

# RHD DEVELOPMENT PRE-CONFIRMATION PROGRAM

Becoming a research student involves developing strong skills in a range of areas, such as critical use of literature, clear written communication and confident oral presentation. This program is designed to support you in building these skills in the months leading up to confirmation.

All new research students are strongly encouraged to participate in this program of workshops and come to individual RHD Consultations to discuss academic development and receive personalised advice.

## WHICH WORKSHOPS SHOULD I ATTEND?

Each workshop is delivered four times, once for each discipline group (see below). We will use materials relevant for each discipline group, although many underlying principles will be very similar. This means that if you are unable to attend the workshops for your discipline, you will still benefit from coming on a different day. Once you have joined a group, you should continue to attend future workshops on that day. This allows a strong group dynamic to develop, offering social support as well as academic information.

## WORKSHOP DISCIPLINE GROUPS

The workshops are designed for broad discipline groups, because it is useful to discuss research issues with students who approach their research in a similar way. For example, research in Politics probably has more in common with the research processes in Sociology than in Physics. However, each discipline can incorporate a wide range of approaches, so think about your research and choose the group that you think will be the best for you. If you cannot attend the 'best' group, do not worry, just come to a different one. Many of the principles will be similar, and sometimes students benefit from exposure to different attitudes and approaches. To talk to someone about which group might suit you best, email us at [rhd-development@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:rhd-development@newcastle.edu.au).

Discipline group	Social Sciences	Arts and Humanities	Applied Sciences	Hard Sciences
Example disciplines	Politics Geography Business	Education Literature Media Studies	Engineering Health Sciences Applied Physics	Chemistry Geology Physics
Typical approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative or qualitative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative or qualitative</li> <li>Argument-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative or qualitative</li> <li>Directly applied</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative</li> <li>Lab work</li> <li>Field work</li> </ul>

## WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

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### 1. INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

- **Introduction to research study**
- **Reading and summarising the literature**
- **Synthesising the literature**

These initial workshops explore the concept of 'being a research student' and how to get started. We will discuss what is expected and share ideas about how to cope. We will also share strategies for effective reading and note taking, as well as how to start writing about your growing body of literature.

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### 2. WRITING CRITICALLY

- **Start writing, keep writing**
- **Academic critical voice**
- **Writing focused paragraphs**
- **Writing clear sentences**

It is important to write as soon as possible, rather than waiting until the task seems impossibly daunting. To write effectively, you will need to develop strong technical ability. We will look at different styles, tones and techniques to help you gain confidence and build skills.

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### 3. CONFIRMATION PAPER

- **Confirmation structure**
- **Your literature review**
- **Your research plan**

These workshops will show you what is involved in confirmation, and offer ideas about how you can meet the requirements. We will look at different structures and styles of literature reviews so you can decide how to write yours.

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### 4. PRESENTING AT CONFIRMATION

- **Planning your presentation**
- **Practising your presentation**

The final two workshops assist you in preparing and delivering your confirmation presentation. We will offer advice about presenting effectively, in terms of PowerPoint slides and also your speech and body language. You can then practice your presentation and receive valuable feedback.

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## REGISTERING FOR DISCIPLINE GROUP WORKSHOPS

Sign up for a series of workshops by emailing [rhd-development@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:rhd-development@newcastle.edu.au). You will need to state which discipline group you would like to become part of (see schedule). **IMPORTANT:** Sign up for workshops as early as possible. Registrations close a week ahead of each block of workshops; for example if the series begins on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March, registrations close on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March. If fewer than five students register for your session, you will be asked to choose another.

## INDIVIDUAL RHD CONSULTATIONS

In RHD Consultations, we can advise you about strategies and techniques for reading and writing effectively as well as preparing for the confirmation process. Please note that we do not advise about the content of your research – you need to talk to your supervisor(s) about that.

Availability of RHD Consultations is limited. As a guide, we suggest that students come to three consultations per year. All RHD Consultations are with either Erika Spray or Jaime Hunt. We recommend that you try to see the same person each time, so that we can get to know you. (Please register for consultations by using the Registration System at <http://webapps.newcastle.edu.au/rego>. See the final page of this document for step-by-step instructions.)

# PRE-CONFIRMATION WORKSHOP PROGRAM 2012

Try to attend the group most suitable for your research. When you have joined a group, continue with that time each week. All workshops are in W301A or EF122, see below.

Social Sciences	Arts and Humanities	Applied Sciences	Hard Sciences
Monday 2-4pm W301A	Tuesday 9-11am W301A	Wednesday 12-2pm W301A	Thursday 10am-12pm EF122

## 1. INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Introduction to research study	12 March	13 March	14 March	15 March
Reading and summarising	19 March	20 March	21 March	22 March
Synthesising the literature	26 March	27 March	28 March	29 March

## 2. WRITING CRITICALLY

Start writing, keep writing	2 April	3 April	4 April	5 April
Academic critical voice	16 April	17 April	18 April	19 April
Writing focused paragraphs	23 April	24 April	Anzac day No workshop	26 April
Writing clear sentences	30 April	1 May	2 May	3 May

## 3. CONFIRMATION PAPER

Confirmation structure	23 July	24 July	25 July	26 July
Your literature review	30 July	31 July	1 August	2 August
Your research plan	6 August	7 August	8 August	9 August

## 4. PRESENTING AT CONFIRMATION

Planning your presentation	10 September	11 September	12 September	13 September
Practising your presentation	17 September	18 September	19 September	20 September

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## USING THE REGISTRATION SYSTEM TO BOOK RHD CONSULTATIONS

All research students are encouraged to make use of this free service. We recommend that you see us about three times in your first year of candidature, to discuss your academic skills development.

**You may come to RHD Consultations even if you are unable to come to the workshops.**

1. From the University home page, click [Quick Links](#) (at the top right) and select [Online Services](#).
2. Select [Registration System](#) and log in with your University username and password.
3. On the left you will see a menu, select [Other Registrations](#).

Find the section for Learning Development Activities, and look for 'RHD Consultations'.

4. Click on the [Register](#) link on the right of the page next to 'RHD Consultations'.

You will see a list of consultation appointments, with dates and times.

5. Find a suitable date and time which is showing as **Available**, then click [Book](#).

**Available** will then change to **Full**. This means you have booked the appointment and a confirmation e-mail will be sent to you.

You must **cancel appointments you do not need**, so that other students can use them. We have a very limited number of appointments and we want to help as many people as possible. To cancel, follow steps 1-3 above, select [Change](#) then use the [Remove](#) link next to your appointment. When you click [Remove](#), the system will ask you to confirm your request to unregister. If you wish to unregister, click [Yes, unregister me](#). The appointment will immediately become available for another student.

## ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)

This Pre-confirmation Workshop Program is **not** an ESL program. We discuss reading and writing, but we do not teach grammar and vocabulary. Domestic and international students are equally encouraged to attend, and the workshops will target the needs of the whole group.

Outside of this workshop program, we also offer a small amount of ESL support for research students. Hours may change throughout the year, so please contact [rhd-development@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:rhd-development@newcastle.edu.au) to check what is currently available. Also, check Learning Development on Blackboard to see what ESL support is being offered for all students – there are often free workshops you can attend.

## RECOMMENDED READING (Available from the Library)

Davies, M. (2007). *Doing a Successful Research Project*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Swales, J., & Feak, C. (2000). *English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Wellington, J., Bathmaker, A., Hunt, C., McCulloch, G., & Sikes, P. (2005). *Succeeding with your Doctorate*. London: Sage Publications.

Williams, J., & Colomb, G. (2010). *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. New York: Pearson Longman.