



Australia Awards

Practical Tips for
Finding a
PhD/Research Supervisor



Getting the right research supervisor is one of the critical elements in pursuing a Master by Research or PhD degree. Below are 4 tips in finding a PhD/research supervisor:

Contacting a supervisor

- Link your proposed topic with the potential supervisor's research interests – you will be able to find their interests on the university's website
- Think about co-supervision arrangements – most institutions will require 2 supervisors. Co-supervisors can come from the same institution and same department, but may come from another department or even a different institution. Your proposed primary supervisor may have suggestions, but may also be open to you suggesting someone
- Don't contact a supervisor with a vague request – provide them with some concrete information about your background, and your proposed topic. This will show the proposed supervisor that you are prepared, and organised, and have put some thought into your proposal, and the reasons why you have contacted them

CV

- Make sure you really spell out your experience in your CV – under key responsibilities, don't assume that someone will know what your duties are simply by your job title. Provide details about the types of typical duties you do in your current and previous roles. Ideally, consider listing at least 3-4 bullet points for each role (more if relevant)
- Ensure that the CV highlights any work experience which contains components of research or research-related activity
- Think about how you convey the work that you have done, and make connections to how this demonstrates research skills – for example, have you done a literature review? Have you submitted grant applications? Have you worked as a research assistant? Have you written documents that require significant research (ie 5,000+ plus essays; reports may be acceptable depending on the discipline to which you are applying)

Drafting your research proposal

- Australian universities will all generally have a required (or recommended) format for research proposals submitted during the formal university application process – while you will be contacting your potential supervisors much earlier in the process, use the format recommended by their universities. The supervisors will be familiar with the format, and will make it easier for them to assess your proposal in relation to others they have received. This means you may need to fashion your proposal slightly differently if contacting supervisors from different institutions

Sign up for [ORCID](#) (Open Researcher and Contributor ID)

- It's free
- If a candidate already has experience in research, has publications, or has received grants – this can all be recorded and will demonstrate their capacity as a researcher
- The ORCID can then be included in any CV – potential supervisors, as well as university admissions teams, are likely to check/review the information provided