

#1 Booklet for academic tips

LESSONS LEARNT FROM A LIFETIME OF LEARNING:

tips and insights for academic research

Written by

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Lessons Learnt from a Lifetime of
Learning

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*To my beloved family Rogério, Ruan and Louise.
To all my former teachers and mentors.
Adriana.*

*To my teachers and mentors.
Yulia.*

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Foreword

“This book is a great guide for those considering starting a graduate course or those who feel lost in the middle of one. The tips are objective and practical, based on the vast experience that the authors have in this field, and can help students navigate the maze of academia. The book also considers issues related to mental health and family support, which is much needed during long research projects but often overlooked in similar guides. This, and other valuable tips, make this booklet a great companion for aspiring researchers.”

Dr Thiago Alves Pinto, Director of Studies in Religion and Theology & Departmental Lecturer in Legal Studies and Diplomatic Studies (Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford)

“It was a pleasure to read this booklet, which has so many tips relevant to the successful development of academic work. Each one of the sessions addresses a topic to be considered in the different phases of the work. I wish I had read something like this when I started my graduate studies. Today many things are easier than they were for me. Access to information is more democratic and

opportunities are more publicised. I am sure all students and young researchers who read this document will benefit from it. Congratulations to the authors for the sensitivity and objectivity of the text.”

Dr Maria Virginia Alves, Senior Researcher, retired after 40 years working on Space Geophysics (Brazilian National Institute for Space Research, INPE)

“Lessons Learnt from a Lifetime of Learning: Tips and Insights for Academic Research” is the friend you need to consult before writing a dissertation. It is a book one has to revert to again and again when preparing, writing, editing, and presenting any research work. Working in research myself I wish I had read this book earlier. I found it interesting and pertinent that the authors advise us on two distinct but interrelated levels. At first, they provide practical advice on how to start a dissertation, who to contact to tap information, where to look for resources, etc. They draw our attention to the issue of time management and where there is a risk of getting lost being inexperienced. I have to admit that when I started my thesis I underestimated the degree of dependence on other people; teachers, technical staff, collaborators. So here I am, working overtime, trying to compensate for all the time lost. The book also aptly points out that research is not a matter of opinion, but of unquestionable evidence, and that a good researcher should also be a skilled speaker. Indeed, if knowledge cannot be communicated effectively, it is degraded. Secondly, the book duly approaches the dissertation as a marathon of personal struggle. It is a

struggle with the self, which, without clear planning and direction, becomes desperate, bored and lost in its way. Fortunately for us readers, the authors provide practical advice on smoothing or avoiding such situations. I thank them for pointing out the importance of recognising when it's time to seek help. In closing, the reader realises that a success story is not necessarily based on a single life-changing event caused by luck. The authors give us insight into the difficulties encountered when writing a dissertation. Their own success stories emerged from a series of closed doors, wasted time, and personal hardships. Stories well grounded in reality and most importantly relatable. Stories that anyone can have. They teach us that remaining goal-oriented, persistent and refusing to give up is what recreates the light in the tunnel."

Sofia Mertika, Mechanical Engineer, PhD Candidate
(ISAE-SUPAERO)

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Adriana and Yulia.*

Introduction

You are thinking of or starting to pursue academic research – congratulations and best of luck to you! To help you along this journey, we have compiled some of the best advice from our journeys here. Together, we have completed 5 master’s Degrees and 2 PhDs, written many scientific reports and articles, and given university courses. Both of us have backgrounds in STEM, however, most of the tips you will find ahead apply to cross-fields. We simply share our lessons learnt. The goal is to help you to organise your research and to succeed while making the process as personalised and convenient as possible for you.

We present our ideas as guidelines on several major topics related to building, working, writing, presenting, and surviving an academic journey. The advice is divided by respective chapters, and you can choose either to follow the proposed order or jump around, depending on where you are on your journey. We present what went right and wrong for us, and draw generic observations from there. Our advice mightn’t work exactly as posed for everyone, as research is a very individual endeavour, but it should be relevant to all in some accounts. Anyway, our ideas are the results of our own experience, and there is no one right way to do research. However, many things can and will go wrong, and here’s where you should find our practical advice useful. On top of general observations and tips, we also share our personal stories. You will find “Adriana speaking” and “Yulia

speaking” sections around the rest of the booklet. That’s where we share our unique experiences with you.

About half the advice is oriented towards those only starting, and the other half is for everyone, even those finishing up and writing or presenting their work. Therefore, there is something for everyone! Speaking of everyone, your research supervisors are an important part of your journey, and everybody’s experience working with advisors is diverse. We suggest that as you read this booklet and discover something interesting, you go and talk about it with your supervisor. It will help you both to build a strong professional relationship and to add clarity to your communication. In addition, you can always talk about these topics and tips to fellow students and researchers.

On a final note of clarity: we did not intend this booklet to be your how-to recipe with exhaustive accompanying materials that you can, and should, find elsewhere. For instance, if you want to know how to reference according to the IEEE style, you should look this information up online. This booklet is like a friend who’s been there doing academic research, sharing the best advice and tips from their own experiences. So treat it as a friend and keep it near – you may need to refer back to it at further stages of your academic journey.

1

How to apply

There aren't many ways to enrol in a research-focused programme, such as a PhD or a research Masters. There are mainly three: you can apply for an open position, co-apply with a professor for funding or a grant, or create the project, and through collaboration, have a spot open for you.

Perhaps, the most common and straightforward way is to apply for a regular programme or an open position. The first tip in this case is to sign up for several academic mailing lists sending out information about open positions, often worldwide. A short list of such websites is provided below¹. Some universities have their portals for recruitment where you can also sign up for news. If you have a university in mind, it is worth checking out their website and students' office.

Let's say you have a university in mind. Is it a good idea to write to a professor? To a master's or PhD student there? You may be wondering how to go about it. Answering from experience, it is a great idea to get in touch with a student, or better yet - several students, in different years and diverse majors. You can search on LinkedIn and find many people

you can contact. Identify one or two main questions you want to ask; and please, do your research online first. With a nice introduction and an informed question, you'll likely get a response from some people.

If you want to contact a professor, you should be prepared to begin a serious conversation about the scientific project, the scope of work, and your motivation. Read several articles about the topic, ideally authored by the professor. The best way to contact a professor or academic staff is by email. However, be mindful to check with other students or the admission office, if contacting a professor in that specific course/university to talk about your project ideas is appropriate. In some places, this attitude might be seen as an attempt to interfere with the admission process, which ultimately goes against your objective of being selected for the programme. It is more of a cultural aspect of the institution than anything else. For example, in Brazil this can vary among different universities, and among different courses/programmes in the same university as well. Therefore, it is worth checking first.

Some programmes will require the submission of a preliminary proposal, especially for PhD applicants. Additionally, most of the programmes will require the submission of a full proposal of your research later on, which will need to be approved by a supervisor or the board, depending on the programme structure.

A central question that often haunts students' minds concerns the subject that will be the topic of their research and future dissertation. It is difficult for students to think of something that can be developed and analyse the subject's relevance in academic terms. Normally, preliminary proposals are simpler than full proposals and the inexperience of the future student is taken into account when being analysed for admission.

Independently of this, it is important to check the format and requirements for this type of document with the targeted university/course. Regardless of the experience of the future student, it is of extreme importance to write a preliminary proposal that is coherent and has clear objectives and envisioned results. Therefore, you will need to dedicate time and effort to prepare a document that will fulfil the expectations of the admissions board. An interesting course of action is to talk to other students and seek other preliminary proposals made in the past (be certain the proposals are good!). It can be useful to ask the admissions office for help with this. Reading relevant articles on the subject can also help you with ideas of what you intend to research and, most importantly, which results you hope to achieve.

The full proposal is normally due later on in the programme. Therefore, there will be plenty of time to adjust the preliminary proposal or even to disregard it completely and begin a new one from scratch if necessary or desired. At this point, reading many relevant articles on the subject is paramount. In addition, as you are already a student in the programme, talking to professors about your future research is normally encouraged. Therefore, write down your ideas and seek your professors for academic advice. If you already have an advisor/supervisor, ask for their permission and opinion before talking to others.

Concerning the subject of the research, it's typical for students to want to propose something grand and bold. However, you must be mindful that you have limited time to finish your dissertation/thesis, and it is necessary to be practical. It's important to have your feet on the ground and not fly too high. It is also important to consider what type of data, interviews, or experiments you will need to complete your research. Some

of them, although very interesting, may be inaccessible or not feasible considering the amount of time and the structure you have available at the moment. In this case, even if the idea may be outstanding, it is better to change the direction of the research a little or even disregard it. Remember that your objective is to complete your research project and to deposit the final deliverable on time. If the subject pleases you, in the future, with more time, you dedicate yourself to that project and make its development viable.

Yulia speaking: Towards the end of my master's degree, I knew I did not want to study more. So, I did not want to do a PhD per Se. However, on that occasion, I was interested in research on radiation protection of astronauts for some years. Also, having gathered knowledge about in-situ resource utilisation on the Moon, I thought about how using local resources on the Moon could serve to build habitats for astronauts and protect them from radiation. Ideally, I wanted a job in the space sector working on this topic. However, it is such a niche topic that I did not find any job offers. Then I thought of doing a PhD on it. So, I started to put together resources to build my PhD project on the topic that was so interesting to me.

Building your project from scratch inevitably requires time and external support. You need at least an academic institution that would enrol you and, in the end, deliver your diploma as well as financial support which can come from the university itself, one of their partners, an industrial player, a governmental agency (e.g. a space agency), or the government. You need a

detailed research plan that needs to be supported by a professor or your potential future supervisor. Your potential investors and partners will review your plan and decide whether to foster you based on your ideas and skills.

Yulia speaking: The whole process of setting up my PhD took nearly two years. I started by writing down my research idea, as best as I managed, including a bibliography review and a clear research question with an outline of how I would break it up and perform my studies for three years. To write the proposal, I consulted a friend halfway through his PhD. I asked for help with academic writing and explained my idea in detail to get the first feedback.

The next step was to look for academic support. I used my network to find a professor working on radiation protection in space around Europe. When that did not work, I started broadening my search and looked for professionals in the field of radiation who might be interested in space exploration. When that did not work, I asked the professors I knew who worked on radiation protection of electronic components, if they would be interested in human radiation protection. When that did not work, I emailed every professor at that point that I could find with an appropriate background, asking if they would be interested in my research idea. When that did not work, I turned back to my university of origin to see if some professors would be open to a new area of research since, at that time, no one in my university was looking at the radiation protection of astronauts on the Moon. And

just like that, I found my professor!

In parallel to my academic search, I was looking for financial support. After looking at potential schemes of financing research, either through a state allocation, a European fund, or industrial support from a company, I decided to bet on another option: setting up a three-way collaboration between the European Space Agency (ESA), my university, and an industrial partner. ESA has the so-called “Open Space Innovation Platform” whose purpose is to unite the agency and industry’s efforts for space exploration. One of their programmes supports co-funded research. That was my plan. In order to apply for the programme with ESA, I needed to have my full research proposal signed off by a research institution (my university) and a written statement of support from an industrial player.

Identifying potential partners from my network, I prepared a research pitch for a company that had already had a good relationship with my university. In the pitch, I highlighted the benefits for the company if they participated in this research. After some refinements, they provided their letter of intent. Up to this point, the process took about eight months. Next, I submitted my application to ESA. In short, there were several rounds of selection and some refinement of the research scope, and about one year later I got a positive response. After another six months, all the documents were signed, and I could finally enrol to start my research.

Adriana speaking: In my case, finding a university/course

for enrolling in my PhD was easier and faster, since I decided to pursue a Doctorate in the same institution and course I had done my first Master's. This decision became very useful because all the disciplines I had attended during the Masters were counted as credits. Therefore, I only needed to take half of the obligatory credits for the PhD. In addition, I was very familiar with the rules, requirements, lines of research, and the faculty, which provided a smooth settle-in process, giving me more time to concentrate on the subject of my future research.

(1) An example list of websites where you can sign up for newsletters about PhD positions and other job offers in academia:

academics.com

computeroxy.com

academicpositions.com

2

How to develop an annual work plan

Creating a work plan isn't a simple task. However, it is essential for planning the execution of your research and ensuring that you stay on the right path throughout your journey. Planning can make a big difference in the quality of your academic work and life while conducting research.

Since plans often change along the way, people usually believe that planning is synonymous with wasting time. Nevertheless, you must remember that plans are not made to be static, but to minimise the need for major course changes. Small changes and adjustments will be necessary during your research and consequently, this will bounce back at the planning. However, if the work plan has been carefully done in the first place, these changes and adjustments will be manageable, and won't have a huge impact on the whole.

Adriana speaking: One tip I received from my doctoral advisor was to create a one-year plan composed of large steps. For example, consider the following annual plan

starting in January:

(Step 1) By March 31st: send the draft proposal to my advisor;

(Step 2) By April 30th: deposit final proposal;

(Step 3) By August 31st: have the results of the questionnaire ready, the bibliography review completed, and the introduction written;

(Step 4) By October 31st: have the first final version of the dissertation/thesis written;

(Step 5) By December 15th: deposit the final version of the dissertation/thesis.

Annual Plan Starting in January

Adriana speaking: To facilitate the visualisation, you can put the information in a table, as shown below (Table 1).

Annual Plan - 2024					
Due Date	March 31st	April 30th	August 31st	October 31st	December 15th
Tasks and Deliverables	Send the draft proposal to my advisor.	Deposit the final proposal.	Have the questionnaire results ready, the literature review completed and the introduction written.	Have the first final version of the dissertation/thesis written.	Deposit the final version of the dissertation/thesis.

Table 1 – Annual Plan

*Adriana speaking: With this long-term plan in hand, you can build more detailed plans for each large step without losing sight of the whole. In my experience, it is not necessary to reach the level of daily planning. Monthly and weekly planning is sufficient. Additionally, you do not need to elaborate on all the detailed plans at once (It is even better if you do not do them all at once!). You can, for example, elaborate the overall plan and the detailed plan for Step 1 (Month by month, and for each week of each month of Step 1). When you accomplish Step 1, you elaborate the detailed plan for Step 2, and so on. For example, **Step 3** of the previous table, whose main goal is “**Have the questionnaire results ready, the bibliography review completed, and the introduction written**”, is detailed below (Table 2).*

Step 3 (May to August) Plan - 2024				
Due Date	May 31st	June 30th	July 31st	August 31st
Tasks and deliverables	<p><i>Elaborate the questionnaire and the necessary documents related to it;</i></p> <p><i>Proceed with bibliography research, reading and writing down the important findings;</i></p>	<p><i>Send the questionnaire for approval;</i></p> <p><i>Proceed with bibliography research, reading and writing down the important findings;</i></p>	<p><i>Send the approved questionnaire to the interviewers;</i></p> <p><i>Adapt the proposal to the format of the dissertation;</i></p> <p><i>Finalise writing the literature review;</i></p>	<p><i>Receive the questionnaire from interviewers and compile the questionnaire results;</i></p> <p><i>Write the final version of the introductory chapter including contextualisation, scope, research aims, hypothesis, literature review, conceptual and methodological framework;</i></p>

Table 2 – Monthly Plan

When making your work plan, be mindful of important deadlines and technicalities that involve experiments that need special bookings and performing interviews. It may be necessary to make specific arrangements, paperwork, and approvals. Make sure that you include these details on your schedule. Also anticipate delays in the schedule, especially when your work depends on the work of others, e.g. in a lab. Finally, plan around big holidays and long conferences when your supervisors may be absent, and your university closed.

*Adriana speaking: The weekly plan for **Step 3.2 (June)** of the previous table is detailed in Table 3.*

Step 3.2 (June) Plan - 2024				
Due Date	Week 1 (1-8)	Week 2 (9-16)	Week 3 (17-23)	Week 4 (24-30)
Tasks and deliverables	<p>Receive the questionnaire's feedback from my advisor;</p> <p>Send the questionnaire to the ethics committee for approval, including the necessary documents;</p> <p>Seek dissertations/theses from the past cohorts (to have a reference in terms of the format of the document and to find the ones related to my topic);</p>	<p>Go to the library to look for more material for the literature review and methodology;</p> <p>Read the material found and write down the important aspects;</p>	<p>Seek for more material if necessary;</p> <p>Read the material found and write down the important aspects;</p>	<p>Receive the questionnaire's feedback from the ethics committee;</p> <p>Make the necessary adjustments in the questionnaire and documents and send them again for approval (if necessary);</p> <p>Seek more material if necessary;</p> <p>Read the material found and write down the important aspects;</p>

Table 3 - Weekly Plan

Once the planning is done, always have it at hand and in sight. It must be contemplated every day. This will make you calmer and more focused, as you know you are on the right path. At the same time, this will make the plan stick in your mind and make it easier to follow through.

3

How to stick to it

A fatal mistake many of us make is thinking that having a satisfactory work plan means that following it will be easy. Most of the time, this isn't the case. To perform the proposed work plan a huge commitment is necessary. This means the work plan alone won't lead to the success of the completion of your activities (It is paramount to point out this!). It is difficult to stay motivated constantly, and as we get beyond what was planned, we tend to abandon the plan altogether.

Therefore, Rule Number 1 to keep up with the plan is to look at it every day, to think about it in a way that you become part of the proposed schedule. The plan needs to be taken care of, it needs to be nurtured and therefore, you must have a lot of affection for it and give it a lot of attention. When you realise that you are deviating from your goals, if necessary, make a small adjustment to your route, but never completely abandon what was planned. To adapt yes, to desert no.

We all know that academic work is full of ups and downs and that we cannot be 100% committed or excited day and night. There will be days when your productivity will be above average,

but on the other hand, there will be other days when inspiration will pass you by. That's why planning exists. With planning, you avoid deviating from your goals when your inspiration has abandoned you. Exactly for this reason, a sufficiently malleable plan is important. In plain English, even if some days of a given week aren't productive, you will still have the rest of the week to achieve the proposed objectives.

Adriana speaking: From where I stand, making adjustments on the journey may be necessary due to assorted situations. The important thing is that you stick to meeting your established goals. For example, suppose there is a day when your production is lower than expected. You can catch up on the other days of the same week to guarantee the weekly objective is met.

Suppose, for instance, that your supervisor tells you that they will take longer than expected to give their feedback on the material you have prepared (It happens more frequently than you think!). In this case, you just need to shift activities from the following week to the current week and your plan will quickly be back on track. In this way, even though your week's planning has changed, you will keep your planning for the present month.

In another example: Suppose that your university's library will be closed in the week you have planned to go there to look for dissertations/theses from the past cohorts, as proposed in Table 3. You just have to make a small adjustment in the order of the activities proposed (see Table 4). The changes were performed in Weeks 1 and 2 (highlighted in green to facilitate the visualisation).

Step 3.2 (June) Plan – 2024 (Adjusted)				
Due Date	Week 1 (1-8)	Week 2 (9-16)	Week 3 (17-23)	Week 4 (24-30)
Tasks and deliverables	<p>Receive the questionnaire's feedback from my advisor;</p> <p>Send the questionnaire to the ethics committee for approval, including the necessary documents;</p> <p>Go to the library to look for more material for the literature review and methodology;</p> <p>Read the material found and write down the important aspects;</p>	<p>Seek dissertations/theses from the past cohorts (to have a reference in terms of the format of the document and to find the ones related to my topic);</p> <p>Seek for more material if necessary;</p> <p>Read the material found and write down the important aspects;</p>	<p>Seek for more material if necessary;</p> <p>Read the material found and write down the important aspects;</p>	<p>Receive the questionnaire's feedback from the ethics committee;</p> <p>Make the necessary adjustments in the questionnaire and documents and send them again for approval (if necessary);</p> <p>Seek more material if necessary;</p> <p>Read the material found and write down the important aspects;</p>

Table 4 – Adjusted Plan for June

Adriana speaking: Naturally, one change may spill over to the next month. However, it would help if you kept the change impact on the planning as minimal as possible. Therefore, my secret tip is to try to reduce the damage. In other words, your work plan needs to be malleable enough to adapt to small changes, but it has to be structured enough for you to stick to it!

Above all, sticking to planning means you don't spend too long without having contact with your work. Every time you spend a long time without being in contact with the text of

the dissertation/thesis or without having contact with your research, you will need time to find your feet again and to get to the point where you stopped. This can generate a feeling of ineffectiveness, that is, a feeling that the work is not progressing. From this feeling to getting to total discouragement it is just a small step. The ideas being developed need to remain fresh in your mind so that you don't need to remember everything you have done every time you write. Therefore, following the plan and keeping what you are doing fresh in your mind is extremely important, because it generates a virtuous cycle where each weekly achievement drives you to take the next steps, ensuring that you stay on schedule.

Yulia speaking: I kept a daily log of my simulations. This helped me keep track of the different things I tried and track my progress. It was a simple Word document organised in a way that was easy for me to fill in and follow. Whenever I left for a long conference or a vacation and spent time away from my simulations, the log helped me to jump right back to where I left things off.

Adriana speaking: It can be useful to use a spreadsheet to keep an overview of the whole while having a vision of what needs to be accomplished in a specific week. I used to print a table with my Annual Plan, one with the Term planning, and one with a Monthly Plan containing the details of the specific steps for each week of the month. This helped me to visualise the bigger picture and at the same time to stay focused on what was important at the moment. In addition, I used to colour

the weeks that had already been completed. This gave me a feeling of progress. These practices made me calmer and encouraged me to move forward, as the progress was visible and clear.

Another important point to keep on track and motivated is regularly maintaining contact with your advisor. Talking about what you are developing, the difficulties, and, the progress you are making, is paramount to keep you calm and motivated. Yes, many advisors aren't exactly what you expected, and many will not give you much attention. This doesn't mean you should stop looking for them and presenting your results. If relating to or contacting your advisor becomes too prominent to harm the development of your work, the advice is to seek your course management and explain the problem. However, whether this is the case, don't leave it until the last minute, when you won't have time to change your advisor or to develop a plan B.

Yulia speaking: When I had stopped progressing, it felt daunting and embarrassing to even think about talking to my supervisor. Ultimately, I realised that I was only making the whole experience worse for myself: I was not being kind to myself by adding self-judgement and stress to the workload. Sometimes we will produce little results, and that's part of research! Whenever I did find the courage to see my advisor, even when I had nothing new to show, I did feel better afterwards. Or we talked about the problems in my way, or I felt heard. This motivated me to find a way forward. If anything, seeing your supervisor regularly is a form of accountability and that can be a

powerful technique to drive you forward through the dry season.

4

How to write academically

Academic writing can be challenging, especially for those unfamiliar with how ideas, propositions, and conclusions must be expressed and especially, contextualised, evidenced, and referenced. Unfortunately, there isn't an easy way to learn academic writing other than to begin writing.

You have to be aware that although academic writing is normally universal, “must have” chapters, citations, and references will vary depending on the format used in each university or course. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to that. Normally, a dissertation/thesis will have an introductory chapter that will give the context of your research, present the research goals, and methodology used, and present a bibliography revision. In the sequence, you will include chapters detailing the specifics of the research topic, and one or several chapters with the research results. Finally, you will add a chapter containing the conclusion, wrapping up the general ideas of your research. Any complementary information that is important for your research can be added as an annexe.

Normally, the university/course will prepare a special class

and written materials with specific rules for writing a dissertation/thesis for the new students. Some Universities even prepare a template for the students, facilitating their work. Anyway, a useful idea is to look for previously approved dissertations elaborated at your university/course to observe how the research was organised and referenced. Concerning citations and references, many useful books and sites can give a very insightful idea on how to do it rightfully. There are also useful automated tools that you can incorporate into your search engines and writing software to both store the source files and cite them correctly, according to the selected referencing style.

Yulia speaking: For me, Zotero was a lifesaver! I built my library from the bibliography review and incorporated the tool into my Word document, so citing throughout my entire thesis was fast and easy.

Adriana speaking: When I was doing my PhD, there were no available digital mechanisms to help me with citations and references (Not that I knew at least!), therefore I had to do it manually. However, in my last research endeavour, I used EndNote and found it very useful and time-saving!

Generally, students need to understand that academic work differs plenty from a work of opinion. An example of the latter is when you write an article for your course/university newsletter expressing your opinion of some area or subject. Everything you affirm in your dissertation/thesis needs to be based on evidence or from previous work that must be properly cited or from evidence provided by your research (this should be documented

as well, that is, the methodology and research method need to be explained and properly presented). Therefore, you need to be careful with this specific topic. The evaluators aren't going to take easy on affirmations that are not evidenced and on results that are not presented with clarity concerning where and how they were obtained. In addition, it is important to note that it is common for some universities/courses not to oblige students to write a dissertation/thesis. Instead, they consider publication of the research in well-recognised journals as a requisite for graduation. It is important to check whether this is the understanding of your course/university.

Adriana speaking: One useful tip I received from my Master's advisor (the first one) to kick off writing my dissertation (I still use it when writing documents) was to assemble the skeleton of the dissertation/thesis (table of contents) in a text file, as the very first research activity. To be more specific, I was asked to write down the names of the chapters, considering one chapter for the introduction, one for the conclusion, and one for the bibliography, and even a draft of the other chapters I believed I would include in the dissertation.

Yulia speaking: I developed a similar habit which helped me tremendously in the long run, both in writing status update reports for my stakeholders and the dissertation. As I did my literature review at the beginning of my research project but had to read new works throughout my doctorate, I kept a record of "Bibliographic Highlights". It was a simple document where I listed the most important,

interesting, and unexpected results from other people's research. It contained bullet points with citations or summaries of the interesting facts and a note for myself on where to find this information in my library. When I was writing my articles, reports, and ultimately, the thesis these highlights came in very handy. I believe I saved hours during those hard long times of writing.

Of course, it is all right if you don't have the skeleton in detail from the start. The skeleton is just for you to organise your ideas and have a big picture of what will be required of you. Even if you consider it too soon to start writing from the very start, it is interesting to have this skeleton ready to be filled with information and data. This seems weird; however, it is indeed useful. As you progress in your reading and come across interesting quotes or information that may be useful for your research, you immediately insert this information into the chapter you consider appropriate.

Adriana speaking: Another important tip I received from my Master's advisor (the first one) related to writing is that at the first moment, you are not to be worried about the format of the text or the connection of the information you feed your chapters with. You must just add stuff in the proper chapter as you read. There will be a moment when you will organise the text. However, in this first phase, you are supposed to collect the information and put it in the right place. Later on, you will organise it.

You mustn't forget to cite the sources correctly and include them

in the bibliography, taking care to note the citation page (As the text is still under construction, avoid paraphrasing at this point). It is normal for students to read, write down quotes, and leave the proper citation and referencing for later. It results that after having read so much, and having collected so much information, it will be complicated to know where you got the information you wrote down. Therefore, you must be careful because it may cost you when your time is tight to make the deposit and it is necessary to find out where you got the information in your text.

Yulia speaking: Outlining my thesis structure right in my first year while doing my first bibliography review helped me organise my reading and library. I kept updating the structure as I was progressing with my work. This exercise helped me keep my dissertation in mind before writing it. Halfway through my PhD, I already had a firm idea of how I would organise my final delivery: which chapters would be there and roughly what each chapter would contain. This helped me begin to write without stressing about the logic and the big picture as it was already taken care of during the long and slow exercise of structuring my thesis from the onset of my work.

Whether you aren't writing in your native language, it is essential to evaluate the need to have a language revision, especially if your advisor is not reviewing your text (in some countries, supervisors/advisors are expected to read/review their student's work, in other countries they are not). Anyway, submitting your text to a language revision is always a good idea, regardless of whether you are writing in your native language. Make sure

you leave time for the reviewers to do their work. This means you need to finish your final version a little before the deadline to submit it. Ensure you agree beforehand with the reviewer about how much time they need to review your text. Language reviewers can be your university's teachers and professors from the language department – some universities offer such help. Otherwise, you can ask your librarian for guidance in looking for a language reviewer. Finally, a trusted person could review the language for you as well.

One final word of advice for writing is about the routine. Writing is part of your work and you don't need to wait for inspiration to knock on your door to start. It is more effective to set up a routine around your writing process. For example, you can start with a small ritual that you always repeat at the beginning. It could be something as simple as pouring yourself a cup of tea or coffee or listening to the same song to help you concentrate. If you repeat the same ritual again and again, after a few times it will be a signal to your brain – “it's time to write!” And it will be easier to stick to it. Another part of the writing routine is the physical setting: place and time. It could be a good idea to create a special writing space where you would associate with deep concentration and writing.

In addition, having a specific time of the day could help you, especially if you tap into your circadian rhythm and select the right time for working a few hours on your thesis. It could be a game-changer. There are several times around the day when we peak and dip our performance so knowing when you are at your best for concentration is very important. Furthermore, it is needless to say, but minimise distractions! No social media, email notifications, or whatever is bound to pull your attention away. Sometimes even your co-workers can be a distraction,

gossiping while you're trying to focus or inviting you on a coffee break. Get to know your limits of concentration and attention and respect them.

Yulia speaking: I had a special place for writing. It was my favourite bar in town. I wrote most of my PhD thesis there. Other people were working on their computers simultaneously, and it helped. Whenever I came to that place with my laptop, my brain knew that it was time to work. I avoided going to the same place to hang out with friends when finishing my thesis to respect my routine. Also, I usually put similar music in the background to get started. I had a concentration album ready for that. Knowing myself, I had to fight my urge to distract myself, so sometimes I would intentionally not connect to WiFi and write offline. It was very productive.

Adriana speaking: My experience in writing was a bit different. I am the kind of person who needs a peaceful, silent, and lonely place to write. People talking, music and agitation usually disturb me, and my productivity normally goes down the drain. That is why I always preferred to write at home where the environment could be more controlled (Not that easy with two kids around!). Writing late at night while sipping a nice cup of tea was an option that I used frequently. When I wanted to change the scenery (and sometimes needed!), I normally sought a nice spot (with a nice view of the landscape) in the library. This allowed me to leave isolation and meet with some peers without losing my concentration on the job that

| *must be done.*

The most important takeaway from what was written above is that you should find the best situation for encouraging your writing. The environment triggering your productivity may differ from person to person. If you don't know which environment works best for you, try different situations and see which one (or which ones) makes you comfortable. Find the arrangement that suits you better.

5

How to collaborate with other researchers

It is understandable that many students, especially the ones in their PhD, might have some restrictions against collaborating with other researchers due to the unprecedented characteristics necessary for most doctoral proposals and research. This can be particularly complicated in some research areas, where for instance, a similar technology developed may implicate an invalidation of the originality of the research project.

However, collaboration is often necessary and sometimes even inevitable, especially when you depend on data or results obtained from other research as an input to your own. Be sure that if you share parts of your work you're doing it in a safe space and consider asking all the people involved to sign confidentiality documents. Most importantly, although cooperation is encouraged, avoid as much as you can, to be dependent on the work of others to have your results.

Adriana speaking: Along my experience in academia, I have seen many academic works that could not be carried on due to the connection with another research that unfortunately could not be put forward, either because the researcher could not get to the results on time, or because the results were not what was expected, jeopardising someone else's research work that was counting on them. Not even to mention situations where one of the students completely gave up on his research and the student who relied on the first one's results to contribute to his work was in a difficult position. Therefore, although cooperation can be interesting, you must consider the pros and the cons. I believe the best situation is to ponder the results of cooperation as something that can add to your work. However, don't be dependent entirely on them to finish your research project.

Often, your professor or supervisor will propose collaborations, and consequently, they will provide the necessary connections to you. But sometimes, you can take the initiative. Of course, double-check with your supervisors before engaging with anything. Good places to find collaborators are, for example, conferences, seminars, published articles, and even LinkedIn. Whether you talk to a lecturer or write to the corresponding author of an article, make sure you are off to a good start. To maximise your chances of success, have a clear picture of a win-win relationship.

- What concrete and unique added value do you bring? E.g. your research facility, your code, etc.

- What do you need from this collaboration?
- How, if you collaborate, do you envision that it can be organised effectively to maximise the chances of success?

Yulia speaking: An anecdote from personal experience – how one email changed my life. I was heading into my second year of a three-year PhD and was getting nowhere good. At least, it felt like that. Regardless, I was certainly losing hope for my PhD project. It was the period of COVID home-based work in Europe, and I signed up for a lecture from a top-tier expert in my field, in Australia. Only a couple of days before the talk, I realised that the talk was held in person, as Australia was out of quarantine. I was inexplicably disappointed by this and out of desperation I wrote an email to the speaker. Mind you, I did not write and send the email immediately after! One suggestion is to write your first message draft and give it a day before sending it. Take your time and write an email to start a serious conversation, if not a professional relationship.

I wrote my email expressing genuine interest in the expert's opinion on my thinking, my way of doing my research; and what the building blocks looked like from an outside view. I did explain in detail what my research question was, what tools I was using, and how I was thinking about my problem in big terms. Of course, I did not include any code or that level of detail, but enough information for my correspondent to comprehend what I intended to do. And it worked! The lecturer responded

within a couple of days, proposing to meet. The expert highlighted how the way my email was written was appreciated and caught interest. Mind you, such experts receive hundreds of similar emails. And so began our collaboration, which was a deciding and crucial part of the quality of my work. Indeed, one email changed my life. I started to see light at the end of the tunnel, of course in PhD-life equivalent terms.

Again, taking the initiative can pay off. After all, it is your research and project. Do it wisely, and when you do it, you take charge. For that, you need to have a plan. Remember to paint a clear picture of what success is and how to get there together with your collaborators.

Yulia speaking: For those of you pursuing a PhD, there may come a moment when you realise that or you get help or you will have to drop a part of the planned work. It happened to me as part of my research was on an adjacent topic, yet it was supposed to complete the whole picture. Whether I had to conduct this research myself I would be depleted of time. So, I proposed a Master-level end-of-study internship. Of course, on my part, it required a lot of preparation, since I needed to guide the research. However, my student carried out the technical work. Both of us gained a lot from this work: my new student gained new knowledge and skills, and I could complete my research on time. On my side, continuously discussing part of my research with another person daily was also beneficial. Due to their busy schedules, such

interactions aren't normally available with the research advisor. Yet it is always interesting having another set of eyes on your ideas and a curious mind challenging your assumptions and conclusions. Finally, as an internship supervisor, you learn a lot about yourself as a teacher and your research topic, since you have to explain it to someone for them to be capable of contributing to it with meaningful work themselves! That is a precious set of skills to practise during a PhD if you have the opportunity.

Adriana speaking: Be mindful though, that it is not in every university/course that a PhD student is permitted to supervise a master's degree student. This may be the case in Brazil, for example. In my PhD, we were conscious that the proposed framework could only be partially implemented due to the time available for conducting the research. Therefore, jointly with my advisor, we decided which parts we would go deep into the line of code and which parts we would leave for future work. Indeed, parts of the framework proposed in my PhD were developed later on by other Master's degree students of my advisor. The important thing to note in this case is that to prove my thesis I was not required to implement all the framework, that is, to go deep in some of the branches of the framework was enough. Therefore, it is important to check your options according to your environment.

On a final note, be truthful and generous with acknowledgements. Remember the people who helped you along the way. One day, you may be that person for someone else.

6

How to choose conferences & journals

“Publish or perish” is probably a phrase you have heard. Depending on your field and doctoral school, this practice is more or less part of your life. Sometimes it can come with a certain amount of pressure but remember that you want to publish. You do want to share your knowledge and research. So how do you do this?

- When is the time to publish?
- How to choose a journal?
- When to present at a conference?
- How to select a conference?

Often, your university will provide guidelines on how much you are expected to present and publish your research. This is very different for most of us internationally. Typically, together with your supervisor, you would write a publication plan with milestones.

About conferences, your research supervisor would normally propose a couple of conferences to join as you progress. It is

often the case that both the supervisor and the student attend conferences jointly. However, this isn't always the case and is not a requirement. You can research and pre-select conferences and journals you want to apply for and propose them to your supervisors. Usually, more senior students and researchers from your field will share their experience with publishing and conferences, and you can follow their examples. Alternatively, you can take to the Internet and search for other options.

When looking for journals, you must consider whether to publish open-access or on a subscription. That affects the publishing procedure, your cost, and the potential for outreach. If you publish open source, your work will be accessible to others for free. In return, you have to pay an editing, or processing, fee as the author to the publisher. Often journal reviewers receive vouchers that they can add up and use to publish their work. The chances that your professor is also a reviewer are high and it is worth asking. Generally, If you publish in an on-subscription journal you don't have to pay any fees. Instead, your potential readers can only access your work if they are subscribed to the journal provider.

After considering open-source Vs on-subscription access journals, you typically look at the journal impact factor. It is extremely varied across the different scientific fields so keep that in mind and ask your supervisors about the appropriate level for your case.

Regarding journals and conferences, watch out for fraudulent activities such as predatory publishing and conferences. Predatory journals will charge fees and barely check the scientific validity of the work published, and you don't want to end up among the authors there. Predatory conferences collect fees and either barely organise the meeting or not at all. People show

up to an empty room and do not have any way to collect their spending.

There is no “shame on you” if you are caught up in one of the above, but to reduce the chances double-check the history of the conference, find its proceedings from previous years, and perhaps write an email to the organisers if the website seems poor. Best of all, talk to many people in your lab/course and see if anyone has heard of this conference.

To avoid predatory journals, normally a simple Google search is enough. Several websites publish their lists of predatory journals. While there is no official title or punishment for such journals, it is probably wise to select another one if you see the one you’ve selected on one of those lists. Again, talk to people about it before you engage with the publishing process. Above all, talk to your supervisor.

How to present your work

The oral presentation of your thesis/dissertation is undoubtedly an important part of your work and should be taken with the utmost seriousness. Therefore, preparing for this phase is vital.

Our advice as a first step worth taking is to check whether you need to make an oral presentation of your dissertation/thesis in your course. If the answer is positive, it is also important to check in which phases of the course a presentation will be necessary. For example, in many courses offered in Brazil, it is common to have an oral presentation with an examining board, both in the master's or doctorate proposal phase and the defence phase.

In other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Australia, an oral presentation often isn't necessary. Nevertheless, normally you are expected to present your work at other occasions, such as scientific conferences, where the same general advice applies.

If oral presentations are necessary for your course, once you have found out at which stage they should be carried out, you must pay attention to the rules of each university/course.

You must especially consider the supposed duration of the presentation, the time for panel questions, the presentation format, the location where the presentation normally is held, the audiovisual resources available on-site, and finally, how to book the room.

Adriana speaking: Throughout my student and professional life, I had the chance to attend many presentations, from undergraduate final works to Master's and Doctoral proposals and defences, among others. Consequently, I had the opportunity to observe some mistakes made by students in their oral presentations which often contribute powerfully to transforming a situation that is normally already tense, into an even more complicated one. One of the biggest problems I've seen in presentations is the disrespect for the time stipulated by the university/course for the oral presentation.

I saw a PhD defence where the 45-minute time limit for oral presentation had passed and the candidate had not finished presenting the introduction...The situation became very complicated, and the student consequently became increasingly nervous. Therefore, you must remember that respecting the established time slot is essential for the success of your oral presentation.

Keeping on time normally is complicated for the students because it is difficult to separate what is and isn't important to be included in the oral presentation, that is, it is sometimes difficult to choose what would be in and out of the presentation. You must bear in mind that you probably spent years studying the

subject of your dissertation/thesis. Therefore, it is natural for you to find it difficult to condense everything you have learned into some minutes (Commonly 15 minutes - for undergraduate work, 30 minutes for - Master's degree, and 45 minutes for a doctorate, but the stipulated time may vary from place to place). However, being able to do this condensation is essential. When preparing the presentation material for defence remember that the examination board, in most cases, has already received your final report/dissertation/thesis in advance and consequently they have already read it. Therefore, you should focus on presenting the core of your research. Topics that usually need to be included in your oral presentation are introduction, motivation, proposal, methodology, results, conclusion, and bibliography.

Yulia speaking: When preparing my thesis defence, I knew I had only 45 minutes to present it. The first rehearsal took more than 2 hours. So of course, I knew that I needed to cut things out. To cut down to 1,5 hours was relatively easy for me alone but I simply could not see what else could “go” to bring the presentation time down to 45 minutes. I turned to my partner, who had enough background knowledge about my research and an appropriate level of studies to understand my work and judge what was essential to present. I won't lie - it was a rather hard process for me to go through (because I was extremely attached to all of my work and wanted to present it all), but I am extremely grateful that we did it. My trusted partner helped me extract exactly what was needed and I could focus more energy on preparing an effective delivery. Eventually, I

wasn't worried about time and finished the presentation in 48 minutes.

Dress appropriately to perform your presentation (obviously respecting the dress code of each location). This demonstrates respect for your work, supervisor, and the examination board. It shows that you have taken the time to think about your professional appearance. Another form of respect for your audience is being prepared for technical issues. Check that the screen-sharing works before you begin, bring backup batteries, a laser pointer if you need one, etc. A good suggestion is to familiarise yourself with the room and technical setup before your presentation. Drop in after hours and familiarise yourself with the space and room setup. Visualise how everything will be placed and where you will be while presenting. This will also help you to reduce unnecessary stress on the big day.

Talk to your advisor about what the presentation will be like, including how you should behave during the presentation and the examination board questions. These aspects can vary greatly from location to location. Therefore, the most important thing is to know what to do in a moment of eventual distress. This should be clear between you and your supervisor. Keep an open mind during the discussion with the board. Yes, this can be difficult, however, treat it as a detailed discussion of your ideas with people who are genuinely interested in you and your research. Do not treat it as “they VS me”.

Adriana speaking: I learned from my doctoral advisors (I had two advisors sharing the advisory) that the examination board is always right. With this, they wanted

to teach me to remain calm when answering the questions posed by the examination board. They advised me to always thank the board for their questions, observations, suggestions, and corrections. They instructed me never to disrespect the board, and that if something more serious happened, they, as my advisors and equals to the board members, would argue with the board, not me.

If you have a phobia of public speaking, we suggest that you seek specialised help. However, do it as soon as possible. Don't leave it to the last minute! Regardless, practising the oral presentation is essential to stay on time, and improving diction, clarity, posture, and confidence when presenting. If necessary, ask your friends to watch your rehearsals and give you honest feedback on what you need to improve. If you are going over the allotted time, you must cut your presentation short and summarise its content.

Remember, the examination board has probably already read your work! Ideally, do several dry runs with different people: your supervisors, fellow students, more senior researchers, friends, and family. Take in feedback. Ask the audience what they enjoyed the most, and where they disconnected from your narration. Have them ask you practical questions. Take notes and rehearse again.

Your slides, or visual support, should be concise and not contain small print. Slides must attract attention. Avoid boring slides. Figures are welcome and are often very illustrative. You can include videos, if essential. However, you must be certain you can play them during your presentation. There isn't anything more annoying than a video that won't open, keeps

freezing, or takes a long time to start. If you can, avoid them.

The same applies to computer programmes. If you intend to run a demo in front of the panel, be sure it gives the expected results and doesn't crash. A good tip is to run it in advance and print the screens with the results on slides or record the screen as you are running a demo ahead of time, and speed it up in replay during your presentation.

You must remember that the room allocated for your presentation may require you to use another computer, which may restrict many of the accesses you have on your own computer. Therefore, testing your presentation in the room and on the computer where it will be performed is vital. You mustn't underestimate this tip, it may cost you dearly! If your presentation will be online, make sure that you are in a quiet room, with sufficient light, that your mic and headphones/ear plugs and all the equipment necessary are working properly, and most importantly, that you have a good internet connection.

On the presentation day, keep a stopwatch visible so you get your bearings and speed up or slow down if necessary. It is always useful to bring a printed copy of your presentation slides, as the power may go out, the computer may fail, your file cannot be found, or any other problem can happen, so, in any case, you have something on hand. Also have a printed copy of your dissertation/thesis, in case you need to consult it in more detail to answer a question from the board. Remember to memorise the names of the examination board members. At the end of the presentation, thank everyone, especially the examination board for their time.

The more you prepare ahead of the big day, the more you can enjoy it when it comes. It is the culmination of your work and, in many universities, is even viewed as a celebration. Maximise

your chances of success and have fun! You will remember this day for a long time.

8

How to stay sane

Developing academic research is a commitment of many months and normally of several years. Sometimes, students are so involved in reading, studying, writing, conducting experiments, and conducting interviews that it becomes difficult to balance personal life and research tasks.

Not to talk about the doubts and fears of not qualifying their work and not having successful results and feedback. Therefore, it is not a surprise that students get distressed during this period and not uncommon that some of them even give up entirely on their research project.

Universities are aware of this problem and normally offer some sort of support for their students. Of course, the type and quality of support will vary, and it is important to be aware of all the mechanisms offered by your course/university in case of need. Regardless of the infrastructure made available by your university, you may find it more comfortable talking to someone from outside of your academic circle. There is no problem with that. The most important thing is to seek help in time. Do not leave for later. To develop academic

research, although time-consuming and distressful, must be simultaneously pleasurable. Therefore, be mindful of signs of too much distress, discouragement, nervousness, apathy, and anything else that makes you feel out of your temper. Seek help!

Yulia speaking: I went through the classic second-year motivation dip and even came close to a depression at some point. I did not feel good about my progress, I did not see a way out, and I did not even want to go to the lab any more. Of course, I thought about quitting the programme. But, because I had built it from nothing and I am not a quitter in life, I pushed on. The longer I pushed, the harder it got: I isolated myself from my community because I did not want people to see that I was struggling. I started to consider seeking help from a work counsellor on campus but I was not convinced it would help me since I felt like my struggle was deeper than work at that point – it had to do with the feeling of self-worth. I happened to see that in France students can get free psychological help. I went for it, thinking I had to do something to get back on track with my research. It worked! It was astonishing to see how after only a couple of sessions with a professional, I was feeling better and working better. All I needed was to build a healthy relationship with my work and its place in my life. If you are not feeling well about your ability to perform, if the imposter syndrome is crushing your productivity, or if you are anxious about where your research is going, do seek help.

Adriana speaking: The support of my family, particularly

my husband, helped me a lot during my academic journey as a student. In my final year of the PhD, knowing that my schedule was very tight (I was teaching at the university concurrently with studying), my husband used to go out with the kids during the weekends and holidays to give me more time to concentrate on working on the thesis. This support was crucial for me because I knew that the kids were having a good time with their father, and this helped me to be more focused and to get the maximum from the time I had available. I used to explain to the kids why in those days I needed to renounce my time with the family, hoping that this would help them feel included in my life and see that this was an effort that would soon be over. However, I know that this isn't the case with everybody. Some people I know had a tough time with their companions and families because they couldn't understand how much time and concentration were needed to develop such a project.

Talking to your companion or family explaining what you are researching and why so much effort is needed to carry on your research project may help them to feel included in this part of your life. This can relieve the tension between your personal life and your life as a student, enabling your loved ones to participate somehow in your achievement.

Yulia speaking: I had open conversations with my mum and my partner about what it takes to do this research and what I may need from them. The support of my partner was monumental: understanding what I was going

through, helping with listening and advice, and even proofreading my work and improving my presentation slides. I knew I could count on him at all times. That was a huge relief. Emotional support is crucial to have enough power to carry on over a long time.

Conclusion

Engaging in academic work either in a research project or pursuing a master's degree or a doctorate certainly is a journey full of ups and downs. By default, the adventure carries lots of pressure. However, as far as the process may affect people differently when all is concluded, the maths normally points to a pleasant experience. Above all, it is a journey of self-discovery where you can test and understand better your capacities, limitations, creativity, and hard work.

To find pleasure in this sometimes-extenuating errand is not obligatory. Nevertheless, finding fulfilment in what is being done is fundamental to your mental health and peace of mind. When you're interested in the subject you are studying, this sense of fulfilment is accomplished more easily. However, appreciating what you are researching will not bring fulfilment if you cannot keep up with the deadlines and commitments necessary to get the desired degree. It is important to keep this in mind.

This booklet was thought to bridge the gap between your will to read, study, and write an academic project; and do reading,

studying, and writing an academic project according to an established schedule, taking the maximum advantage of your available resources and time. Of course, the tips and examples presented in this booklet don't intend to cover all the possible caveats of developing an academic project and do not fit all situations and personalities. There is no "one fits all" recipe.

Our intention with this booklet is to help you primarily in your academic journey. However, we understand that you may have your own ways of working in many of the aspects approached in the booklet. If this is the case, feel free to use what makes sense and put aside what you do not consider important or relevant for your current project.

Above all, you must remember that your dissertation, thesis or any other academic project will not materialise as if in a magic spell. It will demand dedication, commitment, focus, hard work, creativity and time. Add these ingredients to your will of studying and developing your academic project and your chances of succeeding will be high. Complete these ingredients with a well-done planning and you will finish the experience respecting your mental health. Organising your work schedule will give you some time for leisure, for your family, and for things that you consider important. It is worth the effort.

In closing, we congratulate you on moving your studies forward. You are investing time and effort in your development and forging your future. You must feel good about it and proud of yourself. Finally, whether you have any comments or doubts about any items covered in the booklet feel free to contact us. We wish you the best of luck with your studies and a bright future!

Afterword



Dr Adriana Cursino Thomé has an academic background in computer science and international relations, both tailored to the space field. She worked for many years as a university professor in computer science. She is a public servant of the Brazilian government, having first served at the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) and today serving at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI). As a university professor, she had the opportunity to work as a student's academic advisor, having focused many of these works on space applications. Considering the government, she has worked in different agencies and positions for fifteen years. In international relations, she has been participating

in many international conferences and meetings with special emphasis on the Sessions of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC). Another area that she has been active in is related to the empowerment of women in the space field. In this regard, another activity she was particularly involved in was the organisation of the United Nations/Brazil/UAE Space for Women Expert Meeting, held in Dubai in October 2021. In 2023, she was a Mentor of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) 's Space for Women programme.

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AFTERWORD



Dr Yulia Akisheva stands as an award-winning aerospace engineer and dedicated advocate for gender equality, currently at the forefront of ground-breaking research in the space field. In 2023, she gained a PhD in the Protective Use of Regolith for Planetary and Lunar Exploration (PURPLE) – a venture supported by the European Space Agency (ESA), TRAD Tests & Radiations, and ISAE-SUPAERO. Today, Yulia works as an independent consultant on space exploration projects and a coach in effective communication for engineers. Adept in the realms of debate coaching and communications, Yulia takes an active role

in organising public debates and coaching sessions for engineering students. Her talk at TEDx called "To Mars Together: 5 Reasons to Explore the Red Planet", stands as a testament to her ability to captivate and inspire. Yulia has won the French National Engineering Award in 2022 and the Pioneer Award of the Space Generation Advisory Council in 2023 among several other previous awards.

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