

# Building connections

## Importance of networking

Completing a PhD or Masters by Research degree means doing independent research, which can be an isolating experience. Many research students may also choose to study part time or work off campus which can make it difficult to build relationships within faculties. The value and importance of networking and making connections within academia and industry cannot be underestimated. Students with an expanded network of connections have an edge when it comes to applying for grants, co-authoring publications, award nominations, conference participation and job offers. Being well-connected in your faculty, school, and department also means you can better navigate the full extent of the facilities, funding and services provided by the University.

## Where to start

Starting research can be daunting. Whether you came to Australia from overseas, moved interstate to pursue your research, are doing research in an unfamiliar faculty, or are studying across multiple disciplines and schools, knowing where to start can be challenging.

## Speak with your lead supervisor or postgraduate coordinator

One of the first steps is to make sure your lead supervisor or postgraduate coordinator provides you with information on faculty inductions; and where to find school or faculty information about events, resources including grants, and support services. Usually there is an email bulletin you can sign up to specifically for postgraduate students. These emails will let you know about upcoming events, conferences, seminars, social events, and other activities happening in your school or faculty. This bulletin may be run by the postgraduate coordinator, or another member of the school or faculty, such as a Student Experience Coordinator.

## HDR News

Make sure to read the University of Sydney's [HDR News](#) email newsletter, it contains important news for HDR students. Your University email address will automatically be signed up to this newsletter when you begin your candidature.

## Find your postgraduate student representative

Each faculty and school will have a postgraduate student representative who can help with issues you may experience during your candidature. Often postgraduate student representatives will attend staff meetings or sit on committees to provide feedback from the postgraduate community to University staff. If you do not know who your postgraduate student representative is, ask your postgraduate coordinator.

## Connecting with other students

SUPRA organises a range of free events throughout the year specifically for postgraduate students. Events are listed on [our events page](#), [our Facebook page](#), and announced in our regular newsletter, eGrad. You can sign up to eGrad when you [join us](#).

Faculties and schools also have postgraduate student associations that are run by postgrads, that hold social activities and advocate on behalf of postgrads. These associations can usually be found on Facebook, but you can also ask your postgraduate coordinator about them.

The Higher Degree by Research Liaison Committee (HDRLC) is a University-wide student organisation that aims to provide a research student voice when negotiating with the University on policy and process positions. The HDRLC comprises 30 student representatives across faculties and schools. Find out what they are up to on [Yammer](#) by signing up through your University email account, or email [nicole.lee@sydney.edu.au](mailto:nicole.lee@sydney.edu.au).

## Developing a social footprint

Social media is becoming more important for academic life. Whether you are in the first or fourth year of your thesis, the importance of having a digital footprint is often considered to be essential to your academic success.

Social media engagement provides you with more than just a platform to share your research. It is a gateway for you to seek out academics and other postgraduates with similar research interests, find out about upcoming academic conferences and workshops, and join in conversations with research communities globally.

## But where to start?

The power of social media and developing online networks can be useful for developing your own personal brand, and also for recruitment and job seeking. Social media works best when different channels promote each other. Twitter, The Conversation and LinkedIn are still three of the most commonly used platforms we see.

The University Library also has a [guide to strategic publishing](#) that has more detail on: promoting your work using researcher profiles; ways to share your research online; and how to communicate with specific audiences.

## Twitter

- [Sydney Uni on Twitter](#)

The University of Sydney and some individual faculties are on [Twitter](#). By following them, you can read all about upcoming events happening in your faculty. You can also search Twitter for [academic hashtags](#).

## The Conversation

[The Conversation](#) was built to connect academic researchers with the public. It is an independent web source of commentary that can provide you with the opportunity to write an interest piece or topical discussion with much further reach than an academic blog.

Once registered on the site you can pitch ideas to the editorial committee and if your idea is accepted, you can submit a draft and receive feedback. This process is similar to submitting an article to an academic journal but the piece itself is a lot shorter, enabling you to get valuable writing experience without a large time commitment. Most articles are between 600–800 words and reach a potential audience of 54 million people, according to The Conversation's website.

## LinkedIn

[LinkedIn](#) is a useful portal to connect you with future employers, research or business partners. You can list completed publications, conferences attended, or any current research projects. You can also list any funding or grants you have been awarded. Research positions (either qualitative or quantitative) and business/research positions are commonly advertised.

## The Thesis Whisperer

[The Thesis Whisperer](#) blog is dedicated to the topic of doing a PhD and is managed and edited by Associate Professor Inger Mewburn at the Australian National University. Join to read useful tips and discussions by doctoral students and academics from Australia and internationally. Being a member will entitle you to regular posts and conversations, as well as news on useful events, publications, groups and organisations.

## Individual advice and support to postgrads

If you are feeling isolated or you are concerned about your studies and don't know who to talk to, [contact us](#) to speak with a [caseworker](#). SUPRA is independent from the University and provides professional and confidential advice. We can provide advice in person, over the phone, Zoom or email, so we can assist you wherever you are.

The University [Counselling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) can help if you are feeling isolated or finding it hard to connect with others in the academic community. CAPS also provides workshops and resources specific to HDR students.

The University [Learning Centre](#) provides workshops on various academic skills.