

**University of Otago
School of Physiotherapy
Centre for Physiotherapy Research**

**Masters of Physiotherapy (Thesis & Dissertation)
GUIDELINES FOR PHYSIOTHERAPY POSTGRADUATE
STUDENTS**

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Further copies of these guidelines will available for downloaded from the School of Physiotherapy website at in due course.

Welcome to the School of Physiotherapy. I hope that you will find your postgraduate course of study a rich, rewarding and personally fulfilling experience.

The following guidelines for students enrolled in Masters programmes at the School of Physiotherapy have been developed to assist you with any queries that you may have about the course of study and include a section of frequently asked questions. Please note this information is supplementary to the important information provided on the University of Otago's website www.otago.ac.nz/study/masters .

The Research Liaison Committee at the School of Physiotherapy serves to provide a forum between the postgraduate students and the staff of the School of Physiotherapy involved in postgraduate education. You are encouraged to contact your representatives if you have any matters you would like discussed at these meetings. If you have any specific queries regarding your course, particularly with regard to your thesis or dissertation, you should contact your supervisor(s) in the first instance.

Alternatively, for further information please contact me:

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INTRODUCTION

- The School and University have well developed processes for the approval and monitoring of postgraduate study, as well as identifying needs for appropriate formalised skills training programmes in areas such as written and oral communication, time management, in addition to preparation for written thesis or dissertation documents.
- The School has agreed a structured timetable for both research and clinical Masters. This plan has been designed to help ensure successful completion of a Masters within the given time period; it is stressed that problems in meeting the required deadlines should immediately be brought to the attention of the relevant supervisor(s) and the Associate Dean of Postgraduate Studies.
- During a student's period of study, progress will be monitored by the appointed supervisory team.
- The responsibilities of supervisors and students are detailed (p13-14) of the University of Otago Masters Handbook (www.otago.ac.nz/study/masters). A Memorandum of Understanding between the supervisor and student as a statement of intent regarding the responsibilities of the supervisor and student may be drawn up and provide a useful working framework. Details for setting up a memorandum are also available on the same website www.otago.ac.nz/study/masters. Please discuss the option of a memorandum with your supervisory team at the beginning of your study but be aware that it may need to be modified throughout the course of your project.
- Candidates are encouraged to present their research findings at the School of Physiotherapy Postgraduate Research Seminars and where possible, to an external group (e.g. the local branch of the Physiotherapy Society, Otago Medical Research Society) during their period of study. It is also hoped that their work will result in *at least* one full paper in a refereed journal. All posters, publications and other forms of dissemination should follow ICMJE (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors) guidelines for authorship, and adequate discussions about the expectations of authorship should be discussed between supervisors and students (see Appendix 1).

NB: Where appropriate, and subsequent to initial discussions with appointed supervisors, the Associate Dean for Postgraduate Studies should be the first point of contact for postgraduate students with any procedural queries. All administrative queries should be directed to Nicola Clarke, Student Administrator.

MASTER OF PHYSIOTHERAPY (THESIS OPTION)

A student undertaking to complete a Masters degree at the School of Physiotherapy must undertake an approved course of papers prior to the commencement of the thesis.

The thesis component of the programme is to be undertaken over two semesters (one year) of full-time study (or the equivalent in part-time study) and that of a dissertation one semester (6 months) full-time (or equivalent in part-time study).

An outline proposal for your thesis needs to be submitted to the School of Physiotherapy's Postgraduate Committee before you can be accepted into the programme – your supervisor will assist you with this. The submission must be limited to 3 pages (A4 double spacing). For submission deadlines for the PG Committee please contact: nicola.clarke@otago.ac.nz

Details of the proposal should include:

- Title of the proposal
- Aim
- Background
- Merit of the project
- Proposed methodology
- Description of skills necessary to undertake the project
- Suggested supervisory team
- Estimated costs and required resources (anticipatory)
- References

MASTERS BY THESIS

SELECTING A RESEARCH TOPIC

It is essential that you work with your supervisors in selecting an appropriate research question.

Students should pay particular attention to the following when considering the possible scope of a selected project.

1. Can my plan of objectives be achieved within the prescribed time?
2. Have I taken into account all the necessary approval processes necessary for my research (i.e. ethic approval, Maori consultation, funding, etc.)
3. Do I have the necessary skills to undertake the study?
4. Do I have a fundamental understanding of the problem; the limitations of the techniques to be employed; and the significance of the work within the broader context?

REPORTING

A brief report of your progress should be submitted to your supervisor at 3, 6 and 9 months. The report should be completed on the Thesis/Dissertation 3 Month Report Form (Appendix 2).

MASTERS THESIS MANUSCRIPT

A thesis should demonstrate a sustained piece of supervised, independent research. The work should demonstrate that the student has the ability to independently carry out research and/or the ability to carry out constructive criticism, and to report the results of such work clearly, accurately and succinctly.

A thesis is distinguished by the relevance of the argument to the student's discipline, the quality of the evidence collected and how it is employed, and the light it sheds on current disciplinary concerns and interests. While a Master's thesis need not contain an original contribution to knowledge and practice in the discipline, it must demonstrate the author's ability to identify and evaluate the relevant literature, to design a well-structured and integrated investigation, to collect and interpret useful information, and to reach mature judgments in the light of the literature and the student's own enquiries.

It should also be clearly and succinctly presented for examination. The work done for a thesis can be expected to yield at least one conference presentation or a published paper in a peer-reviewed academic serial.

The University of Otago Library has information on thesis preparation, for example Notes on the Preparation of Otago Theses at www.library.otago.ac.nz/research/theses.html.

Please see the University of Otago Masters Handbook available at: www.otago.ac.nz/study/masters/index.html#2

PRESENTATIONS

Students are expected to present the findings of their study in the Postgraduate Seminar series. Any posters/presentations based on the thesis work must include the supervisors as co-authors of the work.

The presentation format should include the following information:

- The aims of the project;
- The project background;
- The overall aim of the investigation;
- The methods employed;
- The results of the study;
- Discussion of the results;
- Conclusions

MASTER OF PHYSIOTHERAPY (DISSERTATION OPTION)

A student undertaking to complete a Master of Physiotherapy (Dissertation option) at the School of Physiotherapy must undertake papers from the approved schedule totalling 120 points in addition to the dissertation.

The dissertation component of the course is to be undertaken over one semester (6 months) of full-time study (or the equivalent in part-time study). Progress will be monitored by supervisors until completion of the dissertation. At the time of submission students are required to present to a panel for purposes of examination.

SELECTING A TOPIC

The topic of your dissertation must be relevant to Physiotherapy and in an area that fits with the School's research ethos and supervision capacity. Approval for paper titles and confirmation of supervisors is the responsibility of the Postgraduate Committee.

A topic outline must be prepared and submitted to the Postgraduate Committee before you can be accepted into the programme. For students who have been enrolled in the Postgraduate Diploma at the School in the previous year this will involve consultation with potential supervisors before the end of the first semester as your application and topic outline will need to be with the Student Administrator in time for the October Postgraduate Committee meeting. For students who are enrolling for the first time, email or other forms of communication with potential supervisors are advisable in order to begin research into the proposed topic area. It is expected that the final title for the dissertation will be similar although not necessarily exactly the same as that originally approved by the Committee. Ethical approval may also be necessary. The suggested title and journal to which the manuscript will be submitted should be included in the proposal.

When considering a potential supervisor, determine the availability of the person (e.g. whether they are away for part of the year) and their scholarly/research interests. Discuss with them their expectations of a master's student. Remember, the supervisor is there to assist in the preparation of the dissertation but not to do the work. The timely submission of the dissertation is the student's responsibility.

The supervisor is likely to discuss a timeframe for the preparation of the dissertation. The first phase will normally involve refining and delimiting the topic and collecting and reading the literature in order to facilitate consultation with the supervisor regarding the meaning and implications of this body of knowledge. Following this, the final direction of the dissertation and a plan for its writing should be discussed. In the second phase, students will need to submit drafts of sections of the dissertation to the supervisor for feedback.

REPORTING

A brief report of your progress should be submitted to your supervisor at 1 & 3 months. The report should be completed on the Thesis/Dissertation 1 Month Report Form (Appendix 2).

MASTERS DISSERTATION MANUSCRIPT

A dissertation carried out in partial fulfilment of the Master of Physiotherapy is a substantial scholarly work demonstrating an ability to present an argument based on a thorough understanding of the topic. It normally entails one semester of full-time study or part-time equivalent.

A dissertation is not a thesis, and it may comprise the design and implementation of a small research project, a case study/case series, or a data-based clinical review under the supervision of a member of staff.

It is also important that students are able to communicate their findings to the profession and wider community. Therefore, students will be required to present the findings of their investigation to their peers and the staff of the School in a public forum. The feedback gained from this presentation is invaluable in finalising the written dissertation.

The written dissertation should either incorporate a manuscript suitable for submitting for publication, or in the form of a methodical and detailed evaluation and synthesis of the literature on a particular topic, which is in a format suitable for publication.

ASSESSMENT

Two examiners will assess the dissertation. One will be internal to the School of Physiotherapy and one external to the School whilst internal to the University. Both examiners should be expert in the area of the dissertation and must be approved by the School's Postgraduate Committee. A further requirement for completion of this paper is a satisfactory oral presentation of the findings in an open forum organised by the School of Physiotherapy. Members of the School's Postgraduate Committee will assess the presentation.

To complete the dissertation, both components must be considered satisfactory. **The final grade will be determined on the basis of the written (80%) and an oral presentation (20%).**

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Due date for submission of the dissertation is the last day of the examination period the semester in which a student is enrolled (approx 2nd last Friday in June and mid November). Late submissions will not be accepted without an extension having been granted by the Associate Dean of Postgraduate Studies in line with the School's policy on extensions and compassionate consideration. Three soft-bound copies are to be submitted to the Student Administrator - one will be kept by the School, and two will be sent to the examiners.

The oral presentations will usually be held two weeks prior to the deadline for submission of a dissertation. The presentation will be for 10 minutes and an additional 5 minutes for question time.

MASTERS DISSERTATION FORMAT

See Appendix 3

MASTERS DISSERTATION PRESENTATION

Oral Presentation

This is a formal assessment task and students should endeavour to present the outcomes from their manuscripts as diligently and professionally as possible. Students will be assessed in the oral presentation by members of the School's Postgraduate Committee.

Points that will be assessed in the oral presentation include:

- How well was the problem introduced?
- How well the problem was identified (Why is it a problem?)
- How much of a problem is it (i.e. scope)?
- Relate the details of the problem to what is known (but not a literature review)
- What causes the problem?
- What structural (musculoskeletal/neurological/developmental) problems are identified?
- How well was the case for the problem presented?
- Was the scope justifiable?
- Was the problem clearly delimited?
- Were the delimitations of the proposal justifiable?
- Was the proposed research question(s) appropriate?
- Was the proposed research design appropriate for the question(s)?
- Will the variables/design provide the right answers?
- Were the results presented in a relevant and system manner?
- Were the discussion and conclusions justified by the results?

- What were the clinical implications, and were they justified by the outcomes?
- Had the student considered where the investigation could lead to?

In addition, students will be assessed on the delivery of their presentation. Items considered include:

- Did the speaker speak to the audience?
- Was the A-V material relevant to the topic/order of presentation?
- Did the speaker convey ideas easily/clearly?
- Was the presentation in a logical order?
- Did the speaker adhere to the time limit?

POSTGRADUATE (Masters) STUDY

CONTACT STAFF

SCHOOL OF PHYSIOTHERAPY

Associate Dean Postgraduate Studies:

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Appendix 1

ICJME Guidelines as found at: <http://www.icmje.org/#author>

II.A Authorship and Contributorship

II.A.1. *Byline Authors*

An “author” is generally considered to be someone who has made substantive intellectual contributions to a published study, and biomedical authorship continues to have important academic, social, and financial implications. (1) In the past, readers were rarely provided with information about contributions to studies from those listed as authors and in acknowledgments. (2) Some journals now request and publish information about the contributions of each person named as having participated in a submitted study, at least for original research. Editors are strongly encouraged to develop and implement a contributorship policy, as well as a policy on identifying who is responsible for the integrity of the work as a whole.

While contributorship and guarantorship policies obviously remove much of the ambiguity surrounding contributions, it leaves unresolved the question of the quantity and quality of contribution that qualify for authorship. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors has recommended the following criteria for authorship; these criteria are still appropriate for those journals that distinguish authors from other contributors.

- Authorship credit should be based on 1) substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; 2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and 3) final approval of the version to be published. Authors should meet conditions 1, 2, and 3.
- When a large, multi-center group has conducted the work, the group should identify the individuals who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript (3). These individuals should fully meet the criteria for authorship defined above and editors will ask these individuals to complete journal-specific author and conflict of interest disclosure forms. When submitting a group author manuscript, the corresponding author should clearly indicate the preferred citation and should clearly identify all individual authors as well as the group name. Journals will generally list other members of the group in the acknowledgements. The National Library of Medicine indexes the group name and the names of individuals the group has identified as being directly responsible for the manuscript.
- Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, alone, does not justify authorship.

- All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed.
- Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.

Some journals now also request that one or more authors, referred to as “guarantors,” be identified as the persons who take responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole, from inception to published article, and publish that information.

Increasingly, authorship of multi-center trials is attributed to a group. All members of the group who are named as authors should fully meet the above criteria for authorship.

The order of authorship on the byline should be a joint decision of the co-authors. Authors should be prepared to explain the order in which authors are listed.

II.A.2. Contributors Listed in Acknowledgments

All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an acknowledgments section. Examples of those who might be acknowledged include a person who provided purely technical help, writing assistance, or a department chair who provided only general support. Editors should ask authors to disclose whether they had writing assistance and to identify the entity that paid for this assistance. Financial and material support should also be acknowledged.

Groups of persons who have contributed materially to the paper but whose contributions do not justify authorship may be listed under a heading such as “clinical investigators” or “participating investigators,” and their function or contribution should be described—for example, “served as scientific advisors,” “critically reviewed the study proposal,” “collected data,” or “provided and cared for study patients.”

Because readers may infer their endorsement of the data and conclusions, all persons must give written permission to be acknowledged.

Appendix 2

(Please copy and paste this form into another document before filling it in)

Reporting Form for Masters Student	
Student Name:	
Supervisor:	
Project Title:	
Month of Study (i.e. 3, 6, etc):	
1. Timetable of work planned (updated if necessary):	
2. Work completed to date:	
3. What has gone well to date/What has been problematic:	
4. Other Comments	

Appendix 3

Manuscript Format

For Theses:

Students are strongly encouraged to begin writing up while still engaged in planning, data gathering and/or data analysis. This reduces the often daunting task facing the student if writing up is delayed until it is the only remaining task. The bibliography should also be prepared and updated throughout, not left until the final writing-up of the thesis.

The format of the final thesis should be discussed and agreed with supervisors at an early stage, with later amendments if necessary.

Target dates should be decided and monitored.

Drafts of all chapters should be submitted to the supervisor(s) for comment. Reasonably prompt feedback should be provided on substantive issues. Most supervisors also give feedback on style, grammar, etc, but students are encouraged to seek additional feedback from other readers.

Word processing (with computerized document storage) should be used wherever possible, to allow revisions to be made more easily.

Guidelines for thesis writing are available from the library webpage

www.library.otago.ac.nz/subjectguides/phty.php

Notes on the preparation of an Otago thesis, Theses style-guide, Thesis declaration form, Binding your thesis and Citation style guides are available on this website.

All students are also advised to thoroughly read through the Research Masters Handbook as found on the University website for detailed information regarding guidelines, resources and policy.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/study/masters>

For Dissertations:

If the student proposes to submit their dissertation in the form of a manuscript, the following additional material is required in the bound dissertation submitted for examination. Please note that this takes care to ensure the bound dissertation is a coherent body of work.

Introduction Preamble: This should be up to four pages long and have a reference list independent to that of the manuscript (not counted in page count).

Manuscript Section: The manuscript should be written in line with the guidelines of the Journal the article will be aimed at. These guidelines should be included in the appendices. References should be formatted in line with the designated journal guidelines. Please note that any Tables, Figures and References need to be included within the Manuscript section. Raw data should be consistently referred to within the Appendices Section. Do not switch between Appendices in the manuscript and the Appendices sections as highlighted in the comments of an unhappy marker of a recent dissertation:

“Please note the layout of the dissertation is problematic. It makes for challenging reviewing. The order of appearance is confused and the reader is moving throughout the text trying to locate tables and relevant data, text and references. Appendices 2 – 6 should be included in the text, and for example, Appendix 2 is referred to in the text before Appendix 1 which is located in the manuscript”.

Appendices: The following details should be included:

- Data analysis
- Methodologies
- Raw data material not included in the manuscript
- Ethical approval letter
- Approval for utilization of outcome measures
- Journal guidelines relevant to the manuscript
- The appendices may also include additional notes on limitations/problems with the study not able to be included in the manuscript along with accompanying references if required