




Graduate Research Advanced Skills Program (GRASP)

Research Writing Series

Thesis writing: context and principles

Dr Petra Dumbell (in-person)

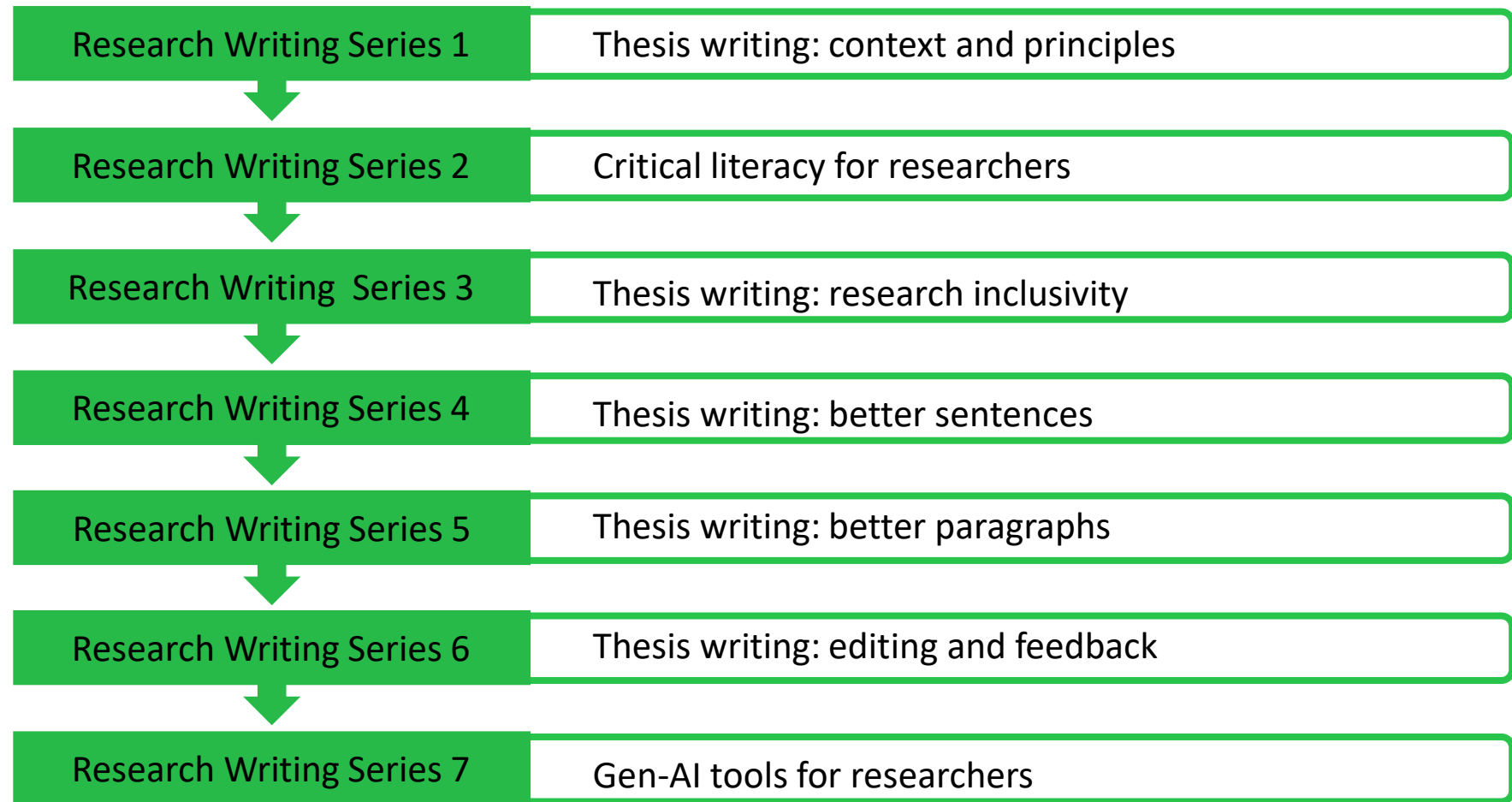
Dr Karen Miller (online)

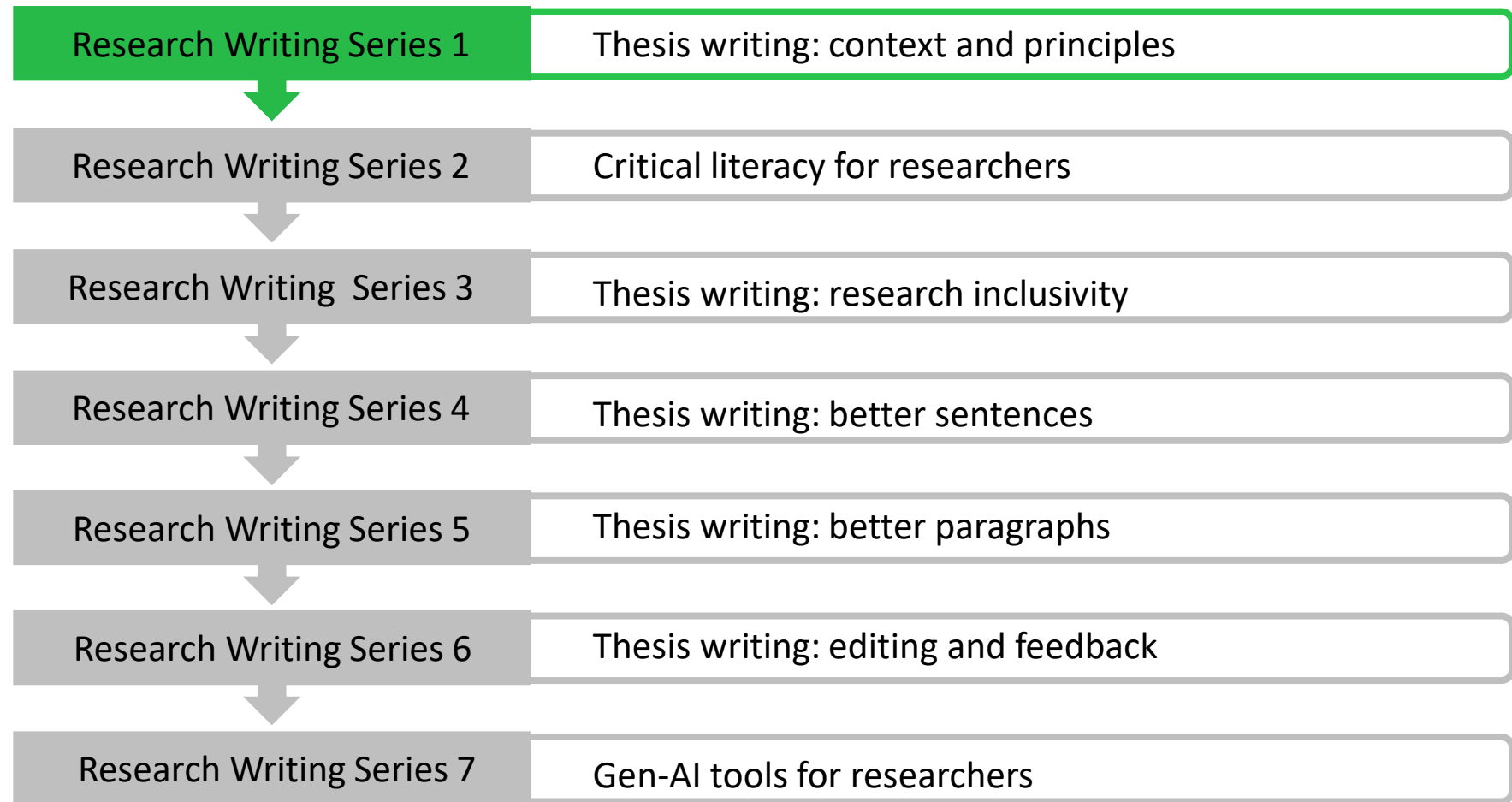
A decorative vertical element on the left side of the slide, consisting of several overlapping, wavy, curved bands of different shades of green, ranging from a bright lime green to a darker forest green.

We acknowledge Whadjuk Nyungar as the Custodians of the land on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend this respect to all Indigenous students present today. We recognise that this Country has been a place of research, teaching and learning for tens of thousands of years.

We acknowledge that the process and the outcome of the Voice to Parliament referendum was deeply hurtful and discouraging for Indigenous communities, and we commit to work towards Reconciliation.

It always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.





What we will cover today...

- ✓ What is a PhD
- ✓ Theses: content and chapters
- ✓ Scholarly voice & signposting
- ✓ Perspective & the flow of ideas
- ✓ The process of writing
- ✓ How to get going, and get it done!
- ✓ What to do when things are good...
- ✓ What to do when things go wrong ...
- ✓ Where to find help.

What is a PhD (Masters by Research, DBA...)

- From the first PhD to now...
 - ... nothing much has changed.
 - ... but will it?
- Thesis is not the research but reporting the research.
- A thesis is not a novel... *
 - Aim is different
 - Distinctive structure

Theses: content and chapters

- *Where are you writing your thesis?* > Indigenous perspectives
- Espace: <https://espace.curtin.edu.au/>
- Hybrid theses; theses by publication; traditional theses...

Theses: content and chapters

Introduction
Literature Review
Methodology
Findings
Discussion
Conclusion

Academic writing & scholarly voice

- Develop your scholarly voice and confidence
 - Work out what to do with feedback
 - Find your own way of communicating
 - Read and have a close look at what you are reading
- Scholarly writing in the English language: get to the point! *
- Myth that scholarly writing needs to be complicated:
 - Language and grammar is simple
 - Concepts and arguments are complex
 - This is not “boring writing”!
- Academic Phrasebank: <https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

[Introducing work](#)[Referring to sources](#)[Describing methods](#)[Reporting results](#)[Discussing findings](#)[Writing conclusions](#)

Academic Phrasebank / Signalling transition

GENERAL LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

[Being cautious](#)[Being critical](#)[Classifying and listing](#)[Compare and contrast](#)[Defining terms](#)[Describing trends](#)[Describing quantities](#)[Explaining causality](#)[Giving examples](#)[Signalling transition](#)[Writing about the past](#)

An enhanced and expanded version of
PHRASEBANK is available in PDF or Kindle format:

Signalling transition

Previewing what is to follow in a paper or dissertation is like showing a map to a driver; it enables them to see where they are going. So it is useful to think of a preview section as a 'road map' for the reader. It must be accurate, but it must be easy to follow.

Writers are also expected to indicate to the reader when they are moving from one topic to another, or from one section of text to another. These are known as transition statements and examples of these, together with some previewing statements, are given below.

+ Previewing sections of text

+ Introducing a new topic

+ Reintroducing a topic

+ Moving from one section to the next

+ Moving from one section to the next, indicating addition or contrast

+ Summarising a section or chapter

Academic writing & signposting

- What is signposting and why is it important?

'It's a PhD, not a Nobel Prize': How experienced examiners assess research theses. (Mullins & Kiley, 2002)

“However, what most examiners did assert strongly was that they looked to see that students were consistent and that they had actually done what they said they were going to do...”.

“In spite of heavy workloads, most indicated that they spent the equivalent of three or four days fulltime examining a thesis, often over a period of two to three weeks”

Letting the reader know what went before and what is coming next.

Academic writing & signposting

McCarthy, 2010, Humanities, traditional thesis

The remaining five research questions ... include the breadth of the views generated from the 24 key respondents at the Aboriginal College. Research Question 2 asked what ... Participants' responses were unanimous on the matter: (1) the students need a place of learning that is homey and safe, (2) decent....

Breadsell, 2019, Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute, thesis by publication

Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter outlines... The research question and sub questions have been developed from the underlying theory and literature and are addressed in a series of seven peer-reviewed publications... This thesis has applications ... The overall thesis organisation is presented at the end of the chapter.

...

2.2 Project participants

The longitudinal case study for this thesis is the Section 2.2 details ... and the residents who are part of this research.

Academic writing & signposting

Senaputra, 2015, Science & Engineering, traditional thesis

4.1.1 Application of FBRM in flocculation

Despite widespread use in a range of industries; studies of mineral systems, including bauxite residue, have been comparatively rare and often lacking in detail.

...

The results were further used to refine the experimental methods in Chapter 6 and 7.

Hart, 2022, Health Sciences, hybrid thesis

Study Two

The purpose of Study Two was to examine.... Statistically significant changes were observed in all variables of interest, i.e.,... . Each variable will be discussed in turn, with additional noteworthy findings highlighted.

Academic writing & perspective

- First person versus third person perspective (??)*
- Check with supervisor and journal

Emery, 2021, Humanities:

This exegesis has been written with accessible language in mind, to help ensure that as many people as possible can benefit from the research as possible.

Mckinley, 2022, Science & Engineering:

Finally, I identify and discuss the opportunities and directions for future research that have arisen out of my thesis, in terms of... . Chapters 1 and 4 are written from the first-person perspective (i.e. my research) while chapters 2 and 3 are written from the perspective of a collective of authors (i.e. “we collect”, “our research”).

Academic writing & the flow of ideas

- Flow of ideas, larger piece of writing

I have collected literature material in chunks so it is important to create a link between my ideas and literature review.

It is challenging to express my ideas logically and reasonably. Giving further details and elaborating on the sentences is also challenging.

- ✓ Mind mapping
- ✓ Structure, headings
- ✓ Reverse-outlining

The process of writing

- Horrible first drafts, editing and feedback
- More drafts, more editing and feedback
- ...
- ...

“Some of your writing will never make the final thesis – it isn’t quite on focus or opens another area that you really don’t have space for. I estimate I wrote over three times the words I needed for my thesis. ...”
(Rhoden, 2017).

“Kill your darlings”.

Academic writing – getting it done!

- * Goals, stretch goals and reasonable goals
- Accountability and productivity
- Shut Up & Work and thesis boot camps
- Start writing today!

Don't wait for the perfect time, thought, location, reference, ...

- Write early and often to clarify thoughts

How can you know what you think until you see what you write.

- Forward planning – detailed next step – keeps you going
- Good enough! (*It is a PhD thesis, not a Noble Prize* 😊)

What to do when things are good...



Photo by Pineapple Supply Co.: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-three-pineapples-surrounded-by-balloons-1071882/>

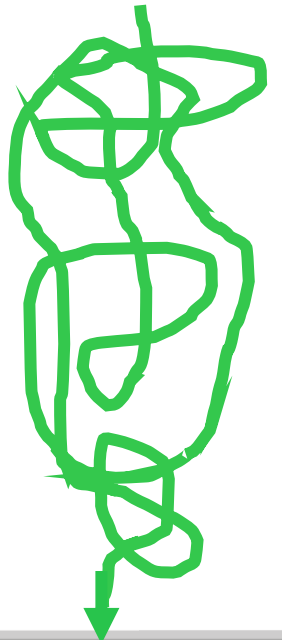
What to do when things go wrong

- Remember that they usually do, at some stage for everyone
- Learn how to deal with rejections.
- Talk to supervisors, friends...
- *Name it to tame it.*
- Look after your mental health and know that there is counselling.
- Come to Thesis Fest!
- Book an academic writing consultation.

"A thousand thanks for your brilliant paper which we are publishing immediately.

Yes, that was just a dream. It never happens.

Even when your paper is accepted, it won't pass muster without changes and improvements." (Rhoden, 2017)



Where to find help

Library's Research Toolkit

<https://researchtoolkit.library.curtin.edu.au/grasp/about-grasp/>

Email us:

LibraryResearchSupport@curtin.edu.au

Academic Writing Consultations

<https://researchtoolkit.library.curtin.edu.au/grasp/academic-writing-consultations/>

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