

A/Prof Geoff Lummis—notes for discussion.

- **For A/Prof. Lisa Paris—Curtin “University’s School of Education**
- **TEAMS —21st August 2025 3:30pm – 4:40pm WST**

Exegesis–Exhibition Model in Visual Arts Education PhD and M/Phil

Introduction

This doctoral and M/Phil research integrates theoretical inquiry with creative practice, comprising 50% written exegesis and 50% practical exhibition. The study investigates the role of visual arts in educational contexts, exploring how artistic practice can both inform and be informed by pedagogical theory.

The exegesis critically engages with relevant literature, educational frameworks, and artistic methodologies, situating the creative outcomes within broader academic discourse. It addresses key themes such as the relationship between artmaking and learning, the development of visual literacy, and the potential of artistic practice as a form of research.

The accompanying exhibition functions as both a body of original creative work and a form of knowledge production, offering a tangible exploration of the concepts discussed in the written component. Together, the exegesis and exhibition operate in dialogue, demonstrating how practice-based research can contribute to understanding and advancing visual arts in education. This dual approach affirms the value of integrating creative practice into scholarly inquiry, emphasising the transformative potential of art in shaping educational experiences and fostering critical, imaginative engagement.

Key Points: Exegesis–Exhibition Model in Visual Arts Education PhD and M/Phils

1. Definition and Purpose of the Exegesis

- Derived from Greek *exēgeisthai* (“to lead out”), meaning to interpret and draw meaning from a ‘text’—in this context, the creative process and artefacts.
- Serves to **support, contextualise, and amplify** the creative project, demonstrating scholarly depth and relevance to the discipline.
- Not merely an explanation of the artwork’s meaning; rather, a **reflective, critical, and demonstrative document** showing research processes, theoretical grounding, and contribution to knowledge.

2. Integration with the Creative Exhibition

- In this research model, the exegesis and the creative work are **interdependent**: theory informs practice, and practice informs theory.
- The exhibition is the primary creative outcome; the exegesis records, analyses, and positions it in cultural, educational, and theoretical contexts.
- This **dialogue between making and writing** is ongoing throughout the research, rather than sequential.

3. Essential Components of the Exegesis

- **Literature and Context:** Demonstrates familiarity with prior research, relevant theories, and comparable creative works.
- **Research Design and Methods:** Clearly articulates methodology (often a weak point in candidates’ work—clarity here is crucial).
- **Critical Reflection:** Documents the evolution of the project, challenges faced, and how creative decisions were informed by theory and research.
- **Contribution to Knowledge:** Articulates originality, significance, and relevance to visual arts education.

4. Form and Flexibility

- While some follow a **conventional academic structure**, others adopt **experimental or hybrid forms** (including visuals, diagrams, interviews, digital media).
- Must remain academically rigorous—risk of “creative explaining creative” without evidence-based grounding should be avoided.
- Balance accessibility, engagement, and scholarly integrity.

5. Common Challenges and Strategies

- **Anxiety & Uncertainty:** Often stems from inconsistent guidelines across institutions—seek clarity early and advocate for clear supervisory guidance.
- **Avoiding Over-Simplification:** Don’t reduce the exegesis to a “show and tell”; instead, embed deep critical and theoretical engagement.
- **Maintaining Dual Coherence:** The exegesis and exhibition must be able to stand individually yet form a unified, coherent research contribution.

6. Application to Visual Arts in Education

- Research topics may explore **curriculum design, visual literacy, pedagogy, digital media in art education, cultural perspectives, or art-based learning strategies.**
- The exhibition may function as a **pedagogical tool**, a case study, or a site for participatory/educational engagement.
- The exegesis situates this creative work within **educational theory, policy frameworks, and scholarly debates.**

7. Outcome

- The combined exegesis–exhibition is both a **scholarly and creative contribution**: the written work articulates the intellectual significance, and the exhibition embodies the research in visual form.
- Together, they expand understanding of how visual arts can be integrated into and transform educational contexts.

PhD & M/Phils in Visual Arts Education — 50/50 Exegesis & Exhibition Checklist

I. Exegesis (50%) — Written Component

Purpose: Support, contextualise, and critically reflect on the creative project.

Core Elements to Include:

- ☐ **Introduction** – Research aims, questions, and rationale.
- ☐ **Literature Review** – Relevant theories, prior research, and comparable creative work in visual arts and education.
- ☐ **Contextual Framework** – Position within cultural, educational, and artistic contexts.
- ☐ **Research Methodology** – Clear description of creative practice methods, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations.
- ☐ **Critical Reflection** – Ongoing documentation of creative decision-making, challenges, and theoretical influences.
- ☐ **Integration with Creative Work** – Show how practice and theory informed each other throughout the project.
- ☐ **Contribution to Knowledge** – Originality, significance, and implications for visual arts education.
- ☐ **Conclusion** – Summary of outcomes, limitations, and future research potential.
- ☐ **References & Appendices** – Comprehensive, correct, and relevant.

Suggestions for Success

- Keep language **critical, reflective, and demonstrative**, not descriptive only.
- Avoid “creative explaining creative” without evidence or scholarly grounding.
- Include diagrams, images, and visual aids where they clarify concepts.

II. Exhibition (50%) — Creative Component

Purpose: Present the creative work as the embodiment of the research.

Key Considerations

- ☐ **Concept Development** – Define central ideas, educational relevance, and target audience.
- ☐ **Artistic Coherence** – Ensure work aligns with research aims and exegesis discussion.
- ☐ **Research Integration** – Reflect theories, educational strategies, or pedagogical experiments.
- ☐ **Technical Quality** – Professional standards of presentation, installation, and documentation.
- ☐ **Engagement & Accessibility** – Consider audience interaction, inclusivity, and learning outcomes.
- ☐ **Documentation** – Photograph/record exhibition for inclusion in exegesis and examination.

III. Process & Management

- ☐ **Timeline Alignment** – Develop a project plan with parallel milestones for writing and making.
- ☐ **Regular Reflection** – Keep a research journal linking creative practice to theoretical insights.
- ☐ **Supervisor Feedback** – Schedule consistent reviews for both components.
- ☐ **Compliance** – Follow university guidelines for format, word count, and submission requirements.

Final Goal: The written exegesis and the creative exhibition **stand alone as rigorous contributions** yet form a unified research outcome that advances visual arts in education.

Survival Reflections from a Supervisor

1. Research Scope and Focus

- Align your project with your university’s research guidelines to keep it achievable.
- Avoid overly complex ethics processes—research involving school children can bring significant delays and challenges due to Education Department sensitivities.
- Consider focusing on teacher surveys, followed by semi-structured interviews, as these are easier to conduct and gain approval for.
- Use **autoethnographic approaches** to connect your personal practice with your research.
- Keep the **educational focus tight**—ideally, your research question should emerge from your professional experience.
- Ensure your work is relevant and beneficial to other teachers and aligned with **ACARA or State** priorities—it is not a fine arts PhD or M/Phil.

2. Exhibitions and Practice

- If possible, exhibit work in a gallery through small group exhibitions—treat public exhibitions as equivalent to publications.
- Document all exhibitions formally; a **portfolio approach** can strengthen your submission and help examiners assess your contribution.
- Plan a **series of public exhibitions** where possible, each with high-quality documentation.

3. Supervision and Feedback

- Schedule **regular, focused meetings** with your supervisor.
- Aim for **practical, targeted outputs** rather than large, unwieldy chunks of writing.
- Provide concise, well-structured drafts your supervisor can review quickly to enable timely feedback.

4. Writing and Documentation

- Begin **all writing** as polished, academic text with correct (e.g., **APA 7th edition**) referencing (both in-text and end-text) from the outset—don't leave it until the end.
- Engage a formatting expert early to set up your exegesis structure, including all relevant headings through to appendices.
- Maintain a consistent and professional academic voice throughout.

5. Time Management and Workflow

- Develop effective **time management habits** from the start.
- If balancing work and family, schedule both **writing time** and **creative production time** in focused blocks.
- Adjust milestones when life events disrupt your plan—flexibility is part of the process.

6. Wellbeing and Support

- Monitor your wellbeing—PhD or M/Phil study is demanding, and unexpected challenges will arise.
- Seek support when needed, whether from supervisors, peers, or university services.
- Keep a diary of your communications and review as required. Often our ambition does not always factor in the practical limitations of life.
- Finally, life is unpredictable so you will need to readjust your milestones—be honest, you are only human!