

The Research Room

November 2025

Tips of the month

Here are some tips and tricks you can use to make your research experience at VUW much more productive and enjoyable

Writing Together: Turning isolation into motivation

It might sound simple, but having someone to write alongside—even virtually—can make a big difference. Knowing someone else is showing up and getting words down can help you stay accountable, share progress, and push through tough writing days. That little bit of peer pressure, knowing someone else is showing up and getting words down, can be just the nudge you need to keep going. Plus, it makes the process feel less isolating and a lot more encouraging. For more insights into how peer support helps students overcome the challenges of thesis writing, check out [this article](#).

Dr William Eulath Vidal, FGR, Victoria University of Wellington

Share your story

When utilized effectively, stories can be powerful tools to motivate and change minds. If you need an extra dose of motivation, this story should help you out

Why writing bootcamps work: Accountability, connection, and joy in progress—William

Writing can often feel like a lonely mountain to climb—just you, your thoughts, and a blinking cursor. But here's the thing: when you bring people together with a shared goal, something changes. That's where writing bootcamps come in. Writing bootcamps—focused sessions where participants gather to write—turn that solitary struggle into a shared experience. There's something powerful about the collective energy in the room; it fuels individual progress, making it surprisingly easy to get things done when surrounded by others doing the same.

The Faculty of Graduate Research has been running two types of bootcamps: one-day sessions

open to any research student working on a writing project, and three-day bootcamps designed for PhD students nearing submission. They've been such a rewarding experience. After every session, we run a quick survey—and the feedback has been consistently positive. That, combined with the strong interest we're seeing from students, shows that these sessions are delivering real value.

"Thank you very much...for providing this platform and opportunity. If there are such activities again next time, I will continue to sign up and participate"

Being a research student can feel pretty isolating at times. It is easy to get caught up in your own work and feel like you are going it alone—and

that may lead to stress, anxiety, and a serious dip in productivity. That is why it's essential to create opportunities for connection. Bootcamps help with that! They offer a supportive environment that reminds students they are not alone—and that sense of community can make a real difference in both how they feel and how they work.

So, how do these bootcamps actually work? Before jumping in, participants are encouraged to prepare a writing plan using a handy template we provide. It is simple, but surprisingly effective—it helps you set clear goals and figure out exactly what you want to focus on during the session. Instead of spending time wondering where to start, you arrive with a roadmap. That means less stress, more focus, and way better progress. It's all about setting yourself up for success from the get-go!

During the bootcamp, we keep things moving with a modified version of the Pomodoro technique—writing in short, focused bursts with timed breaks in between. We use the venue's projectors to display a big countdown timer on the screen, which adds just the right amount of urgency to help everyone dive in quickly. At the same time, the breaks offer a chance to recharge and prevent burnout. Sounds simple, right? But it really works. People often say they get way more done than they expected—and feel better doing it!

"Having scheduled times for writing and breaks is an excellent strategy for sustaining productivity"

At least once a day, we throw everyone's progress up on a big screen—not to pressure anyone, but to check in and celebrate wins. When someone hits their word count goal, it's not just a personal victory—it becomes a shared celebration. There's something really motivating about seeing your progress alongside others and cheering each other on.

And during the three-day bootcamps, we take it up a notch. Every time someone reaches a goal, they earned a little something—like colour-coded LEGO blocks. It's not really about the block itself (it could be anything); it's the recognition that counts. As a facilitator, I've been amazed at how this simple gesture can boost motivation and build a real sense of achievement.

"I really enjoyed the blocks and...progress sheet! It was so nice for once to be held accountable by someone else and not just to myself"

A key message in our bootcamps is simple but powerful: just write. The task is to get words down, whether you're creating new content or building on existing ideas, without worrying about editing or proofreading. This helps writers let go of perfectionism and focus on flow. Once the core idea is captured, refining it later becomes much easier.

There's a quiet but energizing vibe in the room when everyone is focused. It's not competitive—it's collaborative. You're not just writing; you're part of a collective momentum that helps you stay focused, push through blocks, and actually enjoy the process.

Our bootcamps aren't just about writing time—they're also about connection. During the breaks, writers are encouraged to share tips, celebrate wins, vent about challenges, share their writing to give and receive feedback, and simply connect. These interactions can lead to unexpected insights and useful information that can improve your writing process.

"Thanks for organising the bootcamp! It was a really good opportunity to do some focused writing and also to make new connections"

The role of the facilitator in a writing bootcamp is key. It's not just about keeping time—it's about creating a space where people feel supported and ready to push their boundaries. To keep momentum going, quick check-ins and mini sessions with writing hacks, tips, tricks, and bursts of motivation really help. At its best, facilitation turns writing from a chore into a shared adventure. The presence of a facilitator who is a former PhD, passionate about student success, and deeply familiar with the research journey has proven to be effective.

"[The facilitator's] experience coaching and mentoring student for success was very refreshing"

"I will always remember those short tips we received during the sessions and will definitely remember them while writing my thesis"

And yes—writing can actually be fun! Especially during our three-day bootcamps, we love to mix things up with light-hearted sessions that give everyone a chance to relax and recharge. Sometimes it's someone playing an instrument, singing a song, leading a stretching break, or even a surprise Zumba session! It's all about

helping people relax and enjoy the process, taking the pressure off and making the whole experience way more inviting. All these elements should help writers enjoy themselves, be more likely to stay motivated, keep going, and actually look forward to the next writing sprint.

"Had a fantastic time, wrote more than 5k words (which was my goal) and really enjoyed the stretching breaks!"

One of the most rewarding parts of facilitating bootcamps is seeing students arrive unsure, and leave feeling accomplished. Seeing someone light

up when they realize how much they've written—or how close they are to finishing a project—is genuinely fulfilling.

"I leave inspired, connected, supported, and with a bunch of progress"

But it's not just about hitting word counts. It's about creating a space where writing feels possible and even enjoyable. With others beside you, the words flow, and the process feels lighter.

Dr William Eulath Vidal, FGR, Victoria University of Wellington

Useful resources

Explore our list of research-related links that will help you throughout your research studies

[Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model](#)

It's a widely used framework that helps people understand their conflict style and adjust it to suit different situations—leading to better communication and stronger relationships.

Events happening soon

Looking for other events happening at the University and beyond? We go over some interesting events happening worldwide

Opportunities from other institutions

Organizer	Event	Date and Time	Register
Ako. Aotearoa	Legacy and the uncomfortable truths of learning (Online)	05 Nov, 12:30–13:10 NZST	Here
Statistics Solutions	Quantitative analysis (Online)	07 Nov, 07:00 NZST	Here
	Qualitative analysis (Online)	14 Nov, 07:00 NZST	Here
	Beyond the basics: A practical guide to data analysis (Online)	21 Nov, 07:00 NZST	Here
Working Voices	Emotional Intelligence (Online)	05 Nov, 11:00 (GMT)	Here
	Assertiveness (Online)	12 Nov, 10:00 (GMT)	Here
	Critical Thinking (Online)	12 Nov, 14:00 (GMT)	Here
	Difficult conversations (Online)	12 Nov, 14:00 (GMT)	Here
	Presentation Skills (Online)	14 Nov, 14:00 (ET)	Here
Zenspeak Public Speaking Center	Overcome your fear of public speaking (Online)	Different date and time options	Here
Skillsme Academy UK	How to turn your presentations from boring to brilliant (Online)	Different date and time options	Here
Ideas on stage UK	How to present with confidence and impact (Online)	06 Nov, 05:00 NZST	Here

*By listing these events we are not endorsing any organisations but rather compiling and sharing a list of resources that may be helpful.

Happening here: Events at our university

Organizer	Event	Date and Time	Register
Student Learning	Monday morning writes (<i>In person</i>)	03 Nov, 09:00–10:30 NZST	Here
	Get writing done (<i>In person</i>)	17 Nov, 24 Nov, 01 Dec, 08 Dec, 09:00–11:00 NZST	Here
	Academic writing, paraphrasing and summarising (<i>In person</i>)	18 Nov, 14:10–15:00 NZST	Here
	Time management and managing research timelines (<i>In person</i>)	25 Nov, 14:10–15:00 NZST	Here

FGR

Faculty of Graduate Research
Te Here Tāura Rangahau

FGR works to ensure that your experience as a thesis student is a positive one. For more information, visit our [website](#)

Contact

Postgraduate Research Student Advisers: FGR-postgrads@vuw.ac.nz

- Enrolling in your doctoral or master's programme.
- Candidature management changes. Online forms for thesis candidature changes can be found [here](#).

Thesis Examinations: FGR-Exams@vuw.ac.nz

- Submission or examination of theses.

Doctoral Admissions and Scholarships: pg-research@vuw.ac.nz:

- Doctoral applications or the doctoral application process
- Scholarships

Learning and Development: william.eulatthvidal@vuw.ac.nz