

Conducting a literature search for higher degree theses

It is very important for those students considering embarking upon a higher degree thesis, to check to see whether anyone else has already produced something similar (either in Australia or overseas).

There are some major databases that need to be checked:

⇒ **ProQuest Digital Dissertations (also known as (aka) Dissertations Abstracts Online)**

- Access through the Library's [CrossSearch](http://www.lib.adfa.edu.au/crosssearch.html) service (<http://www.lib.adfa.edu.au/crosssearch.html>)
- Contains searchable records for 99 percent of all American doctoral dissertations completed since 1900 and selected masters theses since 1962
- Full text abstracts are available and searchable for all theses since 1980 (and for most theses pre-1980)
- Since 1988 the database has been including records (*selectively*) for dissertations lodged at Canadian, European and Australian universities
- Since 1997 almost all US dissertations have been scanned and are available to be downloaded in full text
- But be warned! PDD cannot be relied on as a mechanism for identifying non-American dissertations

⇒ **Index to Theses (aka British Index to Theses or BriTs Index)**

- Access through the Library's [CrossSearch](http://www.lib.adfa.edu.au/crosssearch.html) service (<http://www.lib.adfa.edu.au/crosssearch.html>)
- Contains searchable records for all higher degree dissertations completed at British or Irish universities since 1716
- Full text abstracts are available and searchable for almost all theses from 1986 (and selectively for those completed between 1970 and 1985)

⇒ **Theses Canada Portal**

- Available at: <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/thesescanada/index-e.html>
- Will allow you to search the records of all theses in the National Library of Canada theses collection, which was established in 1965
- 55 Canadian universities are currently submitting theses to the National Library of Canada for cataloguing

⇒ **Australian Digital Thesis Program (aka ADT database)**

- Available through the Academy Library web site at:
<http://www.lib.adfa.edu.au/adt/index.html>
- Recently developed portal for obtaining online access to Australian theses in full text
- 28 Australian universities are now contributing theses
- Since its inception, several thousand theses has been digitised through the program
- UNSW@ADFA is a contributor to the program and seeks to achieve digitisation of all higher degree theses completed at ADFA
- Students should not consider a search of the ADT database to be a reliable procedure for identifying all Australian higher degree theses

⇒ **Australian National Bibliographic Network (aka NBD)**

- The NBD is the mechanism for searching for Australian higher degree dissertations completed since 1990 (and is more reliable for this purpose than a search of the ADT database)
- Staff and students at ADFA do not have desktop access. A request to search the NBD must be made to the Academy Library (via the '[Ask-Us](#)' service)
- The NBD simply provides searchable catalogue records. There are no abstracts and no full-text files included.
- For pre-1990 theses it is necessary to search the hardcopy volumes of 'The Union list of higher degree theses in Australian libraries' (held in the Academy Library in the Reference Collection at AC 895 .A8 U5)

Question: What about higher degree theses that are works in progress?

Unfortunately there is no reliable mechanism for identifying works in progress. A new database called PhdData at <http://www.phddata.org/> is seeking to fill the role here. PhdDate is a private initiative that is still not well known. At this stage it is certainly not reliable for purposes of identifying work in progress.