

How to apply for PhD research at the University of Auckland

The PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) degree is a research-only degree, done by thesis. Applying for a PhD degree at The University of Auckland involves the following steps:

1. **Decide upon, and clarify as much as possible, your area of research interest or potential research topic.**
2. **Ensure that you meet the academic eligibility requirements for entry into the PhD programme.** Check these requirements in the 'Regulations' for the PhD in the University Calendar.
<http://www.postgrad.auckland.ac.nz/postgraddegree/PhDStatutes03/PhDStatuteContents.asp>
You must meet the research requirements necessary to enter the programme. You should ensure that your English language skills are good enough to meet the entry standards.
<http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/for/prospective/welcomes/internationalstudents/howdoiapply/intlentry/englishrequirement.cfm>
3. **Contact a potential main supervisor** to discuss your proposed research. If your application is accepted by the University, you will have a main supervisor, plus a co-supervisor and/or an advisory committee or advisor(s).
4. **Write a preliminary thesis proposal** and submit it to the supervisor for consideration.
5. **Refine your preliminary thesis proposal** and obtain agreement of the supervisor.

Contacting a potential main supervisor

1. Look on the University website at the homepages of academic staff and their publications, to get a sense of their research interests. You should be looking for someone who does research that interests you, and in an area in which you have sufficient educational background to do research at the doctoral level. You should be able to find bibliographic information on staff and their publications from their homepage, from the departmental publication list, by googling, or by searching publication databases.
2. Look at some Masters and PhD theses in your areas of interest. You can find out quite a lot about a possible supervisor by looking at some theses written by their students, and you may be able to find an online copy of some of these works. Your goal should be to get a sense of the standard of research that an individual is expected to achieve in 3-4 years of fulltime work as a PhD student.
3. After completing the above, you're ready to contact a prospective main supervisor. They will want to know about your research interests, your academic background, and your prior research experience. You can best address these issues by sending an email explaining:
 - a) why you are contacting them
 - b) what relevant coursework you have taken (you should attach a complete academic record), and
 - c) your prior research experience (you may include a copy course work such as essays, thesis/dissertation, project report).
 - d) In your email you could suggest a specific topic for your thesis research but this isn't always necessary in a first contact. Supervisors vary in their preferences and practices. Some supervisors expect their students to propose something, while others give general suggestions and then expect the student to come up with a detailed proposal. Some supervisors may suggest a specific topic.
4. Your supervisor will want to be assured that your topic is well-defined, that the project will make an original contribution to knowledge or understanding, and that it can be completed successfully within 3-4 years of fulltime study. Both you and your supervisor will want to work on a topic that is of genuine mutual interest.

5. Once you have found a willing supervisor then work with them to prepare your preliminary thesis proposal. Best wishes in your search for a supervisor!

Writing a preliminary thesis proposal

Your preliminary thesis proposal should describe the research that you are going to undertake. It will give an indication that you have given some thought to the research and that you have sufficient knowledge and training to undertake the research. You should note the points below, and then complete writing a preliminary thesis proposal in the format set out on the next page.

Please note:

- This form should be completed in consultation with your potential supervisors
- The proposal should be between 3-5 pages long
- A more detailed Departmental or Faculty thesis proposal may be substituted for this University form, provided it includes at a minimum the information and signatures required in this form.

Preliminary Thesis Proposal

Name of Applicant

Student ID number (if known)

Department(s) where the work will be conducted

Supervision team:

Main supervisor

Co-supervisor(s)

Other advisors

Provisional title of thesis

Introduction / Background

- Briefly summarise current research / state of the art in your area of interest

Aims and objectives of the research

- What question(s) or problem is your research seeking to answer?
- Why do you think this project is worth doing?

Research design

- Which data are required?
- What major methods or procedures will be used to collect and analyse the data?
- Which ethics approval(s)/permissions will be required?

Schedule / Timeline

- List the major steps/tasks in the research and anticipated completion dates – the thesis should be submitted within 3 to 4 years

Resources

- What resources will be required (e.g., facilities, funding, travel), and what is their source/availability?

Signatures

This preliminary thesis proposal was prepared by:

Student Name:

Signature:

Date:

In consultation with:

Name:

Signature:

Name:

Signature:

Name:

Signature:

Provisional Goals

The provisional goals are recorded on the doctoral registration form and are in two parts.

Part A: Provisional goals required of all candidates

- Completion of a full thesis proposal. This should normally be completed in the first 6 months.
- Completion of a substantial piece of written work, e.g., the literature review. This should be completed within the first 12 months.
- Presentation by the student of the proposal and/or work in progress to an appropriate forum, e.g., seminar, research group, conference, to the satisfaction of the supervisors.
- Approval of the full thesis proposal by the appropriate departmental/faculty postgraduate committee.
- Ethics approval(s)/permissions obtained for the research (if required).
- Attendance at one of the Doctoral Skills Programme's 'Induction Days'.

Part B: Other provisional goals
(to be inserted as appropriate for each candidate)