



PhD RESEARCH CHECKLIST

30+ Essential Tasks for Doctoral Success

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ABOUT THIS CHECKLIST

This comprehensive checklist is designed to help PhD students and researchers stay organized throughout their doctoral journey.

- Track your progress year by year
- Never miss a critical milestone
- Prepare thoroughly for thesis submission

Last Updated: June 2026

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

- Print this checklist and keep it visible on your desk
- Check off (☑) each task as you complete it
- Use the "Due Date" column to set personal deadlines
- Review your progress monthly with your supervisor

PHD JOURNEY CHECKLIST & PROGRESS TRACKER

Year 0: Pre-PhD / Application Phase (12–18 Months Before Start)

No.	Task	Status	Due Date
1	Research potential universities and programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Identify potential supervisors	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Prepare for standardized tests (GRE, GMAT, TOEFL, IELTS)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	Request letters of recommendation (3–4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	Draft and revise Statement of Purpose (SOP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Prepare research proposal (if required)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7	Contact potential supervisors	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Submit applications by deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9	Attend interviews (if invited)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10	Review offer letters and funding packages	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11	Accept offer and confirm admission	<input type="checkbox"/>	



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Year 1: Foundation & Coursework (Months 1–12)

No.	Task	Status	Due Date
12	Attend orientation and meet advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13	Complete core required courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14	Explore potential research areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15	Build relationships with faculty and peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16	Establish a routine and time management system	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17	Conduct preliminary literature review	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18	Identify research gap	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19	Start forming dissertation committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20	Begin pilot study or preliminary research	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Year 2: Proposal & Comprehensive Exams (Months 13–24)

No.	Task	Status	Due Date
21	Complete remaining coursework	<input type="checkbox"/>	
22	Finalize dissertation committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	
23	Prepare for comprehensive/qualifying exams	<input type="checkbox"/>	
24	Take comprehensive/qualifying exams	<input type="checkbox"/>	
25	Write dissertation proposal	<input type="checkbox"/>	
26	Defend proposal to committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	
27	Obtain ethics approval (IRB)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
28	Finalize research methodology	<input type="checkbox"/>	
29	Develop data collection instruments	<input type="checkbox"/>	
30	Pilot test instruments	<input type="checkbox"/>	
31	Apply for research funding/grants	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Year 3: Data Collection & Analysis (Months 25–36)

No.	Task	Status	Due Date
32	Complete data collection	<input type="checkbox"/>	
33	Perform data cleaning and preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
34	Begin data analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	
35	Complete quantitative/qualitative analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	
36	Write results/findings chapter	<input type="checkbox"/>	
37	Write methodology chapter	<input type="checkbox"/>	
38	Submit first publication (if possible)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
39	Attend conferences and present findings	<input type="checkbox"/>	
40	Apply for dissertation completion fellowship	<input type="checkbox"/>	



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Year 4: Dissertation Writing & Revision (Months 37–48)

No.	Task	Status	Due Date
41	Write discussion chapter	<input type="checkbox"/>	
42	Write conclusion chapter	<input type="checkbox"/>	
43	Complete full draft of dissertation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
44	Incorporate advisor feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	
45	Submit chapters to committee for review	<input type="checkbox"/>	
46	Revise based on committee feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	
47	Format dissertation according to university guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	
48	Prepare for job market	<input type="checkbox"/>	
49	Apply for jobs or postdoctoral positions	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Year 5+: Defense & Final Submission (Months 49–60+)

No.	Task	Status	Due Date
50	Complete final revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	
51	Prepare defense presentation (30–45 minutes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
52	Conduct mock defense with peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	
53	Schedule defense date	<input type="checkbox"/>	
54	Defend dissertation (oral examination)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
55	Complete revisions based on defense feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	
56	Obtain final approval signatures	<input type="checkbox"/>	
57	Submit final dissertation to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	
58	Convert dissertation into journal articles	<input type="checkbox"/>	
59	Update CV and LinkedIn profile	<input type="checkbox"/>	
60	Begin postdoctoral or faculty position	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Ongoing Tasks (Throughout the PhD Journey)

No.	Task	Frequency	Status
61	Maintain literature review database	Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/>
62	Network with peers and faculty	Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/>
63	Apply for grants and funding opportunities	Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/>
64	Attend workshops and training sessions	Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/>
65	Back up all research files (cloud + external drive)	Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Progress Summary

Phase	Total Tasks	Completed	Progress (%)
Pre-PhD / Application	11		
Year 1	9		
Year 2	11		
Year 3	9		
Year 4	9		
Year 5+	11		
Ongoing Tasks	5		
Overall	65		

PRO TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. CREATE A TIMELINE

- Break down your PhD into smaller milestones. Use project management tools like Trello, Asana, or a simple spreadsheet.

2. MEET REGULARLY WITH ADVISOR

- Schedule weekly or bi-weekly meetings. Come prepared with specific questions and progress updates.

3. WRITE DAILY

- Write for at least 30 minutes each day. Small consistent progress beats sporadic intense sessions.

4. BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK

- Connect with fellow PhD students. Form writing groups and accountability partnerships.

5. PRIORITIZE SELF-CARE

- PhD is a marathon, not a sprint. Exercise, sleep, and take breaks to avoid burnout.

6. PLAN FOR PUBLICATIONS

- Aim for 2-3 publications during your PhD. They boost your CV and job prospects.

NEED ADDITIONAL HELP?

If you need personalized guidance for your PhD journey, our expert team is here to help.

- Free 15-minute consultation
- PhD admission consulting
- Research support services
- Data analysis (SPSS, R, NVivo)
- Thesis & dissertation writing
- Publication support



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MORE FREE RESOURCES

- Free SOP Template (Fillable): <https://adpublications.org/free-sop-template>
- Journal Selection Guide: <https://adpublications.org/journal-selection-guide>
- PhD Timeline Template: <https://adpublications.org/phd-timeline>
- Supervisor Matching Service: <https://adpublications.org/supervisor-matching>

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