## The PhD Piled Higher and Deeper than ever: the expanding expectations of the modern PhD

Dr Agi Gedeon The University of Western Australia, Dr Jo Edmondston UWA

The contemporary PhD has evolved far beyond the pursuit of a single research question. Today's doctoral candidates navigate a complex ecosystem of expectations—spanning ethical compliance, interdisciplinary collaboration, industry engagement, entrepreneurship, teaching, publication, outreach, and the cultivation of a personal academic brand. As universities and funding bodies increasingly demand demonstrable "impact" and employability outcomes, the traditional model of the solitary scholar is giving way to that of the versatile, networked professional.

This panel will explore the implications of these shifting pressures for doctoral training, supervision, and academic identity. How can institutions balance depth of research with the breadth of skills now required? What tensions arise between scholarly integrity, market relevance, and mental well-being? And how might emerging models such as industrial PhDs, cotutelle programs, and embedded internships redefine success in doctoral education?

Bringing together voices from academia, industry, and policy, this discussion will invite reflection on the purpose and future of the PhD in an era where graduate researchers are expected to be innovators, communicators, and collaborators—all while still, somehow, finishing the thesis.

# Presentation 94

## From Partnership to Placement: Designing Meaningful Industry Engagement for Higher Degree Researchers (HDRs)

Simon Kalucy UNSW, Mitch Smyth University of Melbourne, Nilla Wen Flinders University, Agi Gedeon UWA

As universities deepen their engagement with industry, a key challenge emerges: how can we design academic/industry integrated HDR projects that deliver authentic, real-world experience for research training degree participants, while preserving research quality, academic freedom, and integrity?

Industry-engaged (or end-user engaged) research degrees are now a vital component of the Australian and global postgraduate research landscape. Strategic documents such as the 2025 Strategic Examination of R&D, the 2022 Research Commercialisation Action Plan, and the 2016 ACOLA Review of Australia's Research Training System have consistently called for stronger integration between academia and industry. These calls emphasise the need for research training that reflects real-world challenges and expands opportunities for research translation and commercialisation.

This roundtable will be coordinated by the Australian HDR Industry Engagement Community of Practice (CoP), drawing on its collective expertise to convene a panel of academic and industry leaders with direct experience in establishing and supporting HDR industry engagement. The session comes at a pivotal moment in the evolution of industry HDR programs in Australia.

**By April 2026:**

It will be four years since the introduction of Research Training Program (RTP) completion incentives by the Department of Education—an initiative that catalysed the national development of industry HDR programs and the formation of the CoP. Round 7 of the National Industry PhD Program will have been announced, with a growing portfolio of funded projects. Six national Trailblazer University programs will be concluding, each offering insights into sector-specific ecosystems and varying levels of success in cultivating industry HDR models. Hundreds of industry HDR projects, funded through a variety of mechanisms — including internships, industry linked projects with funded top ups and fully embedded industry employed PhDs—will be approaching thesis submission and completion. In light of these developments, the roundtable will explore lessons learned and future directions for industry HDR engagement.

**Key questions include:**

What are the critical success factors in co-designing HDR internships and embedded PhDs with industry? How can academic goals, industry needs, and candidate development be effectively aligned? What governance, supervision, and support structures are needed to sustain engagement and demonstrable research impact? How can expectations be managed and risks mitigated for all stakeholders? Can standard university progress review mechanisms support these models—or is a new approach required? How do these efforts contribute to innovation and commercialisation, and how is success measured? What is the future of blue-sky research in an increasingly industry-driven funding landscape? This session will provide a timely opportunity for reflection, collaboration, and strategic planning to ensure that HDR industry engagement continues to evolve in ways that benefit candidates, universities, and industry partners alike.

# Presentation 95

## Re-shaping Graduate Research:
## Internships, Vivas & AI for a Student-First Future

**Rebecca Firth** Curtin University

Graduate research is undergoing significant transformation, driven by increasing emphasis on student outcomes, rapid technological change, and the need for robust governance. At Curtin University, the Graduate Research School (GRS) has been actively reshaping its systems to ensure they are simpler, more student-focused, and ready for the future.

Rebecca Firth will present three key initiatives that illustrate this shift.

**Internships:** Recognising that most PhD graduates pursue careers beyond academia, the GRS has prioritised embedding internships into the doctoral experience. Internships provide a powerful mechanism to enhance employability, build professional networks, and offer real-world experience. Drawing on findings from a recent survey and research paper conducted by the GRS team and sponsored by Trailblazer, Rebecca will share insights into how these opportunities are being integrated and the recommendations that have informed implementation.

**Compulsory Vivas:** While oral examinations are standard practice internationally, they remain relatively uncommon in Australia. Curtin is preparing to introduce compulsory vivas, not as an additional compliance layer, but to strengthen examination quality, increase transparency, and give students a stronger voice in the assessment process. This initiative reflects a commitment to improving the overall HDR experience and aligning with global best practice.

**AI Integration:** Rather than resisting technological change, the GRS has embraced responsible use of AI to streamline administrative processes, improve communication, and reduce points of failure in workflows. At the same time, the team is supporting HDR students and supervisors to navigate ethical considerations, academic integrity, and the skills required for success in an AI-driven research environment. Importantly, the GRS successfully advocated for HDR students to be included in the scope of Microsoft 365 Copilot with Enterprise Data Protection (EDP) at Curtin.

These initiatives form part of a broader cultural and structural shift within the GRS. Under Rebecca's leadership, the team is moving towards a governance model built on clear processes, distributed responsibilities, and a strong service ethos. This approach creates space for innovation, fosters collaboration, and ensures that no single task depends on one individual. For students, the benefits include a clearer, more efficient experience; for staff, a sustainable and rewarding way of working.

Collectively, these changes demonstrate how a graduate research school can be more than an administrative unit. It can actively shape the HDR journey. By rethinking internships, vivas, AI, and team culture through a student-first lens, Curtin's GRS is preparing students for success during and beyond the PhD. Rebecca will invite discussion on practical implementation, cultural leadership, and opportunities to re-shape graduate research for the future.

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# Presentation 96

## Who's Ready for the Viva?
## Workload, AI, and the Future of HDR Examination

**Eleta Chin** University of Western Australia, **Rana Moustafa** University of Western Australia

As Australian universities increasingly move toward implementing the oral defence (viva) as part of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) examination, the question of institutional readiness at the operational and administrative level has become both urgent and complex. The sector is navigating a period of rapid transformation, driven by generative AI, shifting expectations around research integrity, and growing pressure to demonstrate assessment rigour and graduate capability. Within this environment, the introduction of a viva offers clear academic benefits but also presents significant operational challenges, particularly for already overstretched research administration teams.

The oral defence promises to strengthen academic integrity by requiring candidates to articulate and defend their research in real time, which is an important safeguard when generative AI can now produce sophisticated written text. By moving beyond a "document-only" assessment model, a viva helps ensure candidates can demonstrate true ownership of their ideas and the ability to critically reflect on their methodologies, findings, and scholarly positioning. It also aligns Australia with international assessment norms, where oral defences are standard practice, and enhances the development of skills such as synthesis, communication, and intellectual agility.

Yet adopting a viva component as part of the thesis examination process is not without significant workload implications. Coordination, scheduling, examiner preparation, briefing, student support, policy development, and outcome processing all add layers of complexity to the examination workflow. Many universities are actively piloting or implementing viva requirements, but often without the ability to increase staffing. This raises a critical question: how can institutions implement and scale vivas sustainably?

This session draws on The University of Western Australia's experience administering oral defences since 2018, offering practical insights into the challenges and opportunities encountered during implementation. UWA's journey highlights key considerations in policy design, process mapping, administrative workload, and the cultural shift required among students and supervisors. Lessons learned include the importance of clear communication protocols, early candidate preparation, consistent examiner guidance, and robust scheduling frameworks.

While AI contributes to the need for more rigorous assessment forms, it also offers powerful tools to streamline operational processes. Current applications include tailored communication with candidates and examiners, generating timelines and schedules, and tracking examination progression. Emerging opportunities include secure extraction of data to determine viva participants' locations and preferences, optimisation of scheduling across time zones and automated proposal of suitable alternatives when someone declines. For candidates, these opportunities could present themselves as a customised preparation checklist and sample probing questions specific to the thesis. These innovations have the potential to significantly reduce manual workload while improving consistency, transparency, and student readiness.

By positioning the viva component within the broader context of workload pressures, policy reforms, and the accelerating influence of AI, this presentation will invite participants to consider what genuine institutional readiness looks like, and how universities can move from ad-hoc adoption to embedded, sustainable practice. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that oral defence strengthens research quality while remaining feasible, efficient, and future-proof within the realities of Australian HDR administration.

# Presentation 97

## Enhancing Doctoral Thesis Quality:
## Thesis Examination, GenAI and Thesis including Publication

**Julie Holden** Monash University

This study of thesis examination quality is motivated by the increasing number of HDR students, the recent affordances of Generative AI in research, and the rise in theses with publications. While the stated requirements and processes for the examination of doctoral thesis vary across Australian institutions, they generally constitute the same foundations and support quality assurance goals: a written thesis is produced for assessment purposes with the only audience being the examiners; and the examination is conducted by these domain specialists as part of a discipline community to determine a research student's ability to develop and sustain a body of work that demonstrates critical understanding of a complex field. Research on thesis examination has been conducted for a number of reasons including criteria as indicators of quality (Bourke & Holbrook, 2013) and the recent examination of theses that include publications (Mason & Solli, 2025).

We continue this tradition of investigation to better understand how the current model of thesis examination is reflecting Generative AI use and the rise in theses with publication, and how examiners indicate quality. The study analyses 125 thesis examination reports from the years 2022 to 2025. The theses examined are from a STEM faculty with a high English as an Additional Language student enrolment in a major Australian research university with high retention and pass rates, and cover a range of discipline and inter-disciplinary areas from technical to social science and theoretical and practical applications. The study also includes interviews with supervisors who hold roles as thesis examiners, and analysis of policy documents and materials provided to examiners. The findings of this study includes links between examiner experience and criteria used, and examiner commentary about the use of Generative AI and the cohesiveness of the thesis particularly in the evidence of higher order thinking, value arguments, text repetition and literature reviews.

This study contributes to increasing the transparency of doctoral assessment and includes practical implications to inform Training Needs Analyses (TNAs) for the development of better targeted doctoral training provision. This study supports the need to reinforce specific and customised attention in doctoral training to include critical disciplinary insights and frame contributions for improved thesis quality. It also supports explicit guidance for examiners when commenting on the use of Generative AI in thesis writing and in recognising different institutional thesis requirements and how that can influence thesis structure and narrative. These considerations can only help research students and supervisors better prepare for the examination process, and guide institutional policy-makers on how to improve examination procedures.

### References

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# Presentation 98

## The multifaceted barriers encountered by postgraduate students in a South African University

**Asabonga Mngeni** Walter Sisulu University

Postgraduate students face various obstacles that hinder their capacity to finish their studies within the expected timeframe. These obstacles include institutional issues, challenges related to research, and personal or situational difficulties. This study examines and compares the problems faced by postgraduate (master's and doctoral) students at a university in South Africa.

The research involved a cohort of 30 postgraduate students, split evenly between 15 master's and 15 doctoral candidates. The findings indicate that these students experience challenges such as delayed supervision, inadequate research facilities, and cumbersome administrative processes. Moreover, they face financial difficulties and psychological challenges, including stress and feelings of isolation.

The study suggests a unified and collaborative strategy to tackle the difficulties encountered by postgraduate students. This involves compulsory training for supervisors on strong mentoring techniques, establishing clear expectations, and offering prompt feedback.

# Presentation 99

Thursday, 16 April
4:30pm

Hickinbotham Hall

Barriers
to Success

## Learning from failure for doctoral education

**Elke Stracke** University of Canberra, Australia, **Vijay Kumar** QUEST International University, Malaysia,
**Jen Webb** University of Canberra, Australia, **Allyson Holbrook** University of Newcastle, Australia,
**Rachel Burke** University of Newcastle, Australia

Failure in doctoral education is a taboo topic for many supervisors and doctoral candidates. Failure in thesis doctoral examination is hard to admit to or explain and has not been deeply investigated.

We aim to disrupt the silence around failure in the doctoral context and generate new discussions relevant to doctoral education.

We conduct a theory integrated literature review, which allows for the inclusion of primary research studies, along with other documents (such as policy documents), in the international context.

We seek to explore the learning potentials presented by a better understanding of failure to influence the broader debates about the future of the doctorate in times of uncertainty and crisis.

# Presentation 100

Thursday, 16 April
4:30pm

The Vines

Roundtable

## Good practices for running oral/viva examinations

**Gina Wisker** University of Bath, **Ludovic Highman** University of Bath, **Rachel Spronken-Smith** University of Otago, **Margaret Kiley** Australian National University, **Joseph Waghorne** University of Sussex, **Darren Fa** University of Gibraltar, and **Caroline Moss-Gibbons** University of Gibraltar.

Drawing on our recent and current research projects on the doctoral oral /viva and on a wide range of experience internationally over time with the doctoral oral/viva across several location and practices ( Highman et. al, 2025), this session explores and shares evidence and suggestions for good practice in running oral/viva examinations from preparation, setting, dynamics of interactions to justice in the award. Our ongoing research on experiences of candidates, examiners and convenors (chairs) explores expectations and experiences, then clarifies and suggests good practice for those in each role. It builds on extant international literature on the viva experience (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, 2002 ) and involves semi-structured open-ended interviews with (i) candidates,(ii) examiners and (iii) chairs/ convenors in three diverse university locations.

This and earlier research, and our own international experience, indicate the importance of ensuring sound practical and intellectual planning for both examiner teams and candidate, kindness and rigour in questioning, and an attention to wellbeing particularly when vivas/orals are being conducted remotely (Wisker et.al 2022).

From our data we explore and identify crucial elements of the aims, planning, shape, form , content , focus and rhythms of orals/vivas . These crucial elements can first enable a respectful, positive, dynamic intellectual exchange and collegiality in the oral/viva itself . They next inform a just set of decisions which recognise the contribution and doctorateness of the work, both research and thesis, and help guide the candidate for any future revisions and publications. .

# Presentation 101

## Curtin Thesis Fest:
## a new approach to improving HDR wellbeing and experience

**Kitty Delaney** Curtin University, **Jaya Ralph**Curtin University, **Min Teah** Curtin University

Thesis Fest is a dynamic two-day initiative that reimagines how universities can support Higher Degree by Research (HDR) student wellbeing and progression. Thesis Fest represents a collaborative, institution-wide approach to enhancing the HDR experience. Designed and delivered by the Library at Curtin University, the program empowers HDR students to build research skills, foster wellbeing, and move toward thesis completion with confidence.

Thesis Fest was created in direct response to the isolation, uncertainty, and lack of structured support often experienced by HDR students. Research shows that HDR students are more likely to experience higher levels of imposter syndrome, perfectionism, and loneliness than the general population (Mills et al., 2024). These challenges were intensified during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, when widespread disruption to daily life, heightened uncertainty, and increased pressure on resilience significantly affected HDR students' research journeys (Aristeidou & Aristidou, 2023).

Beyond the pandemic, the doctoral journey itself continues to evolve. Changing career prospects, shifting research ecosystems, and transforming university environments require ongoing re-evaluation of what the HDR experience entails. Within this context, fostering collaboration across the university becomes increasingly important to deliver a supportive and distinctive HDR experience that bridges disciplinary differences.

In response, Thesis Fest was designed as a continuously evolving initiative that reflects the changing nature of the doctoral journey. Delivered in multiple modalities, it creates a space for authentic connection while enabling students to gain practical skills, insights from experts, peers, and alumni, and fosters meaningful collaboration with professional services and academics.

Thesis Fest has had a measurable impact. It has strengthened relationships between the Library, the Graduate Research School, and faculties, sparked online networking communities and positioned the Library as a key partner in HDR support. The event has also facilitated conversations between HDR students and university leadership, highlighting the Library's role as a valued collaborator in shaping research culture.

Now in its fifth year, Thesis Fest has grown from a modest initiative into an award-winning event supported by the Vice-Chancellor. It offers a fresh approach to doctoral support by highlighting issues central to the graduate research experience and embedding wellbeing within the research degree landscape. Students consistently report feeling inspired, supported, and part of a thriving academic community, demonstrating the capacity of Thesis Fest to transform the traditionally solitary research journey into a shared experience.

This presentation will explore the origins and evolution of Thesis Fest, the need it addressed within the HDR community, the program, and its growth over the past five years. It will also examine the impact of Thesis Fest on researcher experience and wellbeing, and how it has contributed to embedding a culture of support and connection throughout the doctoral journey.

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# Presentation 102

## More than Money: How a Student Grant Scheme Became a Catalyst for Skills Development

**Yulia Ulyannikova** Graduate Research School, The University of Sydney

The transformation of graduate research depends not only on structural change but also on fostering environments in which Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students are empowered to take initiative, build communities, and develop the skills required for success within academia and beyond. In 2024, the University of Sydney launched the Graduate Research Activities and Development Scheme (GRADS)—a micro-funding initiative designed to support HDR students to organise events and lead activities that enhance the graduate research experience.

While conceived primarily as a funding mechanism, the scheme has proven to be a transformative skills development experience in itself. Through two rounds of competitive funding, HDR students have designed and delivered career-building workshops, interdisciplinary networking events, and research communication initiatives, to name a few. In doing so, they have acquired authentic experience in project management, budgeting, leadership, communication, and evaluation, all of them being the key capabilities required to progress one's career nationally and internationally.

This presentation will explore how the scheme's lifecycle—from conceptualisation and proposal development to implementation and reporting—functions as an experiential learning process that mirrors the full research project journey. The act of articulating aims, aligning them with institutional priorities, and assessing impact provides students with practice in skills directly transferable to both academic and non-academic research contexts.

The presentation will reflect on the scheme's evolution and the continuous improvement achieved across two funding rounds. Feedback from applicants and faculty has informed iterative refinements, including the introduction of detailed guidance materials, templates for project planning and budgeting, and a self-assessment rubric emphasising skills development progression. These supports not only enhance administrative clarity but also scaffold student learning, ensuring that each stage of participation contributes to HDR skills development.

Qualitative feedback indicates that the scheme fosters a strong sense of agency and belonging among HDR students, empowering them to shape their research communities and engage in collaborative leadership. For many participants, the experience represents their first opportunity to translate an idea into a funded project and to manage resources, stakeholders, and outcomes in a real-world context.

By embedding developmental intent within a seemingly administrative process, the GRADS demonstrates how institutional mechanisms can be designed to transform the graduate research experience. Rather than viewing funding as a transactional process, this approach situates micro-grants as platforms for experiential learning, reflection, and cultural change.

The presentation will offer practical insights for institutions seeking to integrate student-led initiatives into researcher development strategies. It will argue that empowering HDR candidates through well-scaffolded, low-stakes funding opportunities contributes to the broader transformation of graduate research, cultivating confident, capable, and collaborative researchers prepared for the future.

# Presentation 103

Thursday, 16 April
4:30pm

Exhibition Hall

Ways of working with
Graduate Researchers

## From Keywords to Deep (Re)Search: Implications of AI-Powered Academic Search for Doctoral Inquiry

**Che Yee Lye** Singapore University of Social Sciences

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping doctoral research, particularly in how literature reviews are conducted. Traditionally, literature searches have relied on keyword-based databases. However, many academic search platforms now leverage AI to incorporate natural language, semantic and deep or agentic search capabilities.

This transformation is not merely technical innovation but also signifies a paradigm shift in doctoral inquiry - how doctoral students discover, interpret and construct knowledge through the use of AI-powered academic search tools.

This study aims to collect evidence from previous research of AI-based research tools to examine how AI supports doctoral students in orchestrating various stages of the literature review processes, including problem formulation, literature search, inclusion of relevant papers, quality assessment, data extraction, as well as data analysis and interpretation.

The paper further explores the changing nature of academic search, highlighting the different types of academic searches, from keyword-based systems that retrieve potentially relevant documents, to AI-powered searches that use semantic and natural language to generate synthesized answers, and deep search that produces comprehensive, report-like outputs.

Three key issues are identified:

- challenges in assessing the quality of the search queries,
- inconsistencies and non-reproducibility of the search results, and
- the unknown biases within the AI-powered systems.

Beyond evaluating system issues such as hallucinations, ghost references and source faithfulness, this paper argues for greater focus on the educational and cognitive implications of AI-powered searching "questioning what might be lost if doctoral students no longer develop core skills in keyword searching, critical reading, synthesis and academic writing."

# Presentation 104

Thursday, 16 April
4:30pm

The Gallery

Roundtable

## Life beyond PhD completion: Approaching the tensions and opportunities of researcher development for graduate researchers' post-PhD career aspirations

**Rosey Chang** Deakin University, Researcher Development Academy, **Heidi Collins** University of Auckland, School of Graduate Studies, **Cally Guerin** La Trobe University, Graduate Research School, **Cherie Todd-Williamson** Massey University, Graduate Research School and Ethics, **Meagan Tyler** La Trobe University, Graduate Research School

Graduate researchers (GRs) hold a spectrum of aspirations for post-PhD careers—from imagined futures as academics, or industry-based researchers and leaders, to designers and artists, and to roles as expert practitioners, policy advisors, entrepreneurs and more. The variety of roles beyond the PhD is reflected in international trends to examine and support the interconnections between PhD experiences, transferable skills and what are positioned as "good" outcomes for GR employment (McGagh et al., 2016, p. x). Amid this context, we see that GR aspirations for academic careers, even in the face of precarity is nuanced and "entangled in both hopes and fears, ideals and flaws" (Le, 2023, p. 883).

How are universities and researcher developers adapting to these aspirations, and the underlying tensions and opportunities? This question goes to the heart of what we aim to achieve by shaping conditions, initiatives and curricula in researcher development for doctoral education for the future. We argue that approaches and frameworks that enable graduate researchers to shape meaningful professional identities and career trajectories are key. In addition, a practical consideration involves opportunities to collaborate with university careers services, or academic staff in careers and employability learning (Healy, 2023) at our institutions.

In this round table, we explore frameworks and approaches from various institutional contexts from Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. We explore Deakin University's Graduate Employability conceptual model that guides employability activities from undergraduate to graduate researcher levels. We discuss University of Auckland's approach to charting flexible doctoral career development pathways, catering for varying demand for breadth and depth of development opportunities. We also describe the developmental approach taken at La Trobe University, in which workshops address both self-knowledge and options-knowledge (Spronken-Smith et al., 2024) for GRs. Alongside this, we consider the emotional facets of transitioning to their post-PhD career for GRs, and for the researcher developers facilitating this development.

Audience members are invited to share the programs and approaches at their own institutions (and what they might wish for) with the aim of generating a better understanding of how future GRs are prepared for life after the PhD.

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# Presentation 105

📅 Thursday, 16 April
4:30pm

📐 Broughton & Ferguson

👥 Roundtable

## Joint PhDs... are they worth it?

**Mark Gregory** University Of Melbourne, **Helen Ross** University of Sydney, **Dan Bendrups** La Trobe University.

The number of international joint PhD candidates have grown significantly in Australia over the past decade. As institutions strive to enhance their global presence and foster cross-border collaborations, joint PhDs offer a unique opportunity for candidates to benefit from diverse academic environments. However, this model is not without its challenges, and opinions vary across the research training and higher education community about whether the benefits outweigh the complexities, risks, and potential compliance issues.

From an institutional perspective, joint PhD programs can significantly enhance a university's international reputation and research capabilities. Recent events and experiences have also highlighted how important international collaboration is to addressing complex global challenges, especially when bilateral research funding is limited and difficult to access. Joint PhD programs can help facilitate access to a broader pool of resources, expertise, and funding opportunities, thereby enriching the academic experience and increasing the impact and reach of research. However, the increased administrative complexity and potential for compliance issues associated with coordinating across diverse institutions in varying jurisdictional contexts can be substantial. These risks may deter some universities from pursuing such partnerships, despite the potential benefits.

For supervisors, collaborative research training programs offer the chance to engage more deeply with international colleagues, fostering longer term research partnerships and projects, and expanding their professional networks. The exposure to different academic cultures and methodologies can be intellectually stimulating and lead to more innovative research outcomes. Nevertheless, supervising a joint PhD candidate requires navigation of differing institutional policies and expectations, and the addition of joint supervision within international collaborations can bring exaggerated interpersonal challenges.

Joint PhD candidates need to manage relationships with multiple supervisors and are required to adapt to varied academic and cultural environments, which can be both daunting and disruptive. However, they also stand to benefit significantly from the experience, gaining access to a wider range of academic resources, mentorship from international experts in their field, and the opportunity to develop a global perspective on their research. The experience of studying in different countries can also enhance their personal and professional development, making them more competitive in the global job market.

This round table discussion will explore the multifaceted nature of joint PhDs, delve into some of the issues and ways different institutions have addressed them, and provide a platform for open dialogue and exchange of ideas. By considering the perspectives of all stakeholders, including university leadership, supervisors, research training professionals, international partners, and the candidates themselves, we aim to determine whether the benefits of joint PhDs truly outweigh the added complexities and risks. Are joint PhDs worth the effort? Join us as we explore this question and seek to uncover the best practices for successful implementation of joint PhD programs.

# PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS DAY 3

**Friday, 17 April 2026**

# Presentation 106

## Beyond Employability:
## Graduate Research Capability in an SME Context

**Hosted by Dr Nigel Palmer** Senior Policy Manager for Skills and Education, BusinessNSW & AuSI Visiting Fellow, Australian Studies Institute. Nigel will be joined by Tara Jacobsen, Inger Mewburn and Jodie Trembath

Research education around the world is increasingly informed by the need to enhance graduate employment outcomes. In Australia, the recent release of the Ambitious Australia Report on the national R&D system gives renewed impetus to this imperative. The report recommends the expansion of industry-aligned models for research training at scale. The report also calls for a greater emphasis on entrepreneurial research training programs.

These recommendations have a familiar ring to them. While small and medium employers account for roughly 99.5% of employers and 84.2% of jobs nationally, most of the energy in graduate research employment outcomes remains invested in the 0.5% of employers able to accommodate research graduates at scale. This panel investigates the merits of embracing a capabilities approach to evolving the 'employability' narrative with the other 99.5% of employers in mind.

The panel brings together experts in skills recognition, industry engagement, doctoral education and entrepreneurship to consider the unique contribution of graduate research capabilities in a small and medium enterprise context. The panel will consider how graduate research capabilities can enhance employment outcomes for both research graduates and employers. This means more than simply getting a job. This session will explore how research education equips graduates with distinctive capabilities that are uniquely valuable. In doing so, it seeks to broaden the conversation from graduate 'employability' to wider questions of how research capabilities can be recognised and valued across the broader economy, and their alignment with current and future skills needs.

# Presentation 107

## Grounded Theory Methodologies in Graduate Research Transformation from Below

**Gert van der Westhuizen** University of Johannesburg.

Graduate research in South Africa stands to benefit from Grounded Theory (GT) methodologies in Constructivist and Transformative forms. Strengthened and deepened by Conversation Analysis methods, this would constitute "transformation from below", i.e. intentional methodological choices aimed at constructing theoretical explanations of phenomena that are data-based.

Grounded Theory methods are by design ethnographic and inductive (Glaser 2007, Charmaz 2017). They require negotiating the involvement of participants, entering research settings and problems, and working with the question "What is going on?". Drawing on qualitative methods, they involve the full circle of data gathering and content analysis.

The power of Grounded Theory methodology is in the second level of analyses of content data, by means of memo writing - followed by memos about memos, and theory articulation (Charmaz, Thornberg and Keane 2017). The proposal in this paper is that conversations about data is a unit of analysis which will deepen theory construction (see Koschman 2013).

The immersion Conversation Analytic principles in grounded theory research procedures is the contribution of this paper. We argue that analyses of talk moves, sequences of turn taking and conversational interactions work on two levels - a deeper understanding of how participants use their knowledge in analysing data, and in so doing, refining the shared understanding of the theories constructed from data.

Referring to completed Phd studies in South Africa, the paper is illustrative of Grounded Theory methods and their trustworthy implementation (e.g. Nsibande 2025). The paper also offers a framework of procedures for graduate researchers to consider.

The presentation offers a discussion of implications of Grounded Theory/ Conversation Analysis methods for graduate research and supervision with reference to improving quality and agency for the future. It also considers understandings of relational knowledge and epistemic responsibility as key to quality of graduate education and research.

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# Presentation 108

## Nurturing Researchers for Academic Pluralism: Analyzing Graduate Students' Narratives on their encountering Japanese Thought

**Machi Sato** Kyoto University, Japan

Since the discussions initiated by Alatas(2003), there has been a movement to break free from academic dependency and realize a more pluralistic academic world. One initiative in this movement involves re-examining social phenomenon through the lens of more localized or indigenous thoughts and philosophies. However, in non-English-speaking universities in non-Western countries, a deeply rooted academic framework based on Western theories presents significant challenges in relativizing this perspective especially for graduate students. This study aims to illuminate how faculty members have encouraged graduate students to engage in alternative research practices and how these experiences are perceived by the students at Kyoto University in Japan.

During the modernization process, Japan's academic research in social sciences began by studying and translating Western theories that were considered advanced. As a result, there still is a tendency to study social issues and phenomenon in Japan only through the lens of those theoretical frameworks (Sonoda, 1991). It has become the norm in Japanese academic practices.

In contrast, at Kyoto University, number of researchers including postgraduate students in social sciences have been producing works influenced by the Kyoto School of Thoughts and Japanese philosophies that relativize Western theories and present new perspectives. How is it possible for them, in particular postgraduate students, to conduct research differently when the most textbooks in social science do not mention about those emic theories and philosophies?

In order to explore this question, I conducted in-depth interviews with three postgraduate students who have published studies using emic theories. In the interview, I asked about their experiences of encountering, learning about, and using emic theories and its effects on their academic self. I also asked about roles their supervisors played in the process.

It was revealed that they encountered discomfort when applying etic theories to analyze social phenomenon in Japan. However, the introduction of emic theories by their supervisors not only alleviated these discomforts but also let them experience threshold. In addition, the existence of Kyoto School of Thoughts encouraged and assured them to take alternative perspectives to investigate.

This study highlights the importance of having a sense that existing frameworks cannot explain certain phenomena, as well as the reassurance that one can produce academically recognized insights based on emic theories. How the supervisor navigate this process is the question to be considered.

### References

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# Presentation 109

## Opportunities and challenges for the development of doctoral learning capabilities in the next decade

**Professor Allyson Holbrook** SORTI The University of Newcastle, **A/Prof Rachel Burke** SORTI The University of Newcastle, **Professor Craig Batty** University of South Australia, **Professor David Feldon** Professor, Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences Vice Provost for Graduate Studies, Utah State University, **Emeritus Professor Terry Lovat** SORTI The University of Newcastle, **Dr Erika Spray** SORTI The University of Newcastle, **Jayne Carruthers** SORTI The University of Newcastle.

It is increasingly evident that intellectual skills-building will be simultaneously challenged and augmented by Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) in the next decade, and that this will occur alongside significant changes in knowledge ownership, dissemination and utilisation that will influence the direction and nature of universities and the dynamics of employment. In light of such developments, government, industry and enterprise are already compelled to consider the future educational implications of the growth of access to Large Language Models (LLMS) and the trajectory forecast for AGI. It is argued, for example, that all work tasks that can be routinised, easily verified and simply measured are those for which LLMs will be suited, while the qualities of cognitive flexibility, adaptability and critical and creative capability will be needed in the utilisation of agentic AI.

The aforementioned qualities fall within the ambit of current doctoral education along with the capacity for higher order thinking and capability to generate new knowledge, however there is a need to take stock of the state of knowledge about postgraduate learning and contemporary issues relating to achievement and access in this sphere and to map these findings against the changes anticipated as an outcome of the development of AGI in the near future.

Building on the latter, this round table addresses two questions:

1. In what ways do doctoral skills and research dispositions align with expectations about the place of AI in research and professional work in the next five years?

2. What is the potential role and impact of AI augmentation and collaboration in doctoral-degree study, particularly in respect of:
   a) cognitive development;
   b) emotional health; and
   c) creativity.

The paper produced and disseminated for this presentation will offer perspectives on the opportunities and challenges related to the above that draw on expertise in the fields of philosophy, psychology, learning theory, linguistic and cultural diversity and creative industries. Of the several themes that interweave through the paper, one is an emphasis on building capacity for effectual thinking that is embracive and reflective of new forms of knowledge entrepreneurship linked to developments in AI. Another is psychological readiness for epistemic shifts in what it means to do research.

The team engaged in this work are affiliated with the Centre for the Study of Research Training and Impact (SORTI). For more than two decades the centre has studied HDR student learning and assessment and has published on doctoral and graduate learner dispositions, emotions, motivations, cognitive and epistemic development and standards applied to doctoral research. Members have also engaged in studies on learning in professional and entrepreneurship settings and in situations of individual dislocation and distress. The SORTI program of research 2026-2030, seeks to engage with the role that AI can play in improving the quality of, and access to, higher order learning across a range of contexts.

# Presentation 110

## Transforming Doctoral Education: the complex role of spirituality in doctoral education for women of colour

**Halima Namakula** University of Johannesburg, **Catherine Manathunga** The University of the Sunshine Coast, **Shireen Motala** University of Johannesburg, **Beatrice Akala** Wits School of School, **Maria Raciti** The University of the Sunshine Coast, **Jing Qi** The University of the Sunshine Coast, **Gina Wisker** University of Bath.

Doctoral education is often framed and dominated by secular, Western rationalities and epistemologies, leading to the marginalisation of spiritual and more-than-human dimensions in the research journey. Our paper focuses on the transformative role of spirituality in doctoral education and challenges the prevailing Western paradigms that shape doctoral studies. We highlight the experiences of Black, First Nations, and transcultural women in South Africa, Kenya, and Australia, examining how they utilised spirituality as a resource during their doctoral journeys.

We draw on an intersectional lens to frame and understand spirituality as an enabling factor in these women's doctoral studies. This qualitative multi-sited case study reveals that spirituality serves as a crucial, yet complex, source of support. Our findings illustrate that spirituality is not peripheral but central to candidates' resilience, functioning as a daily coping mechanism, a source of legitimacy in alienating academic spaces, and the foundation for vital informal support networks. Participants employed spiritual frameworks to interpret academic challenges, experienced spiritual transformation through adversity, and navigated tensions between religious commitments and academic demands.

This research argues that a fundamental transformation of graduate education is necessary for the future, requiring the acknowledgement and integration of these spiritual dimensions. We must move beyond a purely secular rationality in doctoral education to create a more inclusive, holistic, and supportive environment for diverse candidates. We propose that institutions foster this transformation through faith-sensitive mentoring, culturally grounded initiatives, and epistemological pluralism in supervision and policy.

# Presentation 111

## Faith, Wellbeing, and Social Cohesion in Graduate Research Education

**A/Prof John A. Rees** University of Technology Sydney

An increased focus on candidate wellbeing in graduate research management invites closer examination of the psychosocial contexts in which Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates undertake their work. While student experience frameworks necessarily emphasise institutional and supervisory environments, this scoping paper explores HDR wellbeing beyond the university, with particular attention to religious communities.

Results from a 2024 gradSERU survey at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) indicate that a statistically significant proportion of HDR students draw "spiritual and emotional support" from religious communities to sustain their research journey. This preliminary finding warrants further investigation of university-community engagement in multi-faith settings as a dimension of student support.

The analysis is situated within Australia's broader social cohesion policy landscape. Governmental and specialist reports consistently frame cohesion in terms of belonging, participation, inclusion, worth, and acceptance. Government reports note that religious and cultural diversity, when accompanied by robust community engagement, strengthens civic trust and resilience. In New South Wales, the Multicultural Strategic Plan 2021-25 highlights intercultural and interfaith partnerships as mechanisms for building social capital through local networks. These frameworks provide a heuristic for understanding HDR wellbeing not only as an institutional concern, but as a potential contribution to national social policy objectives.

Drawing these strands together, the paper argues that religious community support for HDR students represents a largely unexplored intersection between tertiary education and the social cohesion priority of governments. Graduate researchers, as a culturally and religiously diverse cohort, participate in civic networks—religious, linguistic, and community-based—that mirror the pluralism affirmed in state and federal policy. Their psychosocial support practices may therefore function as micro-sites of social cohesion, linking knowledge production with community wellbeing. Recognising this possibility challenges conventional boundaries around university responsibility and invites reconsideration of faith and spirituality as legitimate dimensions within HDR support frameworks.

The paper proposes a research strategy that moves beyond preliminary findings toward a multidimensional account of 'next practice' in graduate education that takes religious pluralism seriously. It explores the potential for universities to partner—ethically and inclusively—with community organisations that provide trusted networks of moral and emotional support. Such partnerships may advance both student wellbeing and public objectives for interfaith understanding and multicultural inclusion. At the same time, the paper acknowledges risks of institutional overreach or "mission creep," emphasising design principles that respect religious freedom, student autonomy, and the secular mandate of public universities.

By positioning faith-based psychosocial support as a lens connecting HDR wellbeing, diversity policy, and social cohesion, the paper offers a new conceptual and empirical pathway for understanding how graduate research education can contribute to Australia's multicultural future.

# Presentation 112

## Publication Policies for Chinese Doctoral Students: A Discourse Perspective

**Tong XIAO** The University of Hong Kong, **Yongyan LI**The University of Hong Kong

China overtook the U.S. in scientific output for the first time in 2017. More recently, it was revealed that China has also topped the world in the number of most influential articles. In this continuous drive toward producing more and better science, Chinese doctoral students contribute significantly, at a momentum propelled by the mandatory publication requirement that has long been installed for them at Chinese universities. In recent years, new policies have been introduced at the national level to redress a trend of "SCI Supremacy" to cultivate a healthy research assessment environment. Some elite universities have echoed the national policies by revoking mandatory doctoral publishing policies, priding themselves on modeling after the top universities in the world in their commitment to the quality, rather than the quantity, of research. However, most universities in China have rendered caution and chosen to hold to their existing doctoral publishing policies. A group of "Double First-Class" and other reputable universities in the Guangdong Province in China fall into this majority category.

While previous research on publishing policies tended to adopt a descriptive content analysis approach (Quan et al., 2023), our study draws upon the theoretical lens of critical discourse analysis to examine a multi-genre corpus of 176 policy documents gathered from 16 best universities located in Guangdong, China. With corpus-assisted analysis of a dataset that represents a full gamut of disciplines, this study aims to uncover the hidden ideologies, power relations, and values embedded in policy documents, especially how "ideal" doctoral students are constructed, how intertextual borrowings from national/global standards occur, and how forms of modality (obligation, permission etc.) are expressed.

The results reveal that university policy discourses construct the image of an "ideal" doctoral student through quantitative standards (e.g., number of publications) and deontic requirements (e.g., "should"). High-frequency measure words such as "piece" foreground publication quantity over quality, while recurrent collocations of "graduate students" and "doctoral students" with modal verbs "should," "is required," "must" position students as passive subjects obligated to fulfill university requirements. The dominant collocation chain "publication," "piece" and "journal hierarchy" naturalizes a "publish or perish" ideology, transforming research into countable commodities. Intertextual references to the "national regulation of academic degrees" further legitimate these requirements by embedding local regulations within authoritative state discourse, thereby obscuring power asymmetries.

Our study sheds new light on a deepening understanding of publication requirements in Guangdong universities to reveal the "publish or perish" culture characterizing the Chinese higher education sector and promote more reasonable and sustainable academic practices for doctoral students.

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# Presentation 113

## Funding female PhDs in South Africa and Australia: Analysis from an intersectional lens

**Jing Qi** RMIT University, **Maria Raciti** University of the Sunshine Coast, **Shireen Motala** University of Johannesburg

Funding precarity affects the wellbeing and retention of doctoral students, and is directly related to doctoral completion rates. How does intersectionality shape access to doctoral funding opportunities for female doctoral students? In this paper, we draw on Crenshaw's intersectionality theory to explore how funding in doctoral programs is influenced by the intersecting influences of gender race, socioeconomic background, and migration status.

In Australia, the Research Training Program (RTP) provides doctoral funding through tuition fee offsets and annual living stipends; however, these amounts fall below the national minimum wage, and high living costs further intensify financial pressures (CAPA, 2025). While top-up scholarships for high-achieving Indigenous students exist, they remain limited, unevenly distributed and not gendered. Australia's current funding structures fail to address intersectional disadvantage adequately, with Indigenous women, particularly those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, regional or remote areas and with caregiving responsibilities, facing compounding barriers to access and complete doctoral studies (Department of Education, 2024; UTS, 2025). Advocacy groups have called for policy reforms, including increasing stipends to living wage levels, incorporating equity criteria into funding assessments, and expanding targeted support (CAPA, 2025; ACGR, 2025).

In South Africa, the National Student Funding Scheme (NSFAS), was a major equity lever, which through means testing, provides free higher education to black and working class students. Using this nested equity approach, it has increased access to higher education, changing the demographic composition significantly. Completion rates, while showing some improvement, continue to be lower than expected, indicating that societal poverty continues to create precarity for these students, with dropout being a feature, highlighting the intersectional challenges. Calls for policy change include increasing the stipend to provide full cost of study, accommodation and living costs, and to address the needs of students just above the means tested threshold, referred to as the 'missing middle', and better administration of the NSFAS funding scheme.

We draw on two sets of data:

1) Policies about the funding structures for doctoral education in South Africa and Australia; and

2) Qualitative interviews with over 50 female doctoral students and supervisors in these two countries.

Our policy analysis specifically focuses on how the national research funding policies in South Africa and Australia reflect (or not) gender and other equity commitments. Findings from our interview analysis demonstrate female doctoral students experiences and perceptions of the transparency and fairness of funding allocation processes across the three countries, multiple barriers that female doctoral students face in accessing competitive research funding compared to their male peers, the cultural and disciplinary differences that affect women's access to doctoral funding, and the important role of mentorship and networks in helping female doctoral students secure research funding. This paper makes recommendations for effective institutional practices that may improve female doctoral students access to doctoral funding by considering these effect of intersectionality.

# Presentation 114

## Enhancing Global Capabilities in Doctoral Education: Insights from the UNSW Scientia PhD Scholarship Scheme

**Lucy Jones** UNSW Sydney, **Belinda Lee** UNSW Sydney, **Micah Azar** UNSW Sydney,
**Louise Salmon** UNSW Sydney

Between 2017 and 2022, UNSW launched the Scientia PhD Scholarship Scheme - an ambitious initiative designed to cultivate high-calibre researchers with a global outlook and the skills to pursue diverse career pathways. The program supported 405 doctoral candidates with a four-year scholarship to undertake innovative, high-impact research, alongside a tailored career and professional development framework.

A distinctive feature of the scheme was an annual support package of up to $10,000 per candidate, dedicated to fostering international research collaboration and professional development. Candidates were encouraged to reflect on the outcomes of these activities throughout their candidature, providing valuable insights into the program's impact.

With 80% of candidates now graduated and recruitment concluded, the program has reached a level of maturity that enables meaningful analysis of its internationalisation outcomes. Where data is available, we compare these outcomes to a 'non-Scientia' cohort-PhD candidates supported by different scholarships and funding mechanisms.

In terms of research outputs, the Scientia cohort demonstrated a notably higher level of global collaboration: 57.7% of their publications involved one or more international collaborators, compared to 45.5% in the non-Scientia group. The Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) of internationally collaborative publications was significantly higher for Scientia candidates (5.13) than for their counterparts (2.18). Although the Scientia group produced fewer total publications, the higher FWCI highlights the global reach and influence of their research.

The nature of collaboration also differed between cohorts. Among the top 100 collaborators for Scientia candidates, 66 were from international institutions across 26 countries. In contrast, the non-Scientia cohort had 36 international collaborators spanning 11 countries. These findings underscore the program's success in fostering broad, diverse global networks.

In addition, our data shows that 85% of Scientia candidates pursued tailored international experiences, while 15% focused solely on domestic opportunities. Among those who engaged internationally, the majority attended conferences and workshops, reflecting a strong emphasis on research dissemination and global academic networking. Notably, 17% undertook placements as Visiting PhD Scholars, representing a substantial investment in sustained international collaboration.

This marked difference in cohort experiences raises important questions about the role of structured support in enabling internationalisation. As we move into the next phase of analysis, we are examining the nature of emerging collaborations and the longer-term impact of international experiences on skill development, research outcomes, and career trajectories.

While many long-term outcomes are still unfolding, early data suggests that the Scientia PhD program has successfully fostered a global outlook among its graduates. By embedding internationalisation into the doctoral experience, the program offers a compelling model for enhancing research training and professional development in a global context.

# Presentation 115

## Doctoral education in a GenAI-enabled world: An interactive open roundtable discussion

**Brigid Clancy** University of Newcastle, **Kylie Shaw** University of Newcastle

The rapid evolution of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) since the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 has profoundly impacted academic research and doctoral education globally, and Australian universities face a critical juncture in determining how to integrate these technologies into research training. While we have seen good practice examples and guidelines for GenAI use in research training published from peak education bodies in Australia, the implications for doctoral education remain under-explored. There is an urgent need to critically examine how GenAI challenges traditional notions of research training, including original contribution and the development of independent research capabilities that underpin international research doctorate degree requirements.

This 90-minute session provides a structured space for the collective exploration of how GenAI impacts the development of research competencies and expectations of students' original contribution to research, as well as an opportunity to share experiences of effective GenAI support and training for doctoral students. This session is part of a larger exploratory mixed methods project investigating how generative AI is reshaping doctoral education through encouraging discourse on the topic and collecting data at open roundtable events using discussion-based digital surveys at conferences in the UK and Australia.

Facilitators will provide a brief introduction to the topics and existing research before guiding discussions in alignment with three key areas:

1. Development of knowledge, skills and core GenAI competencies in PhDs. Attendees to consider how the increasing capability and acceptability of GenAI in performing research tasks may affect development of core doctoral competencies in a GenAI-enabled research environment.

2. Expectations of student's original contribution to field in a GenAI-enabled research environment. Attendees to consider how GenAI may affect expectations of students original contribution to their field, and possible directions for defining and assessing originality in the future.

3. Effective GenAI support and Training for Doctoral Students. This is an opportunity for attendees to share what supervisors and institutions are doing to support doctoral candidates in appropriate use of GenAI in their candidature, including best practice, innovative training, guidelines and other support offerings.

Participants who provide informed consent will engage with digital data collection tools to document their perspectives throughout the session. This will include live polling options to facilitate a time-efficient snapshot of the perspectives of the roundtable participants, as well an opportunity for a dynamic feedback loop. Following the session, data captured through these tools will undergo GenAI-assisted analysis to identify key patterns and insights from the discussions. Synthesised findings from all roundtable events will be published to ensure broad dissemination and impact.

# Presentation 116

## Empowering Postgraduate Researchers: A Reflection on Using Tok Stori as an Indigenous Pedagogy in Postgraduate Education.

**Alice Napasu** Pacific Adventist University

Postgraduate education is often characterized by hierarchies in which supervisors and lecturers are portrayed as experts and research students as novices (Nwachukwu, 2023). Postgraduate education is a transformative process that cultivates knowledge, critical thinking, research identity and proficiency, and scholarly development (Ntho, 2025). However, many postgraduate students may not feel empowered because the pedagogies used in postgraduate education may hinder their growth and empowerment, especially for students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. This reflective paper examines the application of the Tok Stori approach as an alternative, indigenous, and decolonizing pedagogy in postgraduate education (Bolinga, 2023; Sanga et al., 2021).

Tok Stori is a non-formal, conversational approach grounded in the Melanesian values of Gutpela Sindaun, focusing on relationships, exchange, and community (Api & Shaw, 2018) Tok Stori creates an environment where research students and facilitators converse harmoniously and collegially.

Students from this class were of Melanesian origin and were tasked to tok stori about their understanding of the research design in the Melanesian context. Each participant used English to converse, but thought in their Melanesian minds. The Tok Stori was structured informally, including jokes and respectful dialogue, drawing on their lived experiences and knowledge. The local knowledge, wisdom, or experiences shared enhanced their understanding.

Using contextual knowledge, wisdom, and experiences reduced barriers that are created by the traditional lecture format (Sanga et al., 2021) as they own the learning and discussion. Furthermore, the tone and structure of the Tok Stori enhanced the research students' comfort in openly sharing without intimidation or fear. In such a space, a researcher's identity and proficiency are easily created.

Drawing on my experience as a non-expert facilitator, the Tok Stori approach seems effective because it draws on contextualised knowledge, wisdom, and experience, and uses a non-formal conversational structure. This paper argues that adopting indigenous pedagogies, such as Tok Stori, can enrich postgraduate research education for indigenous researchers by reducing hierarchical characteristics and promoting the empowerment of research students and scholarship.

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# Presentation 117

## A transformative doctoral pedagogy for sustainable futures

**Chris Riedy** University of Technology Sydney

The Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) was established in 1997 with a mission to create change towards sustainable futures. Our doctoral training program began the same year and had 88 graduates as of October 2025. The program leaders recognised as early as 2002 that doctoral researchers working across disciplines towards sustainability transformations would need additional pedagogical and peer support to achieve success. Our doctoral candidates aimed not only to make an original contribution to knowledge but to achieve real transformations towards sustainability in their chosen contexts and to build their own capacity to lead change in their future careers. This led to the articulation of three outcome spaces for doctoral research (Mitchell et al., 2015) and the emergence of an innovative doctoral pedagogy to support achievement across these outcome spaces.

The pedagogical approach centred transdisciplinarity and included an annual residential retreat to build the capability and connection of our community of scholars, peer support and accountability groups for students, and a series of voluntary learning modules on topics including knowledge co-production, futures thinking and transdisciplinary knowledge integration (Riedy et al., 2018). Over time, the learning modules evolved into a self-paced online Canvas site called the ISF Knowledge Forest where students and supervisors can access transdisciplinary learning as needed to support their doctoral journey.

The Institute is now embarking on the next stage in development of our doctoral pedagogy by broadening our focus to multiple future-oriented capabilities (Lewis et al., 2025). We draw on a framework developed by a transdisciplinary team of UTS colleagues, led by the UTS Transdisciplinary School. It identifies seven future-oriented capabilities: systems thinking and foresight; creativity and innovation; collaboration and integration of diverse perspectives; agency, change-making and leadership; ethical, sustainable and socially-responsible practice; self-awareness and reflexivity; and practical and technical know-how (Melvold et al. 2023).

This paper reports on the adaptation of our doctoral pedagogy to more consciously build all of these future-oriented capabilities and support our doctoral students to achieve sustainability transformations. It also draws on a survey of our alumni to explore how they are applying future-oriented capabilities after graduation. The framework and survey results pointed us towards a greater focus on ethics, leadership skills and reflexivity alongside our existing learning activities.

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# Presentation 118

## Supervising the Unseen: A PRISMA-Based Systematic Literature Review on Leveraging 4IR and 5IR for Inclusive Postgraduate Support of Students with Hidden and Learning Disabilities

**Cheryl Rielander** University of South Africa (UNISA), **Elriza Esterhuyzen** University of South Africa (UNISA)

Despite increasing awareness of inclusive education, many postgraduate students continue to underperform due to undiagnosed or undisclosed hidden disabilities, such as ADHD, dyslexia, anxiety, and other cognitive or mental health impairments. These hidden and/or learning disabilities often go unrecognized due to limited institutional awareness and inadequate supervisory training.

In South Africa, approximately 3.3 million people live with disabilities (Statistics South Africa, 2024). While globally, one in six individuals are affected (WHO, 2022). However, fear of stigmatization and discrimination frequently results in nondisclosure, perpetuating cycles of misunderstanding and exclusion in higher education (WHO, 2022).

This paper presents a PRISMA-based systematic literature review (SLR) to ensure a transparent and replicable process for identifying, screening, and evaluating interdisciplinary studies across education, psychology, and technology. The review further integrates the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) principle of realigning human-human relationships, emphasizing empathy, ethical leadership, and human-centric innovation as essential complements to technological solutions.

Findings highlight that AI-driven analytics can assist in detecting learning patterns and personalizing academic support. However, ethical, privacy, and emotional intelligence considerations remain critical for postgraduate supervisors., They are often the first point of contact for students navigating disclosure and support for hidden learning disabilities. Supervisors hold a position of trust and authority, and how they handle sensitive information, student disclosure, and support processes has direct implications for students' psychological safety and academic success. Maintaining ethical integrity means respecting confidentiality, avoiding coercion, and bias. It's the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that disclosure of a disability never leads to stigmatization or disadvantage.

The paper concludes with recommendations for supervisor training, ethical AI governance, and institutional frameworks that harmonise 4IR digital capabilities with 5IR human values to advance truly inclusive postgraduate education.

### Methodology

This paper applies a PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach to ensure methodological transparency, replicability, and rigor (Page, et al., 2021). The review covers literature reflecting the 4IR and 5IR technologies in higher education. Systematic literature searches are conducted across Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and institutional repositories using keyword combinations such as hidden disabilities, learning disabilities, supervision, artificial intelligence in education, inclusive learning technologies, 4IR and 5IR.

Inclusion criteria require literature to address either hidden or learning disabilities in a supervisory context, the application of 4IR/5IR technologies in supervision, or institutional inclusion strategies. Excluded are studies lacking empirical or conceptual depth or not aligned with higher education.

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# Presentation 119

## Gender and Equity Assessments for Graduate Research Policy Reviews

**Sam Spiers** La Trobe University

Under the Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020 universities in Victoria have a responsibility to consider, promote and demonstrate the necessary steps taken to achieve gender equality when developing public-facing policies, programs or services. Similar legislation is also in place in South Australia with the Gender Equity Bill 2022.

When developing or reviewing a policy, program or service that has a direct and significant impact on the public, Victorian universities are further required to undertake a gender impact assessment (GIA) as part of the development, or review, process. This is to establish he effect they may have on persons of different genders, and how they will be structured to meet different needs, address gender inequality, promote gender equality and, where possible, consider other intersectional factors that may lead to further disadvantage or discrimination.

For universities, public-facing generally means policies that have a direct impact on students, or in some contexts the wider community. Since the introduction of the Gender Equality Act 2020, Victorian universities need to provide a biennial report that identifies any policy, program or service that was the subject of an GIA assessment, and report on the actions taken to meet the needs of persons of different genders, address gender inequality and promote gender equality.

Graduate research training is a diverse space, and our policy frameworks that are designed to support its management endeavour to be both universally applicable and fair in providing equitable opportunity for all graduate researchers to access, and succeed, in their degrees. Our polices should take into consideration gender and the intersection of other aspects of a graduate researcher's identity or lived experience. Our policy frameworks also provide for the governance of research training to meet the HESF (2021) and legislative responsibilities of the university. In this presentation

I look at the process involved with, and outcomes from, conducting GIAs in the context of research training policy review at La Trobe University. In building on existing policy review practices to include more targeted consultation, comparative data analysis, and sector benchmarking, I'll discuss two examples from recent graduate research policy reviews in our admissions and candidature space and reflect on the GIA process to investigate the unintended legacies of policies and how they may impact La Trobe's diverse cohort of graduate researchers.

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*Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)*.

# Presentation 120

## Actioning the men: enhancing prevention efforts for gender-based harms in graduate research

**Robyn Barnacle** RMIT University, **Shelley Hewson-Munro** RMIT University, **Denise Cuthbert** RMIT University, **Sarah McCook** RMIT University, **Leul Sidelil** RMIT University

Sexual harassment of women identifying PhD students by male professors continues to make headlines. Despite efforts, gender inequality in Australian universities remains pernicious and entrenched. It is evident in the major career benchmarks of academics, such as grants and funding, publishing and citations, and leadership opportunities. It is also evident in rates of gender-based harm, which Australia's new National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (2025) has been established to address. Notably, the Code places a positive duty on universities to act proactively to enhance gender equality, diversity and inclusion and not just wait until victims of harm (bravely) step forward.

This presentation introduces a unique Australian-based initiative which does just this. RMIT University's Working Together with Men (WTWM) program engages senior male research leaders to advance change toward gender equality and harm prevention within research communities. Why leaders? Leaders are widely recognised as potential change agents and key to creating respectful research communities which manifest gender equality, diversity and inclusion (Cortis et al, 2021; Cuthbert et al, 2023). However, all too often those most impacted by harm are left to lead change. Engaging senior leaders who are male to step forward to co-lead change is essential for this work to succeed.

In this presentation, we outline the key features of the WTWM program and share preliminary research findings. Our focus is the action phase of the model in which leaders consider an idea that can be co-designed with others and gather other men for action. The model includes pitch presentations to an accountability panel, providing the opportunity for leaders to further develop their idea and strengthen their skills in listening to identifying women and considering lived experience and expertise. Our presentation will include examples of change initiatives with practical benefits for graduate researchers. We also draw on preliminary research findings based on interviews with participating leaders to examine the potential for programs like WTWM to contribute to institution-wide culture change and advance safe and more respectful graduate research training.

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# Presentation 121

## Gendered geographies of success: Reimagining Women's Doctoral Journeys across Kenya, South Africa, and Australia

**Wacango Kimani** University of Johannesburg.

This paper is part of an ongoing project that is examining the doctoral journeys of black, First Nation, and transcultural female doctoral students in Kenya, South Africa, and Australia. The paper examines how these women interrogate and conceptualise success within distinct yet interconnected higher-education contexts. The project uses a qualitative, multi-sited design and draws on in-depth interviews with participants from Kenya, South Africa, and Australia to explore how success is defined, enacted, and constrained. Grounded in feminist-decolonial frameworks, the analysis unfolds across three levels: individual trajectories, national contexts, and cross-national comparison. This layered methodology allows for attention to both micro-level narratives of experience and macro-level structures of academic inequality. Through iterative coding, reflexive memoing, and collective synthesis, the study surfaces the relational, emotional, and political dimensions of doctoral study that are often hidden by institutional metrics.

The findings reveal that definitions of doctoral success are profoundly shaped by sociocultural context. In Kenya, success is often tied to perseverance, family honour, and social contribution within resource-limited environments. In South Africa, success is experienced through survival and intellectual assertion in a historically racialised and inequitable academy. In Australia, success is constructed around autonomy and international recognition, yet tempered by the challenges of isolation and competitiveness. Across all sites, the doctoral journey emerges as a central process through which women negotiate identity, legitimacy, and belonging. The doctoral experience is not merely a demonstration of academic competence but a transformative act through which participants re-author themselves as scholars and knowledge producers.

These findings illuminate how doctoral education continues to reflect global hierarchies in which knowledge from the Global North is privileged while Southern perspectives remain marginalised. Female doctoral students, particularly those from Africa, experience what we term epistemic dissonance-a tension between inherited colonial academic conventions and their own relational, community-centred understandings of knowledge. Yet, their stories also reveal remarkable resilience and agency. Through mentoring, peer support networks, and reflexive practice, many participants cultivate spaces of solidarity and self-definition that sustain their academic and personal growth.

By synthesising insights across national boundaries, this study advances a conceptual model of gendered geographies of success that reframes doctoral achievement as relational, contextual, and culturally embedded. It calls for supervisory, institutional, and policy frameworks that recognise multiple pathways of scholarly becoming and that centre wellbeing, belonging, and epistemic justice as core quality indicators in doctoral education.

Thus, this paper argues that transforming graduate research for the future requires transforming how we understand success in the PhD. For black, First Nation and transcultural doctoral women students across Kenya, South Africa, and Australia, transformation begins when the academy acknowledges that mentoring, supervision, and relational engagement are not only intellectual processes but also deeply human and ethical acts of becoming.

# Presentation 122

## Future academic careers:
## Perspectives from doctoral students and supervisors

Liezel Massyn University of the Free State, South Africa, Kristina Areskoug Josefsson University West, Sweden,
Anna Karin Olsson University West, Sweden,.

The current labour market is confronted with disruptive changes in technology, geoeconomic fragmentation that creates, amongst others, economic uncertainty and demographic shifts (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2025), also referred to as VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous). This VUCA world had a major influence not only on the world of work but also affected individuals, to the extent that the term BANI (brittle, anxious, non-linear and incomprehensible) was coined to refer to events like COVID that did not only lead to changes in the external world but reflect the personal experience of individuals (Cascio, 2020) about, amongst others, careers.

The effect of the VUCA and BANI environment is also felt in higher education. These changes prompted higher education institutions to source more external funding and function more like corporations. This influenced the day-to-day activities of academics and what an academic career entails, to a focus currently on delivering outputs along with increasingly precarious working conditions (Oliveira et al. 2025). One of the purposes of doctoral education is to prepare doctoral students for a career in this VUCA and BANI environment.

In courses presented to doctoral students and supervisors respectively on thinking about their future careers, students and supervisors were requested to identify their goals for the next decade. This paper discusses the results for both the doctoral students and supervisors but also provides a comparative view on how the two groups view their future careers.

The research methodology used for this study was a qualitative research design, using data that was collected in the course from 20 doctoral students and 20 doctoral supervisors. Reflective thematic analysis was employed to identify themes relevant to future careers within and beyond academia.

Some of the findings indicate that doctoral students place emphasis on well-being and balancing work with personal goals like having a family and a realisation that they will have to consider alternative entrepreneurial activities. From a supervisor's perspective, the goals were more focused on an academic career and how to navigate the academic environment, with very few mentioning work-life balance or well-being.

The discussion and recommendations provide insight into the evolving needs of doctoral students, but also to the responsibilities of doctoral supervisors who must guide and mentor these candidates for their future careers shaped by uncertainties of a VUCA world and a BANI environment, and how the two different perspectives on careers can mutually enrich each other to promote more resilient and fulfilling career pathways.

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# Presentation 123

## Beyond the velvet bonnet: Where are all the PhDs going?

Chris Bilsland Macquarie University, Juliet Lum Macquarie University

Traditionally, the PhD was regarded as a training ground for academic careers, and PhD graduates have been perceived by some employers as less suitably equipped for professional non-academic employment. In some EU member countries, PhD candidates are considered as contracted employees, strengthening the association of a PhD with academic employment.

These perceptions are outdated and potentially unhelpful, as underscored by two trends. Firstly, across the world, there has been a steady rise in PhD completions alongside a reduction in traditional academic positions (Yang & Fumasoli, 2024; McCarthy & Wienk, 2019). Secondly, and more positively, industry reports show that the skills developed in higher degree research (HDR) candidature match those valued by employers, particularly in unpredictable, fast-changing industry and labour market landscapes (Tunstall, 2021). The Australian Government and industry associations, like others internationally, are increasingly advocating the need for universities to embed professional capability development into their HDR programs (Universities Australia/AGCR, 2024).

In 2025, Macquarie University Graduate Research Academy administered a survey to almost 5,000 PhD and Master of Research (MRes) alumni whose degree completions span the 15 years from 2009 to 2024. The survey aimed to identify career and employment journeys post-PhD/MRes, capture alumni reflections of their graduate research experience, and build alumni connections with current HDRs.

This presentation will briefly describe some of the challenges in developing and administering a PhD alumni survey of this kind, and will then focus on career-related sections of the survey: whether and where HDR graduates were employed in the months following graduation, the industries and roles they are now in, and the skills (they wish they had) developed during HDR candidature that they currently use. We outline how the findings will inform the ongoing implementation of Macquarie University Graduate Research Development Framework and Program, launched in 2024 to strengthen professional capability throughout graduate research degrees.

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# Presentation 124

Friday, 17 April
11:15am

Broughton & Ferguson

Supervision

## Rethinking Supervision in Africa in the context of Artificial Intelligence and emerging theories

**Bekithemba Dube** University of the Free State

In this presentation, we critique theories for supervision which have been used to supervise Masters and PhD. We begin by arguing that Africa need to develop model and theories of supervision that correlate with the lived realities of the local people while cognisant of the global trends where Artificial Intelligence has influenced practices and processes of Supervision.

The current model are Eurocentric in nature and have produced graduates which are a misfit in society, Based on the problem at hand, the study is located in transformative theory which argue for the need to ensure change takes places so that programs and qualification obtained speak to the dynamics faced by local people which one of them is the use AI.

The study uses mixed research approach where interviews and surveys are used to generate data from 200 PhD and Masters students based at the University of Technology in South Africa. The study found out that most Universities in Africa use Eurocentric blueprint to supervise students using rather outdated and less relevant theories to supervise students.

In light of the findings, we argue that revolutionarising supervision is inevitable, indispensible and urgent to ensure graduates are relevant and equipped for African problems through integration of AI which is shaping all spheres of life including supervision.

# Presentation 125

Friday, 17 April

Broughton & Ferguson

Supervision

## How has doctoral supervisory practice been transformed through the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Katrina McChesney** University of Waikato, New Zealand, **Liezel Frick** Stellenbosch University, **Nompilo Tshuma** Stellenbosch University, **James Burford** University of Warwick, **Harriet Richmond** University of Warwick, **Robyn Shreeve** University of Warwick

The COVID-19 pandemic demanded unprecedented changes in higher education, including a mass transition to distance learning in the context of emergency remote teaching (Neuwirth et al., 2021). For doctoral supervision, this often altered the traditional face-to-face apprenticeship model. While distance supervision is not new (Evans, 2008), the pandemic shaped doctoral supervision in important ways (Burford et al., 2024) - yet little research investigates to what extent distance-mediated supervision practices that emerged under pandemic conditions have continued to shape post-pandemic supervisory practices.

This presentation will share early findings of a research project capturing accounts of supervision from doctoral supervisors in the UK and South Africa. Governments in both these countries have taken strategic positions that doctoral education is key to innovation and economic growth in a competitive global knowledge economy. Widening participation (UK) and universal access (South Africa) considerations in both countries also reflect recognition that not everyone who enters higher education is a 'traditional' student or may be able to access higher education through traditional on-campus means. This makes it important to explore the extent to which doctoral supervisory practices in these countries enable participation of students in remote contexts or with differing accessibility needs.

In our project, through semi-structured interviews and a storyboarding task (Labacher et al., 2012), supervisors offered insights into their supervisory practices before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic and reflected on the extent to which their current practice is shaped by traces of pandemic times. The interviews allowed for rich understanding of individual supervisors' practices in a judgement-free environment, while the storyboarding task supported concrete encapsulation of practice and delineation of practices before, during, and after the pandemic to allow for comparison over time. Through reflexive thematic analysis of the interview transcripts and storyboards, we explore variations and commonalities in practice across institutions, fields, and the two focus countries. We also consider the discourses evident in supervisors' accounts in relation to expectations and norms for doctoral supervision. Finally, we consider implications of this data for supporting inclusive and effective doctoral supervision pedagogy in post-pandemic times.

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# Presentation 126

## Introducing the ACGR Researcher Development Framework

Dan Bendrups La Trobe University, Louise Sharpe University of Sydney

In global research training contexts, Researcher Development Frameworks (RDFs), such as the UK's widely adopted VITAE framework, serve to define the values, knowledge, and behaviours that are required to be an independent researcher in contemporary society. In Australia, there has historically been no national RDF, although many individual universities have developed their own models to guide approaches to research training in graduate research and researcher development in general. At the 2025 national meeting of the Australian Council for Graduate Research (ACGR), attendees agreed to work together to create a national RDF to guide the sector and articulate the skills and competencies that graduate researchers develop during their training and which are critical for our national workforce if we are to improve the societal, economic, and environmental challenges of our time.

The ACGR convened a working party consisting of academic and professional staff from 18 universities to develop a list of attributes that should be included in the RDF. The working party identified 22 existing university-specific RDFs and mapped the capabilities and skills that they articulated alongside AQF and NZQF learning outcomes, the VITAE framework, and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. The working group met on 8 occasions between April and October and used this mapping exercise to reach consensus on the capabilities that should be included in a national RDF. This work was presented to the ACGR Executive in October 2025, then shared with the wider ACGR membership for the first time in November, before the production of a final version.

The aim of this presentation is to now introduce the ACGR RDF to the graduate research and researcher development community more broadly. It describes the design process for the RDF, including the formation of the working group, the work undertaken to ensure alignment with other university mechanisms, and the operational principles and values that the working group established as the basis for the RDF's composition. The ACGR RDF exists to provide a reference point that will help:

(a) HDR candidates to develop a mindset of seeking continuous skill development as part of their professional and career identity;

(b) supervisors to support the development of researchers, not just the conduct of research;

(c) institutions to provide support for HDR candidates to develop relevant skills; and

(d) the sector to advocate for the importance of HDR programs and the researchers they produce to guide evidence-based policy and practice across all sectors of our community.

# Presentation 127

## Localising Graduate Research Education: A Researcher Development Framework for Aotearoa New Zealand

Dr Anaise Irvine Auckland University of Technology, Dr Roxane de Waegh Auckland University of Technology, Associate Professor Deborah Heke Unitec, Dr Hilda Port Auckland University of Technology, Dr Michelle Ladwig Williams Auckland University of Technology, Annalise Davidson Auckland University of Technology

Postgraduate research students face a dizzying learning curve as they attempt to build not only subject matter expertise, but also an array of skills in project management, communication, research governance, cultural competence, leadership, time management, and much more. As the research landscape becomes ever more multifaceted, the skillset required to be an excellent researcher grows in scope and complexity.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, our specific cultural and research contexts make the task of 'learning to be a researcher' unique compared to anywhere else in the world. For all research students in Aotearoa, and our many international students in particular, it can be challenging to identify how to develop the relevant skillset to be successful as a researcher in this part of the world.

This study sought to develop an Aotearoa-specific Researcher Development Framework (RDF) that articulates how postgraduate research students (and other researchers) can cultivate the skills and capabilities required to undertake high-quality research within Aotearoa New Zealand's unique context.

The methodology was underpinned by Indigenous values of reciprocity, relationships, and respect. The project design integrated principles from multiple research approaches: including talanoa, tauhi vā, Kaupapa Māori, and Western traditions. This approach foregrounded relational ethics and the centrality of culturally grounded knowledge practices in shaping research capability development.

Thirty participants - including academic researchers, postgraduate students, and research support professionals - were engaged through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. We asked them what skills, knowledge, and/or competencies they feel are required to conduct research in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our findings indicate that researchers in Aotearoa value authentic collaboration, characterised by long-term, trust-based relationships with research partners, communities, iwi, and other stakeholders. We found that the skills perceived as essential to perform high-quality research in Aotearoa were deeply relational: listening and humility emerged as essential attributes, alongside the capacity to formulate research questions that respond to community and societal needs rather than personal or disciplinary agendas.

Cultural competencies also emerged as being particularly important. Participants emphasised the need to understand Māori and Pacific values and ways of knowing, uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi, learn decolonising research practices, and ensure cultural safety for all involved in the research.

Drawing these findings together, we worked in collaboration with a Māori artist to co-create a culturally responsive visual framework to represent the interconnected domains of research capability in Aotearoa. The framework acknowledges Indigenous knowledge systems while remaining aligned with international standards of research excellence. This framework provides a pathway for postgraduate research students to develop competencies that support research that is robust, inclusive, Tiriti-led, collaborative, and impact-oriented.

This presentation will outline the framework's structure and content, and discuss its implications for reimagining and decolonising postgraduate researcher education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

# Presentation 128

## A Researcher Development and Education Framework for Open and Distance eLearning Programs in Asia

Juliet Aleta R. Villanueva University of the Philippines Open Univeristy, Shari Eunice San Pablo University of the Philippines Open Univeristy, Leo Mendel Rosario University of the Philippines Open Univeristy, Douglas Eacersall University of Southern Queensland

Open universities in Asia continue to be promising areas of growth for future-ready doctoral education in open and distance elearning programs (ODeL) and in response to feeder programs from residential campuses and distance education graduates seeking advanced studies.

What we expect is a diversity of minds and a range of skillsets as open universities continue to attract adult lifelong learners, working professionals, industry experts, early career and mature-age researchers. As such, we argue for a common frame through which we can guide the development and delivery of quality research courses and graduate student support in ODeL programs. The poster presents a Researcher Development and Education Framework for Open Universities in Asia to benefit both research students and academic staff towards learning alliance and community building to sustain healthy research relationships and in the spirit of ODeL (Alfonso, 2014).

The work is a product of a series of content validation through focused group discussions and collaborative reflections among stakeholders in a leading open university in Southeast Asia. The framework illustrates core values and elements to develop and strengthen research mindsets. For each element, skills and competencies have been identified to support self-regulation and monitoring of progress among graduate research distance education learners.

The framework is also foreseen to guide collaborative research teams and inform research supervision practices for researcher identity development. Through the framework, the study is meant to advocate for crafting research support mechanisms to ensure doctoral student success in reimagined doctoral education programs in Asia.

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# Presentation 129

## Next Practice in Indigenous HDR Supervision: Sharing Research Training Program Funding Across Universities to Strengthen Completions and Capability

Maria Raciti University of the Sunshine Coast, Bronwyn Fredericks The University of Queensland

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students demonstrate remarkable resilience in navigating postgraduate education, yet systemic barriers continue to constrain their success. Indigenous HDR enrolments remain disproportionately low, and completions lag behind those of non-Indigenous peers. A critical factor is limited access to Indigenous academic supervisors. Indigenous supervisors comprise just 1.1% of the university workforce and are distributed thinly across institutions, disciplines, and regions. For many students, culturally safe, discipline-specific supervision is simply unavailable within their home university.

Cross-institutional supervision offers a solution but is currently ad hoc, informal, and uncompensated. Indigenous supervisors contribute above their typical workloads, shouldering invisible cultural load without recognition in performance reviews, workload models, or promotion processes. This disincentivises participation and undermines both student outcomes and academic wellbeing.

This paper presents a Next Practice Model, which introduces Research Training Program (RTP) funding portability to enable formal, equitable cross-institutional Indigenous HDR supervision arrangements. Rather than relying on goodwill and unpaid labour, RTP funding would be pro-rated and shared between institutions, recognising supervisory contributions wherever they occur. The model reframes cultural load as legitimate academic labour, embedded in workload and promotion systems, and supported by national collaboration. Three interlocking recommendations operationalise this next practice:

1. RTP Portability Mechanism - Funding follows Indigenous HDR students to co-supervisors at other institutions where cultural, disciplinary, or methodological expertise resides.

2. Formalised Cost-Sharing Agreements - Standardised templates ensure clear roles, fair recognition, and proportional resourcing between home and host universities, with metrics such as completion rates and milestone achievements used for evaluation.

3. National Indigenous HDR Supervision Register - A centralised, opt-in database of Indigenous supervisors, governed by Indigenous academic leadership, prevents overcommitment, facilitates equitable distribution of supervision, and strengthens national capability.

The proposed model aligns directly with national policy directions, including the Universities Accord's focus on equity and Indigenous participation; the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy's goals to increase HDR completions; and Closing the Gap's targets for equitable higher education and workforce outcomes. Immediate benefits include improved HDR completions, enhanced access to culturally safe supervision, and formal recognition of Indigenous supervisory labour. Longer-term benefits include strengthened Indigenous research capacity, sustainable cross-institutional collaboration, and a scalable framework applicable to other underrepresented groups.

By shifting from current to next practice, the model transforms informal, inequitable supervision arrangements into structured, accountable, and nationally coordinated mechanisms. It moves the sector from cultural load to cultural recognition; from invisible labour to recognised contribution; and from individualised goodwill to systemic equity.

Without reform, inequities will persist. Indigenous students will continue to experience lower completions; Indigenous academics will remain overburdened; and the nation will lose vital Indigenous research talent. With reform, Australia has the opportunity to build a world-leading Indigenous research training system that is equitable, collaborative, and future-focused.

We argue that RTP portability is not just an administrative adjustment but a strategic investment in equity and excellence. It offers a practical roadmap for universities, government, and research organisations to implement a Next Practice Model that will benefit students, academics, and the nation's research future.

# Presentation 130

Friday, 17 April

The Vines

Supervision

## Partnering for Successful Supervision - the supervisee at the centre of the process

**Sarah Carr** University of Otago, **Jodyanne Kirkwood** University of Otago, **Tracie Leckie** University of Otago

While universities increasingly offer workshops on co-constructing supervision relationships and avoiding deficit models (Lee, 2008), institutional structures often undermine these aspirations. Categories like "international student" or "mature student" become proxies for assumed deficits rather than starting points for genuine partnership (Manathunga, 2014). The challenge isn't recognizing partnership as an ideal—it's making it work when supervisors hold evaluative power, institutions demand standardization, and students bring complex professional and personal identities to their research (Halse & Malfroy, 2010).

This paper examines how the University of Otago DBA programme has operationalized co-constructed supervision in ways that directly confront these tensions. Working with mature professionals who often hold senior positions in their fields, we've developed mechanisms for navigating the authority paradox: How can a supervisor be both collaborative partner and final arbiter? How can students with extensive professional expertise genuinely co-create knowledge expectations when the institution ultimately judges their work against academic standards they may not yet fully understand? (Boud & Lee, 2005)

We explicitly name these contradictions rather than assuming goodwill will resolve them. In the coursework component, students articulate their professional knowledge, research goals, and supervision preferences—while we transparently map non-negotiable academic requirements and the supervisor's role. This dual transparency creates space for authentic negotiation about what can be co-constructed: supervision rhythm, communication modes, how professional experience will inform methodology, and how to navigate moments when academic and professional logics conflict (Lee, 2008).

The model requires structural supports many institutions lack: protected time for relationship-building, third-party monitoring beyond the supervision dyad (Eley & Jennings, 2005), safety nets which allow students to challenge supervisory decisions without jeopardizing progression, and flexibility to accommodate non-standard timelines. Critically, it demands supervisors develop comfort with epistemological uncertainty—learning from students' professional expertise while maintaining academic standards.

We will share both successes and failures: moments when the model genuinely shifted power dynamics and enabled research that wouldn't have emerged from traditional supervision, and moments when institutional constraints, supervisor anxiety, or student precarity made true partnership impossible.

By examining where co-construction succeeds and fails in practice, and the resources and cultural shifts required, we will suggest how institutions can move beyond the rhetoric of partnership and well-meaning aspirational language, towards real models that acknowledge and embrace the genuine tensions in doctoral supervision (Halse, 2011).

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# Presentation 131

Friday, 17 April
1:00pm

The Gallery

Administering the Graduate Research Degree

## Reimagining HDR support: blending the benefits of a centralised structure with person-centred service at The University of Queensland

**Alison Pike** The University of Queensland

In the context of increasing complexity and expectations in graduate research training, The University of Queensland's Graduate Research School (UQGRS) has embarked on a comprehensive reform project to redesign its operating model for Higher Degree by Research administration and support. This presentation gives an overview of the rationale, design, and early implementation of the new structure that seeks to balance the operational strengths of a central program support unit with the relational benefits of a person-centred approach.

The reform project responds to longstanding challenges in service quality, stakeholder trust, and staff engagement, with internal reviews, staff surveys, and benchmarking data highlighting key issues related to inconsistent candidate experiences, fragmented communication, and lack of role clarity. Informed by these insights, the new model has introduced a flatter management structure, embedded service teams that align with the candidate journey, and a renewed focus on engagement, continuity, and empowerment.

By reframing HDR support as a collaborative, relationship-driven endeavour - rather than a transactional process - the UQGRS aims to enhance the experience of candidates, advisors, and its staff. The new model is designed to deliver a more coherent, responsive, and high-quality support system that is both efficient and authentically attuned to the needs of individuals navigating the HDR lifecycle. This presentation explores the challenges and opportunities of implementing the new model, including early indicators of cultural and operational change, and offers practical insights for institutions seeking to modernise HDR support while preserving the human connection that underpins research success.

# Presentation 132

## Strategic and Operational Excellence in Cotutelle and Global PhD Partnerships: Insights from RMIT University and The University of New South Wales.

Louise Ballard Co-author, Louise Salmon Co-author

RMIT University has cultivated a robust and mature framework for international research collaboration through Cotutelle and joint PhD programs over the past 15 years.

RMIT's well-established strategic framework for global research training partnerships contrasts with The University of New South Wales' emerging engagement focusing on Cotutelle agreements.

RMIT's well-established operational structure that supports bilateral and multilateral agreements, involving industry and government funding, reflecting broader trends in global research engagement.

RMIT's European presence has enabled Australian universities to access European Union (EU) funding mechanisms, such as the Aufrande program. The presentation will include a case study of this initiative, highlighting the governance, challenges, and lessons learned in managing cross-continental PhD programs. The staff connections that informed this presentation were established through participation in the Aufrande program.

RMIT's global engagement has rigorous quality assurance (QA) framework. Cotutelles are supported by biannual QA reporting, annual partnership reviews, and regular feedback mechanisms with candidates and supervisors. Ensuring continuous improvement is embedding best practice.

SGR plays a central governance role, conducting due diligence, managing international relations, and mitigating risk. Agreement negotiations are centrally coordinate drawing on legal, intellectual property, and academic expertise. While day-to-day candidature management is delegated to specialist teams, insights from operational trends are systematically fed back into the QA cycle.

Despite the maturity of the model, challenges persist—siloed digital systems and reliance on basic administrative tools despite high-value partnerships. This presentation will explore these operational realities and propose strategies for enhancing institutional readiness for global agreements.

UNSW has a small Global PhD program. Growth in this area of international collaboration is supported by leadership in the Graduate Research School (GRS) and the Division of Research and Enterprise.

Historically, GRS would establish Global PhD projects initiated by academics with existing collaborations at international universities. GRS is now working strategically alongside Faculties and the Office of Global Affairs on new joint PhD partnerships. New memoranda of understanding are in progress with institutions in India and Europe, with the goal for UNSW to increase enrolments while improving the way we operationalise these programs.

UNSW's positions in Aufrande co-funded by the EU represented the single biggest influx UNSW had managed. Aufrande has informed improvements in how GRS operationalises cotutelles, benefitting all Global PhDs at UNSW. Incorporating initiation and project approvals into the admission module in the GRS Information System, tracking the status of agreements, and working towards consolidating into a university-wide system.

Benefits of international engagement in HDR programs at UNSW are being explored through an analysis of the nature and frequency of engagement among candidates who have received funding specifically for this purpose. Global PhD candidates are in a unique position to capitalise on benefits such as international collaboration on publications, access to specialised resources, networking opportunities and enhanced career prospects. Building the Global PhD program supports these benefits and is crucial to the future of doctoral studies at UNSW.

# Presentation 133

## The role of international partnerships in transforming graduate research - a vision for the University of Fort Hare

Andrew Leitch University of Fort Hare, Nthabi Taole-Mjimba University of Fort Hare

Faced with growing demand from students and pressure from government to increase enrolments for Master's and doctoral studies, South African universities are exploring various ways in which to manage the challenge. One way, which in itself represents a significant opportunity for students, is to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with other institutions such that the responsibility for training graduate students in certain fields is shared across institutions, as are also the benefits that result from each graduating student. Student exchanges in general are common; the full potential of focused graduate exchanges has, however, not always been recognised and exploited.

While the definition of what constitutes higher education internationalisation continues to evolve and be debated[1], the University of Fort Hare's recently finalised Internationalisation and Partnerships Strategy intentionally sets out to guide the institution in terms of the partnerships it will seek to establish and nurture. Of significance is the intention to ensure that student exchanges form a key component of the partnership.

There are various ways in which graduate students can benefit from a partnership. These may be informal in nature, such as the opportunity to engage with visiting academics, or the opportunity to spend a short period of time at another institution. The more formal option is to define a collaborative degree (such as the co-badged degree or the joint degree) with another institution. While these have long been supported in many other countries, for South Africa it is only recent that a national framework supporting such collaborations has been in place[2].

Building on the complementary strengths of each participating institution, the benefits to be gained for graduate students participating in partnership exchanges are significant. These include the sharing of resources and facilities such as laboratories and specialised research equipment, or data (including historic archives), and the access to expertise that is either limited or not available at one institution.

Equally important and perhaps more profound are the benefits to be gained from exposure to different disciplinary approaches, intellectual traditions and worldviews, through engagement with students and academics from the partner university. This will enable the student to gain insight into the interconnectedness of one's topic of research with other cognate fields, as well as the ability to reflect critically, work independently, and arrive at conclusions that can be defended in the context of intellectual contestation in a foreign environment.

Making the correct choice of a collaborating institution for a partnership is vital, and should take into account, amongst other factors, the extent to which the vision, mission and values of both institutions are broadly aligned, and the extent to which the partnering institution provides an adequate support base for visiting students.

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# Presentation 134

## Experiments in building a research students' writing feedback community

**Abbe Winter** Queensland University of Technology, **Keri Billingham** Queensland University of Technology

We will present findings from our experiments in encouraging research students to build writing feedback communities. Using action research, underpinned by theories of Community of Practice (CoP) and professional identity, we build on our QPR 2024 presentation, reporting engagement in peer feedback was more successful in the face-to-face than online format of a 12-week writing program. Online students need to be convinced that participating in peer feedback has benefit, despite our presenting it as a critical component of becoming a research writer.

Writing is a social practice, and seeking feedback on in-progress drafts is an essential part of that practice. Our data shows that those who sought feedback see the benefit and want more, but the opportunity disappears once the workshop (or series of workshops) ends. Because institutional learning is traditionally assumed to be an individual practice, as researcher developers we need to support rethinking the nature of writing practice development to include peer engagement and feedback as an essential strategy to achieve their writing goals. We provide instruction and space to inform benefits of peer feedback, but unless they actively participate, they won't experience the benefits. So, we have been experimenting with trying some different strategies to encourage their engagement.

Using Wenger's (1998) CoP theory, we trialled live Zoom sessions for the asynchronous version of Wendy Belcher's 12-week journal writing workshop series offered by our university's graduate research school, to model and support effective CoP connections. CoP theory provides valuable insight underpinning our strategies to debunk, reframe, and challenge institutional and individual assumptions that learning is an individual practice, when in fact it is a social phenomenon/practice.

As Wenger (1998) notes, curriculum and programs at the organisational level are insufficient for transformative learning - they provide limited opportunities for what Wenger assumes as the four key interconnected parts to learning:

1)  Learning is a social practice;

2)  Learners need to value the knowledge they're learning;

3)  Needs active engagement and participation in the pursuit of learning; and

4)  The engagement needs to be meaningful for learning to occur (p. 4).

Our strategy has been to explicitly name and explain what a CoP is, to encourage buy-in for the critical discussion, content, and most importantly the feedback that can lead to the transforming. We have encouraged participants to engage in valuable peer feedback opportunities while helping them better understand article writing processes to successfully publish their research and envision themselves as academic researchers. Our data shows that it worked well for those who were able to attend the synchronous opportunities, but our next challenge will be reaching those who cannot attend live or in real time.

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# Presentation 135

## Beyond Writing Support: How Shut Up & Write! Embodies a Pedagogy of Belonging for Doctoral Wellbeing

**Narelle Lemon** Edith Cowan University

Doctoral education faces a wellbeing crisis. HDR candidates experience elevated rates of mental health challenges, isolation, and attrition, with writing-related anxiety and procrastination contributing significantly to distress. While universities increasingly invest in writing support services, these often focus on skill instruction rather than addressing the relational and motivational conditions necessary for sustained scholarly practice. This presentation introduces an alternative model: Shut Up & Write! (SUAW) reimagined through the lens of the Pedagogy of Belonging— a framework that positions community, connection, and wellbeing as prerequisites for, rather than byproducts of, research progress.

SUAW is a global, grassroots writing practice with over 100,000 participants across 60+ countries. The model is deceptively simple: writers gather at scheduled times (in-person or online), write silently in each other's presence using structured time blocks, and repeat regularly. However, beneath this simplicity lies sophisticated alignment with wellbeing science. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory, SUAW satisfies three fundamental psychological needs— autonomy (writers choose their projects), competence (structured time enables visible progress), and relatedness (community presence fulfills connection needs). Social facilitation research demonstrates that the mere co-presence of others performing the same task enhances individual performance, while implementation intention theory explains how scheduled sessions reduce procrastination by automating behavioral triggers.

The Pedagogy of Belonging framework extends beyond individual wellbeing mechanisms to theorize how SUAW creates transformative communities. This pedagogy recognizes belonging as both feeling ("I belong") and process ("we create belonging together"), unfolding through three dimensions: Engagement (purposeful, autonomous participation), Relationships (trust built through reciprocity and care), and Community (shared identity and collective wellbeing).

Within SUAW, this manifests through the "I-We-Us" movement: individual agency ("what helps me write?"), relational care ("how do we support each other?"), and collective culture ("who are we becoming together?").

Critically, SUAW develops wellbeing literacy—the capacity to understand, communicate, and enact wellbeing. Through regular check-ins, reflections on what supported focus, and normalized discussion of struggle, participants develop language that connects writing with wellbeing. This shifts the narrative from "writing as pressure" to "writing as practice of care."

Research on academic writing groups consistently demonstrates that community-based approaches reduce isolation, increase motivation, and strengthen scholarly identity. However, SUAW offers unique advantages: it requires no institutional infrastructure, is completely free and accessible, welcomes writers across all disciplines and career stages, and scales effortlessly from small local chapters to international networks. Its peer-led, non-hierarchical structure embodies the relational equity and cultural responsiveness increasingly recognized as essential for inclusive doctoral education.

This presentation will demonstrate how SUAW inverts traditional productivity-focused models by making community and belonging foundational, with writing progress emerging as natural consequence. Attendees will understand the theoretical foundations, examine evidence of impact on doctoral wellbeing, explore practical implementation strategies, and consider how SUAW complements existing institutional support services. By recognizing that belonging is not the reward for participation but the condition that makes participation possible, SUAW offers a scalable, evidence-based model for transforming doctoral writing culture from isolated struggle to collective flourishing.

# Presentation 136

## Research Supervision SIG Network

Research degree supervision has long been a topic of interest to the QPR community and seeking to improve supervision was the spur for the first QPR conference back in 1994.

We would like to establish a formal SIG involving a community of interested scholars and practitioners and invite you to join with us in that endeavour.

# Presentation 137

## They don't hold many academic conferences in Scunthorpe: the perils of the predatory conference

**Matthew Rofe** Adelaide University, **Alistair McCulloch**Adelaide University

Knowledge creation lies at the heart of a PhD, constituting not just an original contribution to one field, but coming to embody a research student's intellectual capital. Intellectual capital is a form of professional currency that can be invested through an astute dissemination strategy. Typically, the first element in a research student's investment strategy is a conference presentation. The ability to make wise investments offers potential career development benefits, whereas unwise investments can have negative consequences. However, identifying wise from unwise academic opportunities and making sensible and rational decisions about dissemination is increasingly obfuscated by predatory actors in the academic landscape.

Academic predation capitalises on increased pressure for research communication as a metric of individual success. Research students are especially vulnerable due to their relative inexperience. Predatory actors increasingly target research students making significant, grandiose promises that they fail to deliver. The consequences for a Graduate Researcher of being 'duped' are not merely financial but can also be reputational. The identification of predatory publishers has been well documented, the rise of predatory conferences less-so. (Grudniewicz, et al. 2019)

Predatory conferences typically exhibit characteristics such as a lack of peer review, inflated fees, misleading claims about keynote speakers or indexing, and inadequate opportunities for genuine academic engagement. (IAP 2020; TEQSA 2024) As conferences are, typically, the initial communication engagement undertaken by PhD students, equipping them with the skills to decern reputable from disreputable/predatory conferences is essential.

This paper addresses this issue, reviewing the developing literature on predatory conferences, and considering its implications for doctoral education with particular attention on how Australian universities are responding to this disturbing phenomenon. In doing so, the paper makes recommendations to those involved in doctoral education to better support students in navigating the predatory conference landscape, advocating for a more informed, critical, and ethically grounded approach to doctoral dissemination, one that protects emerging scholars while preserving the integrity of academic scholarship.

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# POSTER PRESENTATIONS

## Poster Presentation

📅 15-17 April     📐 Concourse     📊 Poster

### The Politics of Artful Inquiry: spaces for empowerment

**Geof Hill** The Investigative Practitioner

Amidst the interplay between the science vs art debate and the paradigm wars we have witnessed emergence of artful inquiry - the use of art forms for both inquiry and dissemination of inquiry.

As with anything new, artful inquiry has had both struggles and achievements. The trajectory invites a political lens to explore the ways in which a methodology developed and became popular. Most importantly, a political lens helps to illuminate a threshold element of artful inquiry, that it gives voice to the inquirer.

The book The Politics of Artful Inquiry: spaces for empowerment explores artful inquiry associating it with its emergence in the paradigm wars and its, an inquiry process emerging from arts inspired thinking within qualitative inquiry. It addresses the complex interplay of politics and ethics associated with artful inquiry and provides a forward-looking perspective on the future challenges and opportunities in the field. The book is poised to serve as an essential resource for both seasoned researchers and newcomers to the discipline, highlighting the transformative potential of artful inquiry across all disciplines.

# Poster Presentation

## #Academic.Fail Pedagogical Tools for Research Success

**Issiah Burckhardt-Bedeau** Deakin University/Genius.Tools

Arguably, the popular academic culture of concealing failures has created an environment where setbacks are hidden, this can lead to missed learning opportunities. This complementary poster to the Academic.Fail philosophy conference paper presentation illustrates an eco-system of four pedagogical implementations. These four modern tools are designed to bring greater academic satisfaction to graduate researchers and their advisers.

Firstly, the Academic.Fail community events aim to provide a relaxed setting for sharing experiences and insights on academic failures. Secondly, Golden Poopie, a voice-enabled GenAI Chatbot, offers a confidential space for expressive dialogue. Thirdly, a Blog.Academic.Fail serves as the community science blog for distributing anonymised anecdotes and lessons from academic failures. Finally, the empirically grounded Steps & Adders Board Game offers a fun and potentially shockingly informative - interactive platform for graduate researchers learning to avoid pitfalls such as repeating others mistakes by circumventing setbacks across the luck-based gameboard together with their graduate research advisors. Roll the dice!

Grounded in theories of 'anti-fragility', 'emotional processing' and 'liberation education', the Academic.Fail pedagogical toolset presented in this poster aims to cultivate resilience, reduce stress, and improve psychological health and academic attainment where rigorous privacy protocols ensure a safe and trustworthy space for growth, fostering a compellingly playful culture of openness and learning from the gold mine of failure in academia.

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# Poster Presentation

## Facilitating institutional knowledge and belonging in commencing HDR candidates

**Barbra Zupan** CQUniversity, **Susan Kinnear** CQUniversity

Higher degree by research (HDR) cohorts increasingly include older learners, studying part-time with limited on-campus requirements. Many of these learners return to study after years away from academia and are simultaneously engaged in full-time employment and/or carry additional responsibilities such as caregiving. These evolving learning profiles highlight the need to adapt support structures to ensure all HDR learners feel a sense of belonging.

Belonging is an essential component of inclusion and has been shown to impact leaners' wellbeing and their academic success (Crawford et al., 2024). For HDR candidates engaging in academia while simultaneously balancing a range of competing responsibilities, institutions need to facilitate the process of finding and interpreting information in ways that reduce cognitive load, but most importantly, enable them to feel supported and an integrally part of the research community. In doing so, institutions facilitate confidence and empower HDR candidates to navigate their studies with clarity and self-assurance, which ultimately supports candidates' wellbeing and success. Providing effective tools and strategies at the outset of a degree has been shown to reduce anxiety and attrition in adult learners (Macdonald, 2018).

To support our HDR cohort profile, CQUniversity implemented a self-paced, digital induction module in July 2024 aimed at enhancing our HDR candidates' self-efficacy and sense of belonging. The module aims to build institutional knowledge, clarify degree requirements, support wellness management and candidate-supervisor relationships, and provide key information related to research principles and expectations. Processes to increase engagement and support timely completion of interim milestones, which ultimately supports on-time degree completion, were simultaneously implemented.

This presentation will provide an overview of these learning resources and processes and our flexible and responsive approach to ensure the module continues to meet candidates' needs. Candidates' feedback about their experience in engaging with these resources will also be shared. To date, 210 (93%) of our 225 commencing HDR candidates have provided feedback on this induction module. Average satisfaction ratings for eight statements related to the module's aims and content range from 4.16 to 4.41 of 5 (overall mean=4.27). In open feedback, candidates speak positively of the module's structure and content in supporting their understanding of what is required of their degree and building confidence but also provide suggestions for improving the user experience.

# Poster Presentation

## A Researcher Development and Education Framework for Open and Distance eLearning Programs in Asia

**Juliet Aleta R. Villanueva** University of the Philippines Open Univeristy, **Shari Eunice San Pablo**
University of the Philippines Open Univeristy, **Leo Mendel Rosario** University of the Philippines Open Univeristy,
**Douglas Eacersall** University of Southern Queensland

Open universities in Asia continue to be promising areas of growth for future-ready doctoral education in open and distance elearning programs (ODeL) and in response to feeder programs from residential campuses and distance education graduates seeking advanced studies.

What we expect is a diversity of minds and a range of skillsets as open universities continue to attract adult lifelong learners, working professionals, industry experts, early career and mature-age researchers. As such, we argue for a common frame through which we can guide the development and delivery of quality research courses and graduate student support in ODeL programs. The poster presents a Researcher Development and Education Framework for Open Universities in Asia to benefit both research students and academic staff towards learning alliance and community building to sustain healthy research relationships and in the spirit of ODeL (Alfonso, 2014).

The work is a product of a series of content validation through focused group discussions and collaborative reflections among stakeholders in a leading open university in Southeast Asia. The framework illustrates core values and elements to develop and strengthen research mindsets. For each element, skills and competencies have been identified to support self-regulation and monitoring of progress among graduate research distance education learners.

The framework is also foreseen to guide collaborative research teams and inform research supervision practices for researcher identity development. Through the framework, the study is meant to advocate for crafting research support mechanisms to ensure doctoral student success in reimagined doctoral education programs in Asia.

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# Poster Presentation

## A scoping review of postgraduate students academic support needs during the research writing process

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This paper (or, poster presentation) is based on a scoping review of literature about students experiences of research writing during postgraduate studies. The aim of the review is to understand students perspectives of their research writing difficulties and their academic support needs during the research writing process. The research is of an exploratory nature and forms part of a work-in-progress concerning an innovation in a specific practice context. Outcomes of the research will inform a student academic support model that is inclusive of the student voice.

The rationale for this research is based on views of postgraduate students who have found the research writing process daunting and confusing, especially when the process is experienced as isolatory and unaccompanied by explicit writing instruction and feedback about research proposal and thesis writing. This constitutes the research problem being studied for this paper as well.

Explicit writing instruction and feedback are usually provided in writing workshops and seminars, or through programme-specific writing resources, writing feedback, or supervisory coaching. There is also evidence that students tend to navigate the postgraduate learning process more successfully when they have a sense of connectedness to course, department, supervisor and peers. However, there appears to be a disconnectedness between students sense of belonging, on the one hand, and their genre knowledge and writing process experiences on the other hand. These can be mitigated by means of academic support that is based on what students themselves have expressed as needs, particularly with regard to research writing processes that form an integral part of their scholarly activities as postgraduate students.

An intended consequence of this research is that the process of research writing supervision can become more synergistic and attuned to the developmental needs students have at different relational nexus points that are described in the paper. The outcomes of this research may be of interest to higher education institutions that have developed Student Success Frameworks to strategically guide their support for ensuring student success.

# Notes

# QPR

QUALITY IN
POSTGRADUATE
RESEARCH