学术研究方法指导手册

The Postgraduate Research Handbook

(Second Edition)

研究生科研手册

Gina Wisker

上海外语教育出版社
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出版说明

外教社秉承致力学术创新、促进学术繁荣的宗旨，以服务教学科研、人才培养、文化传承与传播为己任，以高品质的学术出版来引领外语学科建设与发展，为我国外语教学和科研提供了丰富的学术资源。

在外语科研方面，外教社曾先后推出《教育与社科研究入门指南》《小型社科项目研究方法指南》等参考用书，其中《MLA格式指南及学术出版准则》（第二版）（第三版）和《MLA科研论文写作规范》（第五版）（第七版）备受广大读者欢迎，成为外语界论文作者的必备工具书。

为进一步解决国内硕士、博士研究生在撰写科研论文和掌握科研方法方面所面临的各种问题和困惑，外教社推出“学术研究方法指导手册”。本套手册融理论和实践为一体，阐释系统、深入，既囊括了对于论文撰写结构与步骤上所有要素的介绍和分析，又涉及有关项目调研、选题论证、时间管理、成果出版、自我评价等方法上的科学指导，为论文撰写规范化提供指南，并对培养研究能力、开辟研究领域和拓展研究思路给予启示。

本套手册对于广大硕士、博士研究生的论文撰写有很好的指导作用，尤其是对人文学科和社会科学领域的硕士、博士研究生的科研工作有非常强的针对性和实用性，对于硕士、博士研究生的学科导师也具有较强的借鉴意义和参考价值。

The Postgraduate Research Handbook

Succeed with your MA, MPhil, EdD and PhD

Second Edition

Gina Wisker

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I have enjoyed working on writing and more recently revising and updating this book and am grateful for all the insights provided by the many research students who have worked with me, using and commenting on the materials as they developed into the book. This revised edition has benefited through comments from the many local and international students who found the first edition useful, and also information, reflection and comments from the many local and international supervisors with whom I have worked since its inception. I have also found that as, inevitably and vitally, research has become much more central to my own work, the second edition owes much to both my own and others' research into postgraduate student learning and supervisory practices. Particular thanks go to the several cohorts of research students from Israel undertaking PhDs with us at Anglia, to my colleagues Dr Gillian Robinson and Professor Vernon Trafford for their advice with materials, and Miri Shacham, Shosh Leshem and Yehudit Od-Cohen for helping me further develop those materials. Thanks also go to Michelle Bernard, Charlotte Morris, Lindsay Barnes and Nicola Skinner for their dedicated hard work on layouts. Especial thanks go to my family, my late husband Alistair, and sons Liam and Kitt for their support and tolerance, as well as their company, when we have travelled to Australasia, South Africa and the Caribbean, while I gave workshops based upon both the first edition, its companion *The Good Supervisor* and my own research. Finally, thanks to Suzannah Burywood and Karen Griffiths during the preparation of the second edition, Margaret Bartley during the first edition, and other colleagues at Palgrave Macmillan who have supported and commented along the way.

GINA WISKER
Cambridge and Brighton

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1 Introduction

If you are thinking of starting to research for an MA, MPhil, PhD, EdD or PrD, then this book should help you at each stage of your work. Initially, it will help you to decide what and how you want to research, where you would like to undertake your research qualification and study, and how to work with a supervisor. It will then tackle how to keep the momentum going over time, and how to analyse your findings and draw conclusions from them. Finally, it will help you to see how to produce a good quality dissertation or thesis – which, we hope, will pass – and then consider how to progress with your research (or other) career.

Commencing a research degree is a very exciting and also rather daunting undertaking, because you know that it is a next step up in your learning. You will probably have heard of friends or colleagues who started a large piece of research, took years and years over it but never completed the work. But you will also know people who have really enjoyed and benefited from undertaking a research degree. My own experience as a part-time, female research student – working at a distance from my supervisor and home university as well as combining a full-time job (and commuting) with study – certainly had its ups and downs. It did, however, change my life; it also changed my sense of my own achievements. I have never regretted the work and have always been pleased I gained the degrees (first an MA, then a PhD). It is this experience that prompted me to write this book, as well as the exciting and fruitful work I have been involved in over the past few years with research students and supervisors, particularly a large cohort of professional part-time research students from Israel and supervisors new to Anglia Ruskin University, the university where I worked for many years. The intention of this book is to enable you to see clearly the topic you wish to research, how to go about your research and how to work successfully towards achieving your aims.

The book draws on good practice developed at a wide variety of universities in Australia, the USA and the UK. I am grateful to colleagues from Australia, the UK, Israel and, lately, South Africa, who have engaged in immensely useful conversations with me, pointing me towards local good

practice and sharing their own strategies. Historically, this led to a companion book for supervisors entitled *Good Practice in Postgraduate Supervision* (Wisker and Sutcliffe 1999), and more recently *The Good Supervisor* (Wisker 2005) and some of the ideas in those books may also be of use to you in your work with your supervisor.

Naturally, you will receive a great deal of support and guidance from your university and your supervisor(s). However, having this book as a guide should help you to take control of and responsibility for your own learning, and to discover what kinds of questions to ask – which is equally as important as the answers to some of those questions – as you proceed on your research journey.

One of the largest growth areas in higher education is postgraduate work. More students than ever are deciding to continue with their studies, or to return to postgraduate study to research for a qualification after spending time in paid or voluntary work or bringing up children. There is now a diverse group of students seeking postgraduate study and it is no longer only the lifetime career academic who seeks research study qualifications. There is also much international movement, as many research students wish to gain the enriching experience of studying in another country, most commonly the UK, the USA and Australia. The greatest growth in groups of research students is that of women, in particular women returning to study, who must often combine their study with jobs and domestic responsibilities. Many other students undertake research when they have retired from full-time employment. They, too, as so many others engaged in research, are seizing the opportunity to 'do something for themselves at last'. The diversity of research students has helped to bring about development and change in research supervision practices and in universities' practices of support for and recognition of the needs of research students. This book takes note of the differences in demands of students from different cultural contexts and takes into account different social, age and gender backgrounds. It also takes note of the different kinds of postgraduate research study in which students are engaged.

In this book, students embarking on research for qualifications are considered in three related groups: those working towards their Master's, particularly the MA; those working for an MPhil; and those working for a PhD, EdD, DBA or Professional Doctorate these latter qualifications being substantially different from the former for reasons of length, depth and originality. Some students attend tuition at all three levels while others undertake research-based studies. More recently, there has been the development of a professional doctorate, where appropriate, referred to as an EdD (education), a DBA (business) or a PrD (professional practice). These developments

recognise the integration of and synergy between professional practice, employment and work-related study and research. They are often different in shape from established research since they frequently involve staged development and the production of progress reports. Doctorates by publication have also recently been recognised. These, too, are different in shape: they entail the collection of previously published works that follow a focus or theme and the production of a theorised 'wrap' or mapping and a theorising, discursive and conceptual section that brings together the published pieces into a more coherent whole. However, all involve research, and anyone undertaking any of these qualifications will find this book useful. We will be looking at these variants and concentrating on what is common between them: for the most part, therefore, I will use the generic term PhD and mean the research and communication that is involved in all the variants. The main element in common for your work towards all these awards is *the process and the practice of research,* which is the main focus of this book.

The book really starts where I did, and where so many of my own research students began, with some basic advice, some questions to answer and things to think about. The opening sections of each chapter outline the issues to be discussed. There are reflective questions to consider and some strategies, plans and exercises to try out that aim to get you to concentrate on planning and managing your research. The more complex developments are in the middle of each chapter and a conclusion sums up the main points covered. The book as a whole follows the line of development of a research project, whether a relatively short-term project for an MA (probably around a year's work) or a longer project for an MPhil or a PhD (between three and six or more years' work, depending on whether you carry out full- or part-time research). You will need to pick and choose your way around the book as different questions arise for you in your work. In other words, treat it as a useful sourcebook, like any other in your research. It is one to which you can refer when you need, but which also provides an underpinning to your study.

Each chapter asks you to become involved in reflective (or active) tasks to help you to focus further on your work. These should aid the reflection on the progress and process of *your research* – activities that in themselves are a key to good research.

What the book does not do

This book cannot guarantee you success: the hard work still rests with you. As you develop your own working relationships with supervisors, your research area and university, and as you also develop autonomy, you will

appreciate that there could not be a manual that successfully guaranteed that at this level. It is a complex, original and creative activity.

This book is specifically addressed at social science and humanities students: it does not aim to guide science students, although those undertaking health-related research should find it useful (and scientists might find some parts useful, too). Nor does it do more than introduce some of the methods you might choose. You would be advised to turn to specialised books on each of the methods for the kind of useful guidance you will need. Some of these appear in the references but you will find more, as this is a growth industry.

What the book does and how it is structured

The book gives basic advice, as well as signposts to more specialist research methods, and I hope that you will find that it is accessible and clear in its presentation, and includes the basic points you will need to consider in carrying out and communicating your research.

There are four parts:

1. Starting research;
2. Getting going – supervisors, methods and time;
3. More detailed research methods – maintaining momentum;
4. Support, progress, analysis, writing up, the viva, presentations and afterwards.

There are 'things to do' boxes to enable you to consider how research methods could work for you and to help you with your thinking towards your research projects. The book endeavours to direct you towards reading that leads you to further *specialist research methods training*. It does not try to replicate the books that train in the use of, for example, statistics, but instead asks fundamental questions that enable you to make some choices about appropriate methods and underpinning methodologies.

In outline it:

- takes you through generic decisions about titles, areas of study, the methods and methodology of research, timing, structures, and so on
- deals with issues and practices common across different subject areas and levels in the social sciences and humanities
- branches out, where relevant, to consider the different levels of Master's, MPhil and PhD. It defines the kind of difference related to

original work or work that contributes to the PhD, and the issues around contribution to practice and experience which much Master's work now involves. It also looks at how to ensure this all takes place consistently and reflects on the different needs of international students.

You will see the book is structured in relation to the four phases of a research student's work, that is:

Part 1 Starting research

This section concentrates on:

- starting your own research
- choosing universities
- choosing topics
- defining the area and asking research questions.

Part 2 Getting going – supervisors, methods and time

This section focuses on:

- understanding and taking control of your own learning
- getting into good study habits and managing time
- literature reviews (presenting theoretical perspectives in which you engage in a dialogue between your work and that of others in the field, or the underpinning theorists), notes and referencing
- selecting research methodologies, theories, methods and practices
- starting to work with your supervisor – agendas and contracts.

Part 3 More detailed research methods – maintaining momentum

This section deals with:

- maintenance and development of ideas and research practices, restructuring and refocusing issues and practices
- continuing to maintain good working relations and supervisions with your supervisor(s)
- restructuring to take into account findings and new questions, new reading and ideas, and so on
- maintaining momentum
- ensuring pilot studies inform further developments, analysing your data and producing and building on your findings

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