

# NELSON MANDELA

## UNIVERSITY

### INSTITUTIONAL REGULATORY CODE (IRC) (Policies, Procedures, Rules etc.)

*To be completed by initiator of policy/policy owner:*

<b>1. POLICY TITLE:</b>	<b>POLICY ON MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL DEGREES</b>
<b>2. FIELD OF APPLICATION:</b> <small>(All persons to whom policy applies)</small>	Postgraduate students; academic staff and professional staff
<b>3. COMPLIANCE OFFICER(S):</b> <small>(Persons responsible for ensuring policy implementation)</small>	Faculties; Research Management; Administration
<b>4. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION</b> <small>(State the stakeholder group/s consulted during policy formulation/revision)</small>	Executive Deans, Supervisors of Master's and Doctoral students, Master's and Doctoral students, Faculty administration and relevant administrative support staff, SRC
<b>5. DESIGNATION OF POLICY OWNERS:</b> <small>(Persons responsible for maintaining policy)</small>	DVC: Research, Innovation and Internationalisation + Director: Research Capacity Development

**POLICY HISTORY** *(To be completed by policy owner)*

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# MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL DEGREES POLICY

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

**DOS** – Director of School

**DVC** – Deputy Vice-chancellor

**ECS** – Executive Committee of Senate

**FMC** – Faculty Management Committee

**FPGSC** – Faculty Postgraduate Studies Committee

**FREC** – Faculty Research and Engagement Committee (or equivalent Faculty Committee)

**HEAVA** – Honorary, Emeritus, *Ad Personam*, Visiting, Adjunct Professorial Titles

**HEADS** – Higher Education Access and Development Services

**HEQSF** – Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework

**HOD** – Head of Department

**IRC** – Institutional Regulatory Code

**ITS** – Integrated Tertiary Software

**PGSC** – Postgraduate Studies Committee

**RPL** – Recognition of Prior Learning

**Supervisor** – Please read “supervisor” in relation to Master’s by coursework and research, and “promotor” in relation to Doctoral degrees.

# MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL DEGREES POLICY

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Policy on Master's and Doctoral Degrees sets out an institutional framework for the administration of postgraduate studies at the master's and doctoral levels. The Policy acknowledges and is guided by the relevant legislation and policy guidelines which currently shape the Higher Education landscape in South Africa. The Policy supports the Nelson Mandela University's Vision 2020 strategic objective to progressively increase its postgraduate enrolments at Master's and Doctoral levels and to create an environment that is supportive of postgraduate candidates, so as to increase student success.

## 2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The policy is intended to provide an institutional framework that will inform rules and procedures relating to postgraduate studies namely, Master's degree and Doctoral degrees as defined in the *Nelson Mandela University General Prospectus*.

The University offers Master's via coursework, research Master's and Doctoral degree programmes as aligned to the HEQSF framework (Addendum 1).

## 3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

3.1 In accordance with this policy, the University strives to adhere to the following principles:

- Promoting access to qualifying students for study at the postgraduate level
- Advancing academic excellence
- Ensuring a quality learning experience for registered Master's and Doctoral candidates
- Developing the next generation of researchers who are able to engage in research that advances disciplinary knowledge and produces innovations and technologies for the benefit of society.

3.2 Each faculty through its respective Faculty Postgraduate Studies Committee (FPGSC) is required to develop appropriate structures and procedures for the planning, management and administration of master's and doctoral degrees appropriate to its disciplinary context and aligned to institutional policy provisions. The Faculty Board assumes responsibility for ensuring that the composition of the FPGSC reflects the range of disciplines that comprise the faculty, and for ensuring that sufficient seniority and diversity are reflected in order to ensure the FPGSC's credibility.

3.3 Each faculty is required to communicate to the postgraduate students the Nelson Mandela University policy, specific programme rules and the faculty's procedures in a

published Faculty Guide to Postgraduate Studies (Addendum 2). The Executive Dean of the faculty together with the FPGSC assumes responsibility for compiling the latter guide with support of Academic Administration.

- 3.4 The FPGSC is established by the Faculty Board, in the execution of its responsibilities regarding matters pertaining to postgraduate studies and may recommend matters to the PGSC.

## **4 APPLICATION, SELECTION, ADMISSION AND REGISTRATION FOR MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL STUDIES**

### **4.1 Application**

- 4.1.1 Candidates should apply, as per published dates in the *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus*, for admission to the University in the academic year prior to the year in which they intend to register for the first time.
- 4.1.2 Applicants wishing to pursue either a master's by dissertation or doctoral studies are required, as part of the application process, to provide a broad outline of a proposed area of research, or a preliminary proposal, or as per Faculty/School/Department application requirements. Applicants should consult the Postgraduate Guide/Prospectus for the Faculty requirements for applications.
- 4.1.3 Applicants wishing to pursue a coursework master's will receive guidance from the assigned postgraduate programme co-ordinator/designated staff member with regard to the choice of a research topic to fulfil the requirements for the treatise component of their chosen degree programme.
- 4.1.4 Completed application forms, together with the required supporting documentation, must be submitted before the prescribed dates to the Postgraduate Admissions Department to ensure that selection can be timeously undertaken by the relevant academic department or school.
- 4.1.5 Faculties should provide clear guidelines on the admissions requirements for their specific postgraduate degree programmes in the *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus* and the Faculty's Guide to Postgraduate Studies.

### **4.2 Selection**

- 4.2.1 Candidates for postgraduate degrees are selected and admitted in terms of the provisions stipulated in the *University Admissions Policy* (see IRC 307.01) and the minimum qualification for admission to master's and doctoral studies as provided for in the HEQSF. Senate may on recommendation of Faculty Board approve additional requirements for admission to master's and doctoral studies.

4.2.2 In selecting candidates, the HOD/designated staff member is required to give due consideration to the following aspects:

- The admission requirements determined by faculties for admission to specific programmes (see section G4 of the *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus*);
- Whether the applicant would qualify for RPL as specified in the *University Recognition of Prior Learning Policy* (see IRC 307.03);
- The availability of research supervision capacity within the specific discipline;
- The appointment of a suitable research supervisor(s);
- The availability of appropriate resources to ensure the necessary research can be undertaken (e.g. laboratory space and equipment);
- The availability of research funding to ensure feasibility of the envisaged research project of applicant (e.g. running costs);
- Alignment of the applicant's intended research with the department/faculty/institutional research focus areas or themes.

4.2.3 Following the departmental and/or School (dependant on the Faculty) selection process, the HOD/designated staff member (or Director of School) forwards such selection decisions for final approval by the FPGSC.

4.2.4 The FPGSC is responsible for dealing with appeals regarding the admission of postgraduate students.

### **4.3 Admissions**

Master's and doctoral students are admitted either as full-time or part-time candidates. This designation impacts on amongst others, the minimum and maximum study periods permissible for a specific candidate, the down payment associated with registration and tuition fees, the awards made in terms of certain scholarships and bursaries, and departmental/faculty expectations of the candidate.

For the purpose of this policy a *full-time candidate* is defined as one of the following:

4.3.1 One who is available on a day-to-day basis to attend and participate in the postgraduate programme of the Faculty in which he or she is registered;

4.3.2 A candidate who does not fulfil the definition of a full-time candidate, as defined above, will be automatically deemed by the University to be a *part-time candidate*.

4.3.3 Changes to the status of a candidate from part-time to full-time or vice versa need to be approved by the Chairperson of the FPGSC.

4.3.4 A full-time member of the University's staff may not be registered as a full-time candidate for a postgraduate degree, except with the permission of the Head of Department/Director of School who will need to satisfy the FPGSC that adequate arrangements have been made for the fulfilment of the normal duties of the candidate concerned.

#### **4.4 Registration**

A candidate may proceed with registration once he/she has received confirmation of acceptance, in writing, from the relevant Postgraduate Admissions Office.

4.4.1 Master's and Doctoral students are required to register in accordance with the University-defined registration periods and procedures.

4.4.2 A student, who is permitted to register after the University-defined registration period will be required to pay a late registration fee.

4.4.3 In the initial year of study, prospective candidates for postgraduate degrees involving research only (that is Master's by dissertation and Doctoral) are permitted to register throughout the year. However, it should be noted that the first year of registration will only be recognised as a full academic year, in terms of the minimum/maximum period of study if registration takes place on or before the last working day of April of any given year (Refer to the *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus*).

4.4.4 Postgraduate candidates who register as stated above in 4.4.3 after the last working day of April will pay fees on a pro rata basis for the first year of study.

#### **4.5 Minimum and maximum period of study**

4.5.1 The *minimum period of study* for a postgraduate degree is as follows:

- Master's degree: One (1) year
- Doctoral degree: Two (2) years

4.5.2 The *maximum period of study* for higher degrees shall not normally extend beyond the following periods:

##### **4.5.2.1 Full-time studies**

- Master's by coursework and treatise: Three (3) years
- Master's by dissertation: Three (3) years
- Doctoral studies: Four (4) years

##### **4.5.2.2 Part-time studies**

- Master's by coursework and treatise: Four (4) years
- Master's by dissertation: Four (4) years
- Doctoral studies: Six (6) years



- 4.5.3 Students who are registered for master's and doctoral degrees will generally not be permitted to extend their registration beyond two years after the normal maximum study period, as stipulated above, has elapsed.
- 4.5.4 A student who exceeds the normal maximum years of study and wishes to continue his/her studies must submit an application (on the prescribed form) together with the recommendation of the FPGSC, for extension of candidature as follows:
- For extension of a period up to one academic year to the FPGSC;
  - In the event of an extension for a period exceeding 12 months (one academic year), an application should be submitted to the Postgraduate Studies Committee upon recommendation of the relevant FPGSC. PGSC may grant further extensions if there are compelling reasons to do so.
- 4.5.5 All applications for extensions of study period should reach the relevant committee before the last day of November for the following academic year.
- 4.5.6 In the event that a candidate may wish to lodge an appeal against the decision of FPGSC, such appeal must be submitted to the PGSC.
- 4.5.7 Appeals against the decisions of PGSC should be directed to ECS.
- 4.5.8 The decision of ECS is final and binding should a student appeal against the PGSC decision.
- 4.5.9 A change of research topic should not be constituted as motivation to extend unduly the maximum study period.
- 4.5.10 A change of supervisor may be considered as motivation to extend the maximum study period, provided that this is formally proposed and accepted by the FPGSC.

#### **4.6 Continuing Registration**

- 4.6.1 The continued registration of a postgraduate candidate is subject to a favourable annual progress report. The Faculty Administration is responsible for initiating the report annually. The postgraduate student is responsible for completing the report by the date published and submitting this for endorsement by the research supervisor.
- 4.6.2 All master's and doctoral candidates are required to renew their registration annually within the periods designated by the university until completion of their studies.
- 4.6.3 Students are also responsible for the payment of the prescribed study fees.
- 4.6.4 From the second year of registration to completion, it is the responsibility of the Faculty Administration to report unregistered candidates to the relevant HOD/DOS and the Chairperson of the FPGSC.

- 4.6.5 The relevant HOD/DOS shall investigate, through the assigned supervisor(s)<sup>1</sup> the reasons for non-registration and assess whether eligible students should be informed regarding the option to place studies in abeyance.
- 4.6.6 Any candidate who misses the deadline for registration will require the recommendation of the Registrar in order for late registration to be condoned.
- 4.6.7 The years during which the registration has lapsed (that is, where a student has not placed studies in abeyance, or has failed to register, or has not made any contact with the University) would be considered as part of the formal prescribed maximum study period for the completion of the degree.
- 4.6.8 If either the revisions to the treatise/dissertation/thesis or the evaluation or re-evaluation are not completed in time for graduation, the candidate must re-register under the relevant re-submission or revision registration category for an additional academic year. A master's candidate must submit revisions within 3 months and a doctoral candidate within 6 months following the FPGSC's recommendation (see 6.10.3(a)).

#### **4.7 Retrospective Registration**

Backdating of a candidate's registration shall not be permitted except by permission of ECS in exceptional circumstances.

#### **4.8 Studies in abeyance**

A continuing master's or doctoral candidate may apply, in extraordinary circumstances, for permission to have his/her registration placed in abeyance for a defined period of one academic year. Permission for abeyance should be considered as the exception rather than the norm.

- 4.8.1 Such permission is granted by the FPGSC upon consideration of a motivation that provides clear reasons submitted by the specific candidate through his/her supervisor(s) to the HOD/DOS in the form of a letter outlining the reasons for such an application, as published in the *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus*, for the relevant academic year.
- 4.8.2 A registered student should request an abeyance within nine (9) months of that year's registration, if proof can be provided (doctors certificate or other documentation) of issues occurring within the first six (6) months of that academic year and consequently no meaningful academic progress was achieved, and no supervision was received. A

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to supervisor in this Policy should be read to refer to both supervisors of master's studies as well as promoters of doctoral candidates.

strong motivation, with supporting documents, may be submitted to FPGSC for consideration for studies being placed in abeyance for the current academic year.

- 4.8.3 During the period of abeyance, the student is not required to pay the study fees and will not be eligible to receive supervision or services from the university.
- 4.8.4 No retrospective applications for studies to be placed in abeyance will be considered in cases of lapsed registration.
- 4.8.5 In exceptional cases, PGSC may grant permission for studies to be placed in abeyance for an additional year but such abeyance may not be granted for more than a total of two years during the complete maximum period of study for the degree.
- 4.8.6 The period of approved abeyance is not constituted as an academic year.

#### **4.9 Orientation or Induction**

The responsibility for induction or orientation of new postgraduate candidates as well as new supervisors, rests with the faculty/academic department.

##### **4.9.1 *Faculty guide for postgraduate studies***

- 4.9.1.1 All new postgraduate candidates and new supervisors should be provided with University and faculty-specific requirements and guidelines/codes of practice relating to postgraduate studies and research.
- 4.9.1.2 Although this policy recognises that each faculty's internal framework for managing research candidates differs, certain facets of postgraduate supervision must be clearly specified in an official faculty guide for postgraduate studies (as is the case for any module) that is provided to all postgraduate candidates (Refer to Addendum 3).
- 4.9.1.3 The Faculty Guide for postgraduate studies and research should be compiled and disseminated by the FPGSC in consultation with FMC and Board of Faculty.

##### **4.9.2 *Faculty/departmental induction***

- 4.9.2.1 Each faculty must ensure that its new postgraduate research candidates take part in an effective induction process that assists them in understanding the academic structures, available resources and procedures involved in conducting their research.
- 4.9.2.2 The faculty may use various methods to structure the induction process, including a formal programme of activities that is organised on a faculty-wide basis, or within specific academic units such as schools or departments. The induction and training of postgraduate candidates should be seen as an ongoing process, a significant part of which takes place in the relationship between the supervisor and candidate.

4.9.2.3 Further guidelines for aspects that should be included in the induction process are contained in Addendum 4.

#### **4.10 Termination of a candidate's registration**

A candidate may be prohibited from continuing his/her registration in the following situations:

4.10.1 Where a registered student has not successfully submitted a research proposal within the prescribed period.

4.10.2 Where unsatisfactory or no progress has been made by the candidate.

a. In the case of Master's via course work, termination can be made if the candidate fails the course work modules.

4.10.3 A change of research topic should not be constituted as motivation to extend unduly the maximum study period.

4.10.4 Where a candidate has exceeded the maximum period allowed for the completion of the qualification for which they are registered as outlined in section 4.5.

4.10.5 Where a candidate has not adhered to the norms of ethical research practices as outlined in the *Code of Conduct for Researchers at the Nelson Mandela University* (IRC 404.01) and the *Nelson Mandela University Policy on Research Ethics* (IRC 404.02).

4.10.6 Where a candidate submits work that was plagiarised or has previously been submitted to another University either in full or parts thereof, for assessment.

4.10.7 Where the treatise/dissertation/thesis is not approved during the examination process and no provision is made for re-submission.

4.10.8 Where a candidate has been proven to be guilty of contravening the *Student Disciplinary Code* (IRC 203.01) following a disciplinary hearing and has been excluded from the university.

### **5 THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY RELATIONSHIP**

The following section provides a framework for the principles which are meant to guide the study relationship between faculties/academic departments, master's and doctoral candidates, and supervisors.

#### **5.1 Roles and responsibilities of faculty and academic departments**

The faculty and academic department bear primary responsibility for the academic administration associated with postgraduate studies, for the appointment of supervisors, the

orientation and induction of candidates, the approval of research proposals, the nomination of external examiners, and the monitoring of study progress.

#### 5.1.1 Appointment of supervisors

The University's policy is that once it has admitted a candidate, it has an obligation to do its utmost to continue to provide supervision for the maximum period of registration for the degree. The roles of the supervisor and co-supervisor should be clearly defined at the outset of the degree programme.

5.1.1.1 It is the responsibility of the HOD/DOS of the academic department/school to facilitate the identification and appointment of suitable supervisors and co-supervisors for the expressed purpose of ensuring effective support and guidance is provided to all registered postgraduate candidates

5.1.1.2 **Addendum 3** outlines guidelines for the said appointments with due consideration to, amongst others, the following aspects:

- a. the research focus of the unit/department;
- b. expertise in the academic department;
- c. postgraduate qualifications of staff;
- d. level of academic seniority;
- e. a proven research supervisory track record;
- f. research of an interdisciplinary nature;
- g. the availability of supervision capacity; and
- h. the provision of training for postgraduate supervision via Faculty or University workshops and or programmes.

5.1.1.3 Faculty PGSC is responsible for the final approval of appointments of supervisors and co-supervisors.

- a. Supervisor and/or co-supervisor should not have a personal relationship with the candidate, such as a child or spouse or close family relationship;
- b. Co-supervision of a candidate by a spousal team must be approved by the Dean and a clear outline of the roles between the supervisors and candidate must be entered into in the form of a memorandum of agreement signed by all parties.

5.1.1.4 Supervisors may not provide supervision to students who are not registered.

5.1.1.5 Supervisors are responsible for informing FPGSC, in writing, in the event of retirement or resignation. FPGSC, in turn, will ensure a smooth transition to an alternative supervisor (where the supervisor wishes to terminate the supervisory relationship) or where the FPGSC elects to retain the supervisor as an external supervisor (see Section 5.1.3).

## 5.1.2 Appointment of co-supervisors

5.1.2.1 Where applicable, the supervisor reaches agreement with the relevant HOD/DOS on the appointment of a proposed co-supervisor(s).

5.1.2.2 Any changes of supervisor(s) should be timeously effected by the relevant HOD/DOS. Such changes should be done in consultation with the relevant co-supervisor(s).

5.1.2.3 In the event of changes, co-supervisor(s) do not necessarily become the main supervisor(s) by default.

5.1.2.4 Co-supervision is encouraged in the following instances:

- a. the research proposal is multi- or transdisciplinary in nature;
- b. a new/inexperienced researcher or academic needs mentoring as a co-supervisor;
- c. an external supervisor who is not familiar with the research norms and standards of the University.

## 5.1.3 Appointment of external supervisors

5.1.3.1 In certain instances, an external research supervisor may be appointed to provide supervision in respect of particular candidates with the final approval of FPGSC.

5.1.3.2 The appointment of external supervisors should be done in accordance with the guidelines for the appointment of supervisors as set out in Addendum 3.

5.1.3.3 Upon acceptance of the appointment, external supervisors will be expected to sign a contract which clearly outlines expectations regarding the engagement with candidates.

## 5.1.4 Monitoring progress and registration of postgraduate candidates

5.1.4.1 The supervisor is responsible for regular contact with the student in order to monitor student progress (minimum once per term), and for endorsing annual progress reports submitted by assigned candidates.

5.1.4.2 By the end of February each year, the Faculty Administration is responsible for compiling a list of all registered and unregistered postgraduate students in the Faculty per school/department.

5.1.4.3 The HOD/DOS of the academic department/school is responsible for communicating with unregistered postgraduate students on the advice of Faculty Administration.

5.1.4.4 Faculty Administration will identify, by the end of the first term of each academic year, and alert both students and supervisors with regard to students who are likely to reach the maximum study period.

- 5.1.4.5 The supervisor will facilitate, with the student, and timeously motivate for continued registration and to facilitate the registration of such a candidate (refer to section 4.6).
- 5.1.4.6 Academic Administration will provide a feedback mechanism for Master's and Doctoral candidates to complete annually; this will be a confidential system whereby a candidate can provide information on their experience in their degree programme and supervision.
- 5.1.5 Submission and approval of research proposals
  - 5.1.5.1 Postgraduate candidates who are enrolled for a master's degree by research are required to submit a research proposal within 6 months of registration. Candidates enrolled for coursework programmes must submit a research proposal within the prescribed departmental requirements but not later than 6 months of registration for the treatise module.
  - 5.1.5.2 Doctoral candidates are required to submit a proposal within 12 months of registration.
  - 5.1.5.3 It is mandatory that each proposal submitted for master's and doctoral degrees be scrutinised at both the departmental/school and faculty level to provide information on research being conducted in the faculty, to allow for interdisciplinary input concerning the research, and to ensure that academic standards, ethical requirements, and safety, health and environmental procedures are being monitored. At departmental/school level, the relevant HOD/DOS is responsible for scrutinising the budget to ensure that the study is feasible.
  - 5.1.5.4 It is the co-responsibility of candidate and supervisor to ensure that the necessary ethics clearance for research involving human and animal subjects (as per the *Policy on Research Ethics*) is obtained at faculty and institutional level.
  - 5.1.5.5 The FPGSC is responsible for the final approval of research proposals of its postgraduate candidates (see Addendum 5 for guidelines) including the budget for the implementation of the study. Upon approval by the FPGSC, Faculty Administration will register the treatise/dissertation/thesis by capturing the relevant information on the Master's and Doctoral System.
- 5.1.6 Conversion of registration from a master's to a doctoral degree
  - 5.1.6.1 In exceptional cases, where the scope and impact of a Master's research project which was originally approved by FPGSC has grown to a level that is undoubtedly at doctoral level, a student may apply with all supervisors' concurrence to have his/her registration converted to a doctoral programme.

- 5.1.6.2 Such conversion may only be requested after at least one academic year has been completed after first registration for the Master's. Compliance with the minimum requirement for a doctorate (2 years) must be followed upon successful upgrade.
- 5.1.6.3 The FPGSC will consider the merits of the request based upon the submission of a substantive report each by the candidate and supervisor, and endorsed by the Executive Dean, which puts forward a clear argument of the background to the study, results achieved thus far, and the status of the findings in context of the existing disciplinary knowledge.
- 5.1.6.4 Based on its deliberations FPGSC will make a recommendation for final approval by the University's PGSC.
- 5.1.6.5 A student who converts from a master's to a doctoral study will not be entitled to be awarded a master's degree and the transfer cannot be reversed.
- 5.1.7 Nomination of examiners
  - 5.1.7.1 The supervisor, together with the HOD and/or DOS, is responsible for making recommendations regarding an appropriate pool of possible examiners for the treatise/dissertation/thesis of their postgraduate candidate.
  - 5.1.7.2 The recommendations, together with the curriculum vitae of potential examiners, should be forwarded to the FPGSC (in the faculty prescribed format) for consideration and final approval. In their deliberations for the number of examiners to be appointed, the FPGSC should be guided by the principles as outlined in section 6.1.
  - 5.1.7.3 A minimum of two (2) possible external examiners should be provided for master's examination, as a pool from which the FPGSC will appoint the chosen number of examiners. For a doctoral thesis, a minimum of three (3) possible external examiners should be provided as a pool for FPGSC consideration.
  - 5.1.7.4 Criteria for the selection and appointment of external examiners as per Section 6.1 and are included in Addendum 9.

## **5.2 Responsibilities of supervisors**

The responsibilities outlined below are considered to be reasonable expectations of academics or any other persons who are undertaking the supervision of master's and doctoral candidates. A guideline outlining the framework for postgraduate supervision is in Addendum 6.

- 5.2.1 Manage the administrative aspects related with candidate's studies according to Nelson Mandela University rules.



- 5.2.2 Liaise and co-operate with the HOD/DOS and/or the Executive Dean and relevant academic support units to ensure that the student is able to access basic resources (such as library, laboratory space, chemicals, accessing bursaries and scholarships where the student meets the criteria, etc.) reasonably required by a postgraduate candidate.
- 5.2.3 Clarify respective roles of student, supervisor and co-supervisor (where relevant) to ensure that student and supervisor (s) are clear about channels of communication as well as expectations. Preferably such clarification should be contained in a supervisory or learning agreement (see sample agreement in Addendum 7).
- 5.2.4 Confer or make contact with the student regularly (minimum once an academic term) to provide academic guidance to ensure the development and mastery of research skills and competencies relevant to the discipline and the specific study, and to ensure adherence to university requirements and/or discipline standards.
- 5.2.5 Monitor progress of the student and submit reports on student progress as required by the university and by relevant scholarship funding bodies.
- 5.2.6 Keep a record of supervision sessions and provide feedback, within the timeframe agreed upon, to enable student progress.
- 5.2.7 Supervisors must maintain an adherence to accepted safety and health standards, as well as ethical research practice as per Nelson Mandela University *Code of Conduct for Researchers* (IRC 404.01), *Policy on Research Ethics* (IRC 404.02), specific codes of the discipline (where applicable) and conventions regarding plagiarism as per Nelson Mandela *Policy for the Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism* (IRC 305.04) and advise their students to maintain these standards as well.
- 5.2.8 Provide the relevant information to the student so that the candidate submits the treatise/dissertation/thesis for examination and final submission in accordance with university or faculty-specific rules (see Addendum 8 for format guidelines).
- 5.2.9 Advise the student regarding the submission of declaration of manuscript at the time of approval of examiner reports for the purposes of awarding of doctoral degrees (for doctoral degrees only).

### **5.3 Responsibilities of candidates**

Outlined below are reasonable expectations of all candidates enrolled for master's and doctoral studies. As a postgraduate candidate, the student is expected to apply him- or herself to meeting the following reasonable responsibilities:

- 5.3.1 Complete all the required components of the academic programme as stipulated.

- 5.3.2 Plan and execute the research study as agreed to with the guidance of the supervisor (and co-supervisor, where applicable).
- 5.3.3 Ensure that the research proposal is submitted for approval within the stipulated timeframe in accordance with the university's rules.
- 5.3.4 Adhere to the principles of accepted safety and health standards, ethical research practice as per Nelson Mandela University *Code of Conduct for Researchers* (IRC 404.01), *Policy on Research Ethics* (IRC 404.02), specific codes of the discipline (where applicable) and conventions regarding plagiarism as per Nelson Mandela *Policy for the Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism* (IRC 305.04).
- 5.3.5 Make regular appointments with supervisor(s) to update supervisor(s) on progress or any difficulties encountered in executing the academic project as planned to ensure timeous remedial action where required.
- 5.3.6 Keep written record of supervision sessions and the decisions agreed to.
- 5.3.7 Submit regular outputs from the academic project to ensure effective guidance and input by supervisor(s).
- 5.3.8 Ensure that written work submitted has been proofread and of an acceptable academic standard.
- 5.3.9 Ensure that the necessary amendments or revisions decided upon with supervisor(s) are made regularly and resubmitted as agreed for further guidance.
- 5.3.10 Take responsibility for the final production of the treatise/dissertation/thesis for examination and final submission in accordance with university or faculty-specific rules.
- 5.3.11 Submit a manuscript to the supervisor prior to the time of the approval of examiner reports (for purpose of awarding the doctoral degree).
- 5.3.12 Renew annual registration for the academic programme within the periods as stipulated by the university.

In cases where there is a breakdown in the relationship between the candidate and the supervisor(s), and they are unable to resolve matters in consultation with the HOD/DOS, the candidate should refer to Section 7.

## **6 EXAMINATION OF TREATISES/DISSERTATIONS/THESES**

The following section provides a framework for the principles which are meant to guide the responsibilities of faculties/academic departments, master's and doctoral candidates, and supervisors in respect of the examination process.

## **6.1 Appointment of examiners: Guideline and Responsibilities**

### **6.1.1 Examiners of Master's studies**

#### **6.1.1.1 Examiners of treatises**

- a. In the case of a Master's treatise it is expected that the examiner should hold at least a Master's degree and that such a Master's degree would have included a research component.
- b. For examination of a treatise, the following applies: at least one (1) external examiner should be appointed and one (1) internal examiner who is knowledgeable in the field of study but is not the candidate's supervisor or co-supervisor; alternatively, two (2) external examiners are appointed. If a supervisor or co-supervisor is to act as the internal examiner for the treatise, a strong motivation must be submitted to the FPGSC outlining the reasons for allowing this. FPGSC must provide approval for this deviation.
- c. The final mark for the treatise is calculated so that the marks of the external examiner counts 50% and that of the internal will count 50%.
- d. In the event of mark variations of 10%, or more, between examiners, then the external examiners mark is calculated at 66.6% and the internal as 33.3%;
- e. Ordinarily an international external examiner will not be appointed to evaluate a treatise.

#### **6.1.1.2 Examiners of Dissertations**

- a. In the case of a Master's dissertation it is expected that the examiner should hold at least a Master's degree and have experience in supervising postgraduate research.
- b. For examination of a dissertation, the following options are possible:
  - i. Two (2) external examiners are appointed;
  - ii. One (1) external examiner should be appointed and one (1) internal examiner (who is knowledgeable in the field of study but is not the candidate's supervisor or co-supervisor) are appointed;
  - iii. Any deviations to this must be approved by the FPGSC.
- c. Where an external examiner who is from a foreign institution is appointed, the FPGSC should ensure that such an individual has knowledge of the South African higher education assessment requirements and is able to evaluate the dissertation based on the prescribed University guidelines.

## 6.1.2 *Examiners of Doctoral studies*

- 6.1.2.1 The FPGSC shall appoint three (3) examiners for the purpose of assessing a doctoral thesis (see Section 5.1.7 for nominations). Of the three examiners to be appointed, at least two examiners shall be external to the University. Consideration should be given to appointing at least one external examiner from outside of South Africa.
- 6.1.2.2 In cases where a third examiner is appointed within the University, the examiner should be, as far as possible, independent of the study. The internal examiner may not be the supervisor or have been consulted during the research process.
- 6.1.2.3 It is recommended that an examiner of a doctoral thesis should:
- a. Hold a relevant doctoral qualification. Exceptions may be permitted in cases where specialist professional or technical expertise in the field is required and must be fully motivated in these terms.
  - b. Have a track record of successfully supervising doctoral candidates
  - c. Have a record of publications which demonstrates competence in the area of the work submitted for examination.
  - d. Preferably not be a recent collaborator of the supervisor(s).

## 6.1.3 *General principles for the appointment of examiners*

- 6.1.3.1 An external examiner should ordinarily not be a member of the University staff or the University's emeritus staff or HEAVA professors or research/professional associates. Exceptions will only be considered at Master's level with a strong motivation, based on evidence, from the relevant supervisor(s) regarding specific areas of expertise (scarce skills) and the approval of the FPGSC.
- 6.1.3.2 Persons who were previously employed by (or recently graduated from) the Nelson Mandela University may only be nominated as external examiners after having been subjected to a "cooling off period"/moratorium of at least two (2) years in the case of a master's study and at least three (3) years in the case of a doctoral study.
- 6.1.3.3 Two examiners from the same institution should not be nominated. Exceptions would need to be very well motivated and shown that the examiners were not in the same department.
- 6.1.3.4 The FPGSC shall approve or not accept the recommendation for the appointment of examiners or the appointment of a new examiner (should a change be necessary).

- 6.1.3.5 The appointment of examiners should be completed at least three months before the candidate is ready to submit the treatise/dissertation/thesis.
- 6.1.3.6 In order to preserve the integrity of the examination process, the same external examiner(s) should not ordinarily be repeatedly invited to examine postgraduate research for the same supervisor beyond three years. Where special circumstances exist, retention of an examiner should be motivated to FPGSC who will make the final decision.
- 6.1.3.7 In appointing an international examiner, the FPGSC should ensure that such an individual has knowledge of the South African higher education assessment requirements and is able to evaluate the thesis based on the prescribed Nelson Mandela University guidelines.
- 6.1.3.8 Examiners who are not from academic institutions may be appointed where specific expertise is required, provided that they are in possession of an appropriate academic qualification, namely a master's degree in the case of the examination of a treatise or dissertation, or a doctoral degree for the examination of a thesis.
- 6.1.3.9 The University's transformation goals should be reflected in the appointment of external examiners.
- 6.1.3.10 All examiners will be supplied with a suitable Examiners Guideline and Template to assist with the completion of reports.
- 6.1.3.11 The Chairperson of the FPGSC is responsible for ensuring that examiners who previously did not provide adequate examination reports will not be reappointed. To assist the Chairperson, the Faculty Officer will maintain a historic register of all appointed examiners and will note those who did not provide adequate reports.

## **6.2 Procedure for appointment of examiners**

- 6.2.1 The Faculty Administration is responsible for informing the Examinations Office, in writing, at least three months in advance of the names (and contact details) of the internal and external examiner(s) nominated and approved by the FPGSC.
- 6.2.2 Examiners should be informed that they may be required to re-examine the treatise/dissertation/thesis if it has been referred back to the candidate for major revision and resubmission.
- 6.2.3 In officially appointing an external examiner, the Examinations Office provides the examiner with a copy of the prescribed evaluation procedural guidelines signed by the relevant supervisor/co-supervisor and required assessment forms to ensure that the

examiner is fully aware of the expectations and responsibilities of his/her role before consenting to act as examiner.

- 6.2.4 Upon accepting the responsibility, external examiners are required to complete the prescribed acceptance of appointment form and to submit to the Examinations Office. Such acceptance implies that external examiners agree to adhere to the Nelson Mandela University assessment format and grading system.
- 6.2.5 The length of time given for examination should be communicated to external examiners upon appointment, namely:
- Master's treatises and dissertations: 4 weeks, and
  - Doctoral theses: 6 weeks.
- 6.2.6 In the case of treatises/dissertations/theses of a sensitive nature, the external members of the examination panel will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- 6.2.7 The identity of external examiners may not be disclosed to candidates before the examination of their treatise/dissertation/thesis.
- 6.2.8 After completion of the examination process such disclosure may only be done with the written permission of the examiners concerned.

### **6.3 Requirements for the submission of treatises, dissertations and theses**

The format and structure of treatises/dissertations/theses should normally adhere to accepted conventions as contained in Addendum 8.

### **6.4 Procedure for the submission of treatises/dissertations/theses for examination**

- 6.4.1 The supervisor gives written consent/support to the candidate that the work may be submitted by completing the prescribed permission form.
- 6.4.2 For the purposes of examination, the candidate submits one securely bound copy for each internal and external examiner as well as an electronic copy of the treatise/dissertation/thesis in PDF format to the Examinations Office. Such copies will be accompanied by the completed permission form signed by the relevant supervisor/co-supervisor.
- 6.4.3 The submission dates are the first Friday in December for graduation in April, and the first Friday in August for graduation in December. Candidates who submit after these dates cannot be guaranteed that their submissions will be processed in time for graduation.
- 6.4.4 Where submissions are made after the stipulated submission dates and results are not finalised in time for graduation, the student will need to re-register for the specific academic year.

- 6.4.5 In the case of doctoral theses submitted for examination, the thesis is to be accompanied by a promoter's report. This report is not sent to the examiners. Upon completion of the assessment of the thesis, all examiners' reports, together with the promoter's report, will be forwarded by the Examinations Office to the Chairperson of the FPGSC. The promoter's report does not constitute an examiner's report but may be used by the FPGSC to provide additional insight alongside the recommendations made by external examiners.
- 6.4.6 In the case of treatises/dissertations/theses or parts thereof that could possibly contain sensitive information which has been made available by (an) organisation(s) and which must be treated as confidential/classified, the responsibility to ensure integrity of the duplication and binding for examination purposes lies with the candidate and his/her supervisor.
- 6.4.7 Copies handed in for examination shall become the property of the University and shall not necessarily be returned to the candidate, unless the examiners choose to do so

## **6.5 Submission against advice of supervisor**

If a supervisor is not prepared to accede to the submission of a treatise/dissertation/thesis, a candidate is entitled, if he/she so wishes, to submit the said treatise/dissertation/thesis for examination.

- 6.5.1 In such circumstances the candidate should seek the intervention of the Chairperson of the FPGSC to attempt to resolve the impasse between candidate and supervisor(s). The chairperson may consult with the HOD/DOS and the Executive Dean as deemed appropriate.
- 6.5.2 When a submission is made against the advice of the supervisor, a report should be submitted by the supervisor(s) to the Exams Office, outlining the reasons for such a course of action. The report does not accompany the candidate's submission for external examination but should be recorded in the minutes of the FPGSC.
- 6.5.3 In the examination process, the candidate's choice will not be communicated to the external examiners.
- 6.5.4 After the examination process, the external examiners can be advised by the Chairperson of the FPGSC that the treatise/dissertation/thesis was submitted against the advice of the supervisor.

## **6.6 Procedure for the assessment and awarding of postgraduate research degrees**

### **6.6.1 Assessment Procedure**

- 6.6.1.1 Once the treatise/dissertation/thesis has been submitted, the Examinations Office assumes full responsibility for implementing the assessment procedure as outlined in Addendum 9.

6.6.1.2 During the assessment process supervisors are prohibited from engaging with examiners under any circumstances unless a specific request has been received from the Examinations Office. Such communication is dealt with by the Chairperson of the FPGSC and, where deemed necessary, the Chairperson may involve the supervisor. Such contact should be conducted in writing and records thereof must be submitted to the Chairperson of the FPGSC.

6.6.1.3 Where a particular discipline requires that there be contact between the internal and external examiner, this must be approved by the FPGSC and should be specified in the Faculty Guide. Such contact should be conducted in writing and records thereof must be submitted to the Chairperson of the FPGSC.

#### 6.6.2 Procedure for awarding of degrees (Addendum 10)

6.6.2.1 A candidate would have met requirements of a qualification when:

- a. there is a clear favourable exam outcome, and
- b. final electronic copies have been submitted according to the applicable *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus*.

6.6.2.2 Where the above requirements are not met, a candidate will be required to reregister until all requirements are complied with.

#### 6.6.3 Review of examination reports

All examiners' reports received by the Examinations Office shall be forwarded to the Secretariat and Chairperson of the FPGSC. It is the role of the elected members of the FPGSC (that is, excluding all faculty members who are not *bona fide* members of FPGSC) to review the examiners' reports and to make recommendations regarding the acceptance or non-acceptance of reports and whether the degree is to be awarded or not. Supervisors are not expected to collate examiner reports. On no account should examiners' reports or forms be changed or amended in any way.

6.6.4 Should a supervisor be a member of the FPGSC, the member needs to be recused from that part of the meeting when the student's examination reports are being considered, to avoid any possible conflict of interest.

### 6.7 Recommendations relating to master's degrees

6.7.1 As set out in the Evaluation Report for Postgraduate Degrees, the report on the evaluation of treatises or dissertation must make one of the following recommendations:

- a. The treatise or dissertation be unconditionally accepted (no revisions required), and a distinction awarded (75% or higher).



- b. The treatise or dissertation be accepted but that minor corrections of a technical nature (e.g. spelling, typing, and numbering of pages / sections, references) be made to the treatise or dissertation to the satisfaction of the supervisor.
  - c. The treatise or dissertation be accepted subject to substantial revisions (of an academic nature) or major technical corrections that should be made to the satisfaction of the supervisor.
  - d. The treatise or dissertation should not be accepted, but that the candidate should be invited to do further work and to re-submit the revised treatise/dissertation for re-examination by the examiners.
  - e. The candidate's work is not accepted, and resubmission is not permitted.
- 6.7.2 In the event of a candidate being granted the opportunity to resubmit a treatise or dissertation for re-examination, the candidate will submit the revised treatise/dissertation to the specific examiner requesting resubmission. Candidates will only be permitted one opportunity to make such a resubmission.
- 6.7.2.1 In the case of a Master's by coursework treatise that comprises less than 50% of the degree, and is failed upon resubmission, the student can be allowed to register a new topic for that module and resubmit under the following conditions:
- a. All coursework modules had passing marks;
  - b. Support for the registration of a new topic and to register for the module is motivated by the Department and Supervisor and applied for to the FPGSC;
  - c. The FPGSC approves the application allowing the student to register for the treatise module with a new topic.
- 6.7.3 The final mark for the degree will then be calculated as indicated in the *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus*. The supervisor/s may not reveal the identity of the examiners unless allowed to do so by the examiner(s) as indicated on the examiners form. The individual marks of each examiner are not to be revealed to the candidate, only the final mark as allocated by the FPGSC.
- 6.7.4 If the candidate is granted the opportunity to resubmit, they will be required to be registered for the academic year for the resubmission process.
- 6.7.5 Where examiners' reports indicate consensus and the difference in marks allocated by examiners falls within a range of less than 10%, the final mark allocated for a Master's treatise or dissertation should be calculated in such a manner that the marks awarded by the external examiner(s) contribute at least 50% of the final mark awarded for the treatise or dissertation.
- 6.7.6 Where all the examiners pass the candidate, but there is a significant discrepancy between the marks awarded (greater than or equal to 10%) by the external examiner(s)

and the internal examiner (if an internal examiner was appointed), the FPGSC will judiciously appraise the examiners' reports and has the discretion to weight the final mark towards the mark that was awarded by the external examiner(s). Such weighting adjustments must then be applied consistently within the faculty.

6.7.7 The following procedure applies in the case of unfavourable reports:

6.7.7.1 Where there is divergence between the examiners' reports as to whether the candidate should pass or fail, the FPGSC may pursue the following process in reaching a decision on the acceptance of a treatise (in cases of a Master's by coursework) or in the awarding of the degree (in cases of a Master's by dissertation):

- a. If a candidate's treatise or dissertation is not accepted by one examiner in its current form and the examiner indicates that the work submitted requires considerable revision after which the treatise or dissertation may be resubmitted for examination, the candidate will be invited to make revisions to the treatise or dissertation and re-submit it to the dissenting examiner(s).
- b. In the event that a candidate's treatise/dissertation is not accepted by one examiner and the examiner indicates that the treatise or dissertation should not be accepted, and this study may not be resubmitted for examination, the Chairperson of the FPGSC shall convene an ad hoc sub-committee of persons from within Nelson Mandela University who have the necessary discipline and research methodology expertise and academic experience. The task of the ad hoc sub-committee is to review all examiner reports and to make a recommendation to the FPGSC whether an independent external person (with the necessary expertise) shall be appointed who will fulfil the role of arbiter, or whether the treatise/dissertation should be revised and resubmitted for examination. The recommendation of the arbiter to the FPGSC whether the examiners' reports are accepted or set aside is final and binding.

6.7.7.2 The general rules in the *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus* outline the criteria for the conferring of the degree *cum laude*. In cases where the marks allocated are not unanimous the following procedure will apply:

- a. Where the external examiner's report states that (s)he does not have an objection to a distinction being awarded and the combined marks (internal and external examiners) are 75% or higher, the treatise or dissertation will be awarded *cum laude*.
- b. Where the external examiner's report states that (s)he does have an objection to a distinction being awarded and the combined marks (internal

and external examiners) are above 75%, the ad hoc sub-committee of the FPGSC will review the examiner reports and make a recommendation to FPGSC as to whether a treatise or dissertation should be awarded a final mark of 75% or higher. In the interest of transparency, the Chairperson of the FPGSC could also make contact with the external examiner to establish whether (s)he would have any objection to the degree being awarded *cum laude*.

- c. Where the final mark of the candidate is less than 75% and the external examiner does not object to the awarding of the degree *cum laude* but whose mark was between 70 – 74%, the FPGSC may use its discretion and award the degree *cum laude* on condition that there are no major revisions/technical revisions to be made and that all other provisions have been considered.
- d. Where a candidate has been registered for more than the prescribed maximum period of study for a specific degree, a *cum laude* endorsement will not be reflected on the candidate's degree certificate or record, except for those candidates where studies were placed in abeyance such that the total period of study (excluding the period of abeyance) was not more than the prescribed maximum period of study.

## **6.8 Recommendations relating to doctoral degrees**

6.8.1 A doctoral thesis is not awarded a mark.

6.8.2 As set out in the Evaluation Report for Postgraduate Degrees, the report on the evaluation of theses must make one of the following recommendations:

- a. The thesis be accepted unconditionally.
- b. The thesis be accepted on condition that:
  - i. minor corrections of a technical nature (e.g. spelling, typing, numbering of pages/sections, references) should be made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the promoter;
  - ii. substantial revisions (of an academic nature) or major technical corrections that should be made to the satisfaction of the promoter;
  - iii. substantial revisions (of an academic nature) or major technical corrections that should be made to the satisfaction of the examiner.
- c. The thesis is not accepted, but that the candidate:
  - i. is invited to do further work and to re-submit the revised thesis for re-examination by the examiners;
  - ii. may not re-submit the thesis for further examination.

- d. In the event of a candidate being granted the opportunity to resubmit a thesis for re-examination, the candidate will only be permitted one opportunity to make such a resubmission.
  - e. If the candidate is granted the opportunity to resubmit, (s)he will be required to be registered for the academic year for the resubmission process.
- 6.8.3 Where a thesis is not accepted, the candidate's candidature will be terminated and (s)he may only be admitted for the same degree after a period of one (1) year following the date of submission of the unaccepted thesis. The candidate would need to submit a new proposal for consideration by the FPGSC.
- 6.8.4 The following procedure shall apply where a divergence in opinions regarding re-submission or substantial revision is experienced:
- 6.8.4.1 Where there is divergence between the examiners' reports regarding an outright decision for non-acceptance of the thesis, the Chairperson of the FPGSC shall convene an ad hoc sub-committee of three to four members with appropriate disciplinary expertise and academic seniority. The task of the said sub-committee is to consider and interpret the examiners' reports, and to make recommendations to FPGSC for the purpose of reaching a decision on the process to be followed in resolving such divergence in evaluation of a candidate's thesis.
  - 6.8.4.2 The possibilities could be inter alia:
    - a. If a candidate's thesis is not accepted by one or more examiner(s) who indicate that the work submitted requires substantial revision after which the thesis may be resubmitted for examination, the candidate will be invited to make revisions to the thesis and re-submit it to the dissenting examiner(s).
    - b. In the event that a candidate's thesis is not accepted and the option to re-submit is not provided by one or more external examiner but accepted by the other external examiner(s), the thesis and anonymised reports shall be submitted, without revision, to an independent external academic (with the necessary expertise) who will fulfil the role of arbiter. The role of the arbiter is to evaluate each examination report and to recommend to the FPGSC which report(s) can be considered by the FPGSC as thorough and usable. Should the candidate wish to appeal the decision, this needs to be strongly motivated by the promoter(s). Such instances must be referred to PGSC from the FPGSC for consideration.
    - c. In the event the thesis as well as any other relevant information or related work, for example, compositions, designs or artefacts, is sent to an

independent external arbiter, the arbiter may choose to make use of a *viva voce* examination as part of the process of reaching a decision on the awarding of the degree (as discussed in Addendum 11). The decision of the arbiter is final and binding.

- d. Where there is divergence in examiners' reports regarding the extent of revisions to be undertaken, with one of the external examiners calling for substantial revisions and the other(s) accepting with minor revisions, the ad hoc sub-committee will make recommendations to the FPGSC regarding the appointment of an independent person or persons with necessary expertise who then acts as arbiter. The recommendation of the arbiter with regards to which examiner's report, or reports, is to be accepted, will be provided to the FPGSC and is final and binding.

## **6.9 Guidelines for arbitration**

The following guidelines should be followed for the process of arbitration:

### **6.9.1 *Arbitration in respect of a Master's treatise or dissertation***

- 6.9.1.1 The FPGSC as advised by the ad hoc sub-committee, will identify, approach and appoint a suitably qualified arbiter (this person can come from the pool of examiner candidates submitted by the supervisor/s for prior approval in the examination process).
- 6.9.1.2 A copy of the treatise or dissertation will be submitted for evaluation to the identified arbiter via the Examinations Office. This should be accompanied by anonymised copies of all examiner reports and guidelines for arbitration. All interactions conducted with the identified arbiter will be via the Examinations Office.
- 6.9.1.3 Based on the above documentation supplied to him/her the arbiter is responsible for making a recommendation to FPGSC as to whether the examiners' reports can be accepted as an unbiased, true reflection of the work or whether one or more should not be considered toward the final mark.
- 6.9.1.4 To finalise the final mark for the treatise or dissertation where the arbiter recommends the acceptance of the examiner's report(s) that pass the candidate, the FPGSC will:
  - a. Accept the passing examiners determination and use that as the only mark;  
or
  - b. Request that a new examiner be appointed to examine the treatise or dissertation and that examiners mark used as a composite final mark;

6.9.1.5 The FPGSC decision based on the arbiter's recommendation will be final and binding.

#### 6.9.2 *Arbitration in respect of a Doctoral thesis*

6.9.2.1 The FPGSC, as advised by the ad hoc sub-committee, will identify, approach and appoint a suitably qualified arbiter (this person can come from the pool of examiner candidates submitted by the promoter/s for prior approval in the examination process).

6.9.2.2 The candidate's promoter will arrange for submission of the most recent copy of the thesis to the Examinations Office.

6.9.2.3 The copy of the thesis accompanied by anonymised copies of all examiner reports will be forwarded to the appointed arbiter. All interaction with the appointed arbiter will be via the Examinations Office.

6.9.2.4 Based on the above documentation supplied to him/her the arbiter makes a recommendation as to whether the examiners reports can be accepted or not.

6.9.2.5 In the event of an arbiter recommending the acceptance of the examiner(s) reports that passed the candidate, the arbiter would be required to make recommendations regarding revisions and/or amendments to be undertaken by the candidate, based on those examination reports. This could take several forms for the FPGSC to determine the way forward:

- a. The dissenting examiner's report is disregarded and only the remaining examiners reports are to be followed and the thesis is passed;
- b. The arbiter recommends that revisions and/or amendments suggested by examiners are made by the candidate and can be:
  - i. made to the satisfaction of the supervisor;
  - ii. made to the satisfaction of an independent person or persons with necessary expertise within the faculty, appointed by the FPGSC, to ensure all corrections are made to fulfil the recommendation of the arbiter.

6.9.2.6 In the event the arbiter deems that there are major revisions and/or amendments to be made, but that the work is worthy of a re-examination upon revision, or that the dissenting examiner was biased, but the thesis does need major revision. The arbiter can recommend one of two paths:

- a. Revisions are made and submitted to the dissenting examiner for final determination. This would constitute the final and binding decision whether the thesis is accepted or not;

- b. Due to perceived bias by the dissenting examiner, the arbiter can recommend that a new examiner be appointed, thereafter that new examination would be final and binding.

6.9.2.7 In the event the arbiter recommends to the FPGSC that the dissenting examiner/s are fair and unbiased, the thesis is failed, and the arbiter's recommendation would be final and binding.

## **6.10 Revisions to a treatise, dissertation or thesis or resubmissions for examination**

After the FPGSC has met to make recommendations regarding the awarding of postgraduate degrees, the supervisor must timeously supply the candidate with the relevant excerpts from the examiner's feedback relating to the desired corrections/alterations to be made to the treatise, dissertation or thesis.

### **6.10.1 Revisions as condition for awarding of degrees**

6.10.1.1 In the case of revisions which are recommended as a condition for the awarding of the degree (subject to the satisfaction of the supervisor(s)), the supervisor (supported by the co-supervisor) is responsible to oversee such corrections.

6.10.1.2 The candidate completes the prescribed form, to be endorsed by the supervisor and submits the said form to the Examinations Office.

6.10.1.3 Where a candidate is unable to complete revisions and submit the final copy in acceptable electronic format to the Examinations Office by the date stipulated in the *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus*, the candidate will be required to re-register and pay the prescribed administration fee.

### **6.10.2 Revisions for resubmission for examination**

6.10.2.1 In cases where it is decided not to award a degree, a candidate may be invited by the FPGSC to do further work or thoroughly revise the treatise/dissertation/thesis before submission for re-examination. The supervisor(s) should ensure that the candidate fully understands the nature of the required revisions or additional work and should continue to provide the candidate with guidance until the work is ready for re-submission.

6.10.2.2 The supervisor(s) should ensure that such revision/corrections are made and submits the prescribed form to the Examinations Office.

6.10.2.3 It should be noted that a candidate **is only permitted one opportunity for such re-submission.**

### **6.10.3 Periods for submission for re-examination**

6.10.3.1 Depending on the extent of the revisions, the periods for the resubmission for examination will be as follows:

- a. Master's treatise or dissertation: to be completed within three (3) months
- b. Doctoral thesis: to be completed within six (6) months.

6.10.3.2 The candidate is expected to re-register for the relevant academic year where submission for re-examination is required. In exceptional circumstances an extension to the re-submission registration status/period may be granted at the discretion of the FPGSC.

6.10.3.3 In cases where a candidate is granted a resubmission and thereby exceeds the maximum study period, no request for extension is required.

## **6.11 Examination Appeals Procedure**

6.11.1 Candidates may appeal against the outcome of the formal assessment (e.g. the allocated mark, failure) on grounds such as:

6.11.1.1 Procedural irregularities in the conduct of the examination;

6.11.1.2 Substantiated evidence of prejudice or bias or inadequate assessment on the part of the examiner(s).

6.11.2 Appeals are to be lodged with the Executive Dean of the relevant faculty, within one month of the communication of the outcome of the formal assessment to the candidate by the faculty, in accordance with the University's examination appeals procedure as stipulated in the *Nelson Mandela University Prospectus*.

6.11.3 The Executive Dean will table such an appeal with the PGSC together with a recommendation by the FPGSC.

6.11.4 PGSC will decide whether or not to uphold the appeal at its next scheduled meeting. In some urgent cases, a Special meeting will be called of the PGSC.

6.11.5 The decision of the PGSC on whether an appeal should be granted, as well as the grounds for this decision, shall be communicated in writing to the candidate by the PGSC Secretariat within one week of the PGSC resolution and vetting of the minutes by the Chairperson. The recommendation will be final and binding.

6.11.6 Where an appeal is granted, the PGSC, on the advice of the FPGSC, will appoint independent external person(s) to act as arbiter, as outlined in Section 6.9. The decision of the arbiter will be final and binding.

## **6.12 Dissemination of postgraduate research findings**

Postgraduate students and their supervisor(s) bear collective responsibility for effectively disseminating research findings.

6.12.1 All intellectual property resulting from research conducted for postgraduate degrees, including all publications, is governed by the *Intellectual Property Policy* (IRC 401.01).



The intellectual property rights resulting from a candidate's research shall vest in the University.

- 6.12.2 Apart from research bound by confidentiality agreements, the candidate shall nevertheless be entitled to submit for publication the treatise/dissertation/thesis in the original or amended form within one year of the degree being awarded.
- 6.12.3 All doctoral candidates are required to submit at least one manuscript together with the final copies of the thesis. The manuscript, based on the research work for the thesis, should be in the format required by an appropriate accredited journal or publisher, as identified jointly by the candidate and the promoter(s). Where candidates have previously published from their theses, the candidate shall submit proof of publication of an accredited output.
- 6.12.4 The candidate and promoter(s) are responsible for the submission of the manuscript as an accredited research output within one year of the degree being awarded. The promoter(s) is responsible for informing the Chairperson of the FPGSC by submitting proof of such submission.
- 6.12.5 Should the postgraduate candidate not submit research results for publication within the stipulated period of one year, the promoter(s) shall be entitled to proceed with publication with due recognition of the candidate's contribution as a co-author.
- 6.12.6 The promoter is obliged to communicate this decision in writing to the candidate and to obtain the candidate's consent for him/her to be included as co-author. In the event that the promoter receives no response, a promoter shall keep records of such communications.
- 6.12.7 Publications should preferably be undertaken collaboratively between candidates and their promoter(s) in keeping with authorship guidelines as outlined in Addendum 12.

### **6.13 Research that is sensitive or subject to a confidentiality agreement**

- 6.13.1 Research that is deemed to be proprietarily sensitive in nature should be ordinarily identified during the process of approval of the research proposal and the Innovation Office should be consulted for the relevant Intellectual Property agreements to be put in place.
- 6.13.2 The relevant supervisor or designated staff member, via the FPGSC, makes a submission to the PGSC with respect to the degree and nature of the restricted access to which the research work is subject, and the time period during which limited access will apply. The PGSC may refer the matter to the Innovation Committee for further consultation.
- 6.13.3 In the event that sensitivity is identified during the course of the research process, an application should be lodged with the relevant FPGSC for classification of research as

sensitive and such decision communicated to the Examinations Office and Library and Information Services. Where there are ethical implications, the FPGSC will consider and refer to the relevant Ethics Committee.

- 6.13.4 The PGSC makes a final decision regarding limited access and its implementation period.
- 6.13.5 The PGSC may then decide that the content of the treatise/dissertation/thesis may not be revealed in any document or in any other way within the period as determined by the PGSC, except with the written permission of the organisation/candidate/supervisor or person who originally requested the classification of the document.
- 6.13.6 The period of confidentiality will commence on the date on which the research work is submitted for assessment purposes or earlier as deemed by FPGSC.
- 6.13.7 In cases where research is bound by confidentiality agreements, the prescribed formatted electronic copy must be stored in the Safety Section of the Library for the stipulated period of time or until declassification has taken place, after which the research work may be released for general dissemination.
- 6.13.8 The dissemination of research that is bound by confidentiality agreements (refer to the *Protocol for Confidential Research Projects*) is subject to the terms and conditions of the specific agreement.

#### **6.14 Submission of final copies of treatises, dissertations and theses**

After the candidate's treatise/dissertation/thesis has been accepted and the proposed amendments/revisions have been made to the satisfaction of the supervisor, the following processes need to be completed:

- 6.14.1 The supervisor is required to submit a declaration, on the prescribed form (Addendum 14), that such amendments/revisions as called for by examiners have been undertaken;
- 6.14.2 The candidate must submit at least one copy in an acceptable electronic format as stipulated by the Examinations Office.
- 6.14.3 The final documentation should be handed in to the Examination Office by no later than three (3) weeks before the graduation ceremony. The Faculty Administration shall then update the ITS database to indicate that the candidate has adhered to all requirements for the awarding of the degree.

### **7 COMPLAINTS, GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS PROCEDURES**

A candidate who wishes to lodge a complaint or, grievance, or appeal the decision of the faculty's PGSC tasked with adjudicating in matters of an academic nature or related to the supervisory relationship or the dissemination of the findings emanating from research

undertaken in fulfilment of degree requirements, shall have recourse to a complaints, grievances and appeals procedure within the faculty and within the broader Nelson Mandela University system (see Addendum 13). The procedures referred to in this section do not include appeals related to the assessment of the work of postgraduate candidates that has been outlined in section 6.11 of this policy.

## **7.1 Procedure for dealing with complaints**

- 7.1.1 As a point of departure, the preference would be that candidates are encouraged to resolve matters at the direct relationship level with his/her supervisor and in consultation with the relevant HOD/DOS.
- 7.1.2 Should the above approach not bring about satisfactory resolution of the issue(s) at hand, the candidate can lodge the complaint with the Chairperson of the FPGSC.
- 7.1.3 Should the above not bring about resolution, the candidate has the right to address his/her complaint to the Executive Dean of the Faculty or the DVC Research and Engagement if the Dean is also the Chairperson of the FPGSC.
- 7.1.4 In circumstances where the candidate has exhausted such complaint mechanisms available to him/her at the departmental and faculty level, a grievance may be lodged.
- 7.1.5 In the event of the candidate terminating his/her studies or changing supervisors, the intellectual property of the University or the relevant supervisor should be appropriately protected.

## **7.2 Requests to change supervisor(s)**

Whilst the practice of changing supervisors is not encouraged for various academic reasons, in the interest of a candidate's progress such requests can be considered. The process to be followed would be:

- 7.2.1 The candidate should make such a request in writing to the relevant HOD/DOS who will consider the request in the best academic interest of the candidate.
- 7.2.2 Should the candidate feel that the above route has not resulted in resolving his/her request, (s)he can forward a written request to the Executive Dean of the relevant faculty.

## **7.3 Procedures for dealing with grievances and appeals**

The University's procedure and that of its faculties for resolving postgraduate candidates' grievances during the course of their studies must reflect the principles of fairness, transparency and consistency, thus protecting the rights of all parties to the postgraduate study relationship.

In the event that the mechanisms for dealing with candidates' requests or complaints as referred to in 7.1 and 7.2 above are followed, a candidate will have recourse to the following grievance and appeals procedure:

- 7.3.1 The candidate shall have recourse to submit a grievance or appeal a decision made by relevant parties in terms of 7.1 and 7.2 above.
- 7.3.2 Such a grievance or appeal shall be submitted in writing on the prescribed form obtainable from the Faculty Administration to the Faculty Board.
- 7.3.3 Should the matter not be satisfactorily resolved; the candidate has recourse to forward the grievance or appeal to the Chairperson of the PGSC.

**Level Descriptors for Master's & Doctoral Degrees**

**Master's Degree**

**Purpose and characteristics**

The primary purposes of a Master's Degree are to educate and train researchers who can contribute to the development of knowledge at an advanced level, or prepare graduates for advanced and specialised professional employment. A Master's Degree must have a significant research component.

A Master's Degree may be earned in either of two ways:

- (1) By completing a single advanced research project, culminating in the production and acceptance of a dissertation, or
- (2) By successfully completing a course work programme requiring a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence and a research project, culminating in the acceptance of a treatise or dissertation. In the latter case, a minimum of 60 credits at level 9 must be devoted to conducting and reporting research.

Master's graduates must be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgments using data and information at their disposal and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences, demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level, and continue to advance their knowledge, understanding and skills.

**Doctoral Degree**

**Purpose and characteristics**

A Doctoral Degree requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis. Course work may be required as preparation or value addition to the research but does not contribute to the credit value of the qualification. The defining characteristic of this qualification is that the candidate is required to demonstrate high-level research capability and make a significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline or field. The work must be of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication. The degree may be earned through pure discipline-based or multidisciplinary research or applied research. This degree requires a minimum of two years' full-time study, usually after completing a Master's Degree.

A graduate must be able to supervise and evaluate the research of others in the area of specialisation concerned.

**Sources:**

The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF), 2 August 2013, Government Gazette, No. 36721.

The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), 5 October 2007, Government Gazette, No. 30353.

### **GUIDELINES FOR THE FACULTY GUIDE FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

In many respects the faculty guide may simply refer candidates to the institutional *Master's and Doctoral Studies Policy*, but it should provide clarity on at least the following aspects:

1. The agreement into which the faculty enters with the postgraduate candidate.
2. A flow-chart which outlines the processes relating to postgraduate study including admission and registration, the coursework requirements the submission of proposals, the conduct of research and the submission of the final treatise, dissertation or thesis. Where appropriate, information should be supplied on the final dates by when certain actions, such as the submission of the treatise, dissertation or thesis, should be performed.
3. The rules and procedures of the faculty and its constituent academic departments/schools for admission to and registration for postgraduate degrees, including:
  - The fact that there may be limitations on student places in certain postgraduate programmes, and, as far as possible, information on specific programmes to which limitations apply (the determination of limitations on student places takes place within the context of the University's admission policy);
  - The criteria and processes that apply to the selection of candidates for postgraduate degrees;
  - The research focus areas and specialisations of the faculty and specific departments to guide prospective candidates in deciding on an appropriate research topic;
  - The level of language proficiency, as well as other relevant knowledge, skills and experience that are prerequisites for admission to master's and doctoral degrees;
  - Procedures and criteria for the submission and acceptance of research proposals within prescribed time frames (see section 5.1.5.1 of this policy).
4. The responsibilities of the Faculty Administration and his/her role in the academic administration related to postgraduate studies;
5. The role and responsibilities of the Programme Co-ordinators for Postgraduate Studies in the relevant academic departments.
6. The responsibilities and contact details of the Chairperson of the Faculty Postgraduate Studies Committee.
7. Research training requirements of postgraduate candidates, and the faculty's arrangements for the provision thereof.

8. The policy on the allocation of supervisory duties, and criteria and procedures for the appointment of supervisors.
9. The roles and responsibilities of supervisors.
10. The roles and responsibilities of postgraduate candidates.
11. The faculty's arrangements for the formal monitoring of the progress of postgraduate candidates, including the manner in which feedback is provided to candidates on their progress.
12. Procedures and time-frames for the submission and examination of treatises, dissertations and theses.
13. The assessment criteria that are used in the examination of treatises, dissertations and theses as well as the weighting of marks allocated by examiners and the calculation of final marks.
14. The faculty and the university's grievance and appeals procedures.



**GUIDELINES FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF SUPERVISORS**

The HOD/DOS of the academic department/school is responsible for the identification of a suitable supervisor for each postgraduate candidate. The final appointment of supervisors is the responsibility of the FPGSC. In appointing supervisors and/or co-supervisor(s) the following aspects should be considered: the existing workload of the staff member, their competence to supervise a study in the proposed field of study, or a conflict of interest such as their personal relationship with the candidate or any other relationships that potentially impact on the credibility of an ethical supervisory relationship. The appointment of supervisors should be based on principles of fair and equitable distribution of postgraduate candidates registered within the academic department/school commensurate with experience, the track record of research supervision, growing the internal research supervision capacity, and the nature of the discipline.

The following points serve as institutional requirements with respect to the appointment of supervisors:

**1. Qualification of supervisors**

Supervisors or co-supervisors must have the appropriate qualifications and/or expertise and/or experience. A general principle in selecting suitable supervisors is that supervisors **should hold a degree qualification a level higher than the degree being supervised.**

In the following points, the specification of the minimum qualification requirements for the supervisor and co-supervisor of a doctorate or a master's degree includes the substantiated equivalent of such qualifications.

- An individual who has not completed a master's degree with a research component in the form of a treatise or dissertation shall not be allowed to supervise a research master's degree as outlined in the section below.
- Supervisors and co-supervisors for a master's degree by coursework:
  - Must hold a master's degree which included a research treatise or dissertation.
- Supervisors and co-supervisors for a master's degree by dissertation:
  - Must hold at least a master's degree, though it is preferable that they should hold a doctoral degree. For supervisors with a master's degree, it is however, preferable, that such a supervisor has completed a research-based master's degree.
- Promoters for doctoral degrees shall ordinarily hold a doctorate. However, in certain cases, which include professional research degrees such as (inter alia) Architecture,

Computer and Information Science, Design, Engineering, Performing Arts as well as the Visual and Tactile Arts, a co-promoter may be appointed on the basis of their acknowledged professional expertise. In all such cases the co-promoter for a doctoral thesis should hold at least a master's degree. The FPGSC must consider each individual case in deciding upon the formal qualifications that are required from co-promoters in such cases.

## **2. Experience and expertise of supervisors**

Supervisors must have sufficient knowledge and experience in the field of study to make a positive and valuable contribution to the candidate's research endeavour.

With regard to the supervision of treatises and dissertations academics who have no previous experience of supervising postgraduate candidates should ordinarily be appointed as co-supervisors and mentored by a senior academic who has proven experience as a supervisor. Appointment as a single supervisor should only be considered when there is evidence that assigned candidates have successfully graduated.

In the case of doctoral candidates, it is mandatory for a new promoter to be appointed as a co-promoter and mentored by a senior academic with a proven track record of doctoral supervision. Where a single promoter is appointed to provide guidance to a doctoral candidate it is the responsibility of the promoter to ensure that opportunities are explored for the candidate's work to be critiqued by peers whether this is through colloquia in the faculty/department, at conferences or input of critical readers.

In addition, new supervisors/promoters are required to attend training in postgraduate supervision as provided either by the University or the Faculty. New academics should have this training before being allowed to supervise Master's or Doctoral candidates, unless they have a proven track record from another institution. Postgraduate supervision workshops offered should encompass the various aspects of supervision, such as, but not limited to:

- University policies that deal with postgraduates;
- Models and styles of supervision;
- Use of Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding;
- Roles and responsibilities of both supervisor and candidate.

It is suggested that all academics who supervises postgraduate students should attend workshops periodically in order to keep up to date on supervision practices as the academic landscape changes over time. The Dean of Faculty and/or Chair of FPGSC can also recommend, or require, that staff members attend different types of supervision training workshops or programmes.

### **3. Nature of contract of supervisors**

The supervisor is usually a permanent employee of the University or an employee appointed on fixed-term contract for at least the duration of the study.

- Contract staff members whose contract expires before the anticipated completion of the study should only be appointed as supervisors if they are able to give an undertaking that they will be available to supervise the candidate until the completion of the study within a reasonable agreed-upon time-frame;
- It is not advisable for faculties to make use of short-term contract staff members to address problems in the supervisory capacity of their permanent staff. The FPGSC may, however, appoint a short-term contract staff member if it is satisfied that he/she will be able to fulfil all the required supervisory responsibilities and see the candidate through to the completion of the research during the duration of their contract.

### **4. Appointment of supervisors outside department/school/faculty**

Staff members from outside the academic department/school and/or faculty in which the candidate is registered, may be appointed as supervisors or co-supervisors. Such cases include:

- Inter-disciplinary studies where a supervisor or co-supervisor is appointed from a different academic unit, faculty, research or professional support unit;
- The appointment of a suitably qualified staff member from a research or professional support unit to act as the supervisor or co-supervisor;
- Such supervisors or co-supervisors will be expected to abide by the policy and procedures of the relevant academic unit in which the candidate is registered.

### **5. Appointment of external supervisors**

The appointment of an external supervisor should take account of considerations such as the strategic importance of the proposed study for the academic department/school/faculty, the possibility of providing capacity development for academic staff in the field of study where internal capacity and expertise is deemed to be lacking, and the potential of the candidate. Preferably current research associates (RAs) or HEAVA professors (see policy 304.01) should be prioritised for this role.

The FPGSC may grant permission for an external expert to be appointed as supervisor or co-supervisor. Faculties should provide the Examinations Officer with the faculty-specific contractual agreement for the appointment of the external supervisor or co-supervisor as well as a confidentiality agreement where necessary.

- Where an external supervisor is appointed, an internal co-supervisor or internal liaison person must be appointed for all doctoral degrees. In the case of master's treatises or dissertations, where no internal co-supervisor is deemed necessary or where no internal co-supervisor is available due to capacity constraints or lack of expertise, an internal liaison person must be appointed to perform the necessary administrative coordinating duties. This person should preferably be the HOD/DOS of the relevant department/school or his/her delegate.
- External supervisors or co-supervisors will abide by the policy and procedures of the relevant academic department/school.

## **6. Appointment of postdoctoral or research fellows as supervisors**

Postdoctoral fellows may be appointed to supervise or co-supervise master's studies. In certain circumstances postdoctoral or research fellows may also be appointed as co-promoters of doctoral degrees. Research Fellows may be appointed to promote doctoral studies and once they have shown sufficient experience in co-promotion of doctoral candidates. In approving such appointments, the FPGSC should take into account the requirements for the appointment of supervisors as set out in this guideline document. Preferably such appointments should coincide with the fellow's tenure period. However, where the supervisory role needs to continue beyond the tenure period, a clear memorandum of agreement needs to be formulated to ensure the continuity of supervision or co-supervision.

## **7. Confidentiality agreements for supervisors**

Depending on the nature of the research, both internal and external supervisors and co-supervisors may be required to sign confidentiality agreements relating to the non-disclosure to any third party of confidential information that is submitted in writing as part of the treatise/dissertation/thesis, disclosed or as part of the *viva voce examination* (where applicable).

## **8. Resignation or retirement of supervisors**

The FPGSC should be timeously informed, in writing, if a staff member who is a supervisor or co-supervisor is no longer able to perform their duties, for reasons such as retirement or resignation. In cases where staff members retire or resign, it is preferable that they should be contracted to seeing their research candidates through to the completion of their studies within a reasonable, agreed-upon time frame. However, there may be cases in which alternative arrangements must be made. In such cases the FPGSC, in liaison with the relevant HOD/DOS should make suitable alternative arrangements in consultation with the candidate. The agreed alternative arrangements must be put in place without delay. The relevant Faculty

Administration should be notified of the change in supervisor or co-supervisor by the Chairperson of the FPGSC.

#### **9. Supervisory load**

Supervisors should have a realistic supervisory load in order to ensure that adequate supervision is afforded to all assigned postgraduate candidates. The FPGSC should develop guidelines to be observed in determining what is deemed to be a realistic supervisory load giving due consideration to, amongst others, the nature of the research, the level of academic seniority, experience and proven track record of the specific supervisor, the progress reports of currently assigned candidates, and the overall workload of the staff member.

**GUIDELINES FOR AREAS OF INDUCTION PROCESS**

Matters that should be addressed as part of the induction process include:

1. The respective responsibilities of candidates and supervisors.
2. The procedures relating to the monitoring of candidates' progress and the rights of candidates.
3. Possible sources of internal and external funding (Research support is offered by the Department of Research Capacity Development).
4. Support services and facilities that are available to postgraduate research candidates (provided by Research Capacity Development).
5. An introduction of postgraduate research candidates to their supervisors and the FREC (or similar) Co-ordinator.
6. The total fees involved, including any hidden costs (for example: photocopying; the costs of practical work; the costs of accessing important documents (interlibrary loans) or other material at specific locations; the services of a statistician; transport, etc.).
7. The institutions, faculty and/or department/school's health, safety and environmental procedures.
8. The institution's code for research ethics.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS**

In the evaluation of research proposals, the Faculty Postgraduate Studies Committee will take the following criteria into account: the conceptualisation and objectives of the research; the feasibility of the research; the suitability of the methodology and analysis; and the scientific integrity of the research.

The format of the research proposal will depend to a great extent on the accepted conventions within the discipline and the appropriate research register in which the study is being undertaken and the research approach that will be employed, i.e. critical literacy, textual, film, media or cultural analysis, qualitative, quantitative or triangulation, but all research proposals should include at least the following elements:

1. The title of the treatise/dissertation/thesis.
2. A review of literature and/or other resources that constitute the knowledge base in the specific area of study (this would also be dependent on the specific research approach).
3. A statement of the research problem and the aims of the study. Where appropriate, reference would be made to the research hypothesis/hypotheses.
4. A description of the research methodology and the procedures that will be used to conduct the research.
5. Ethical, health, safety and environmental and other legal considerations and requirements.
6. A brief outline of the proposed study.
7. A section addressing the feasibility of the proposed research in terms of access to the proposed group of respondents/participants, infrastructural and financial resources, time schedule, and the accessibility of information.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE FRAMEWORK FOR POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION**

The following subsections provide a more detailed discussion of various aspects of the supervisory framework which the FPGSC should pay attention to in developing the faculty's postgraduate supervisory framework.

The role of the Supervisor of a Masters student will be to guide and supervise the student through the study period to ensure that the student has a good grounding in research methodology and undertaking a successful research project. Such a role will require a more "hands-on" approach. In contrast, the role of the Promoter of a Doctoral candidate should be less "hands-on"; the Promoter is seen as a guide and a counsellor, thereby allowing the Doctoral candidate more freedom in conducting the research and preparing the thesis.

1. The provision of training opportunities for supervisors: Training should ensure that supervisors have the necessary skills and experience to monitor, support and direct research candidates' work.
  - Academics who have not acted as supervisors or co-supervisors must receive training on research supervision skills.
  - All supervisors are encouraged to undertake ongoing training activities (such as workshops) to allow them to remain abreast of recent trends and approaches to postgraduate supervision in their discipline.
2. The provision of training opportunities for postgraduate research candidates.
3. Awareness of support systems: Postgraduate research candidates and their supervisors should be aware of the support services that are available from institutional resources. In addition:
  - Research candidates and supervisors should be aware that they may seek independent advice through the Chairperson of the FPGSC, should communication lines in the relationship between the supervisor and the candidate break down (See Section 7: Complaints, Grievances and Appeals);
  - Supervisors should be aware that they are able to obtain support from the FPGSC Chairperson where serious concerns with respect to postgraduate research candidates' abilities have been identified;
  - The FPGSC Chairperson must make appropriate recommendations concerning problems relating to research supervision to the FMC.



4. The conclusion of a learning agreement: Supervisors are required to enter into a specific supervisory agreement (or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Addendum 7) with candidates which specifies the responsibilities and rights of both parties in terms of the supervision process. This agreement should be formally documented and should include the following aspects:
  - The minimum frequency of formal feedback consultations, as well as the responsibility for initiating such consultations and their format;
  - The nature, extent and circumstances of the commentary on work handed in by the candidate (e.g., verbal feedback, notes on a draft chapter, a letter in which methodological errors and erroneous assumptions are spelt out) and the time taken by the supervisors to provide such feedback;
  - Where applicable, agreement between the supervisors, co-supervisors/co-supervisor and the candidate on the roles and responsibilities of the various supervisors to prevent candidates from receiving contradictory advice and possibly prolonging the period of study (see Section 5.2 for specific administrative responsibilities of the supervisor).
5. Mechanisms for monitoring candidates' progress. Each faculty should ensure that candidates' progress is monitored within the context of regular interaction between the supervisor and the candidate.
  - As a minimum, master's and doctoral candidates and their supervisors are required to complete a progress report at the end of each year detailing progress in the research study. Progress reports should be completed by the end of October of each academic year and handed in to the relevant HOD/DOS for consideration. The FPGSC Chairperson will provide an overview of the progress of the faculty's postgraduate candidates for consideration by the FPGSC;
  - In cases of unfavourable feedback concerning the supervisor or reports of unsatisfactory progress on the part of the candidate, the HOD/DOS should attempt to resolve the matter within the department/school as outlined in the Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Procedure (see Section 7). If unsuccessful, the matter is referred to the PGSC via the FPGSC Chairperson;
  - In addition to the annual progress report, the supervisor and the candidate should ensure that they develop appropriate mechanisms for consulting regularly on the progress of the research work. The manner and frequency with which consultations should occur depends on factors such as the nature of the study, the developmental needs of the candidate and so forth. Candidates are encouraged to keep appropriate records of consultations. Where the learning agreement makes provision for formal consultations it is recommended that the candidate should keep a record of important

decisions and agreements that are made during each consultation, and that the supervisor should verify such decisions during the next formal consultation.

6. Mechanisms for attending to situations where candidates are making unsatisfactory progress in meeting the academic requirements of the research including:
  - Communication with research candidates in order to clarify and address the reasons for unsatisfactory progress;

Dealing with situations in which it is unlikely that candidates will be able to complete their dissertations/theses, including procedures for the suspension or termination of a candidate's registration (see section 4.10).

**Example of a Memorandum of Understanding Template**

(reproduced from postgradenvironments.com as part of the creative commons)

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**Between postgraduate student and supervisor(s)**

The aim of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) is to give the postgraduate student and supervisor an opportunity to develop a sound and productive working relationship. There is no blueprint for such an agreement. Rather, it is the result of an open discussion in the early stages of the relationship, during which both student and supervisor can clarify expectations and preferences, surface any misunderstandings or misaligned expectations and pave the way for a productive working relationship.

The aim of this current document is simply to provide a starting point for such a discussion. The content given here is meant to serve as a prompt for things to include in your own agreement, and you are encouraged to make as many changes as needed during your discussion with your supervisor/student. In its current form, IT SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS POLICY OR EVEN AS A FIXED TEMPLATE. Each supervisor-student relationship is unique and the outcome of this discussion will be a personalised and adapted version of this MoU.

Having said that, it may be the case that your faculty or department already has its own MoU template. It may even be compulsory for you to complete such a MoU, according to your departmental requirements. In that case, please see this document as an additional prompt for issues you might want to discuss with your supervisor/postgraduate student at the start of your relationship. Departments and faculties are also welcome to use and adapt this template. It is then up to individual departments or faculties to explain the “status” of the MoU, e.g. whether it is compulsory, recommended or optional.



# Supervisor/Student Memorandum of Understanding

## STUDENT INFORMATION

NAME OF STUDENT \_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
DEGREE COURSE \_\_\_\_\_

## SUPERVISOR INFORMATION

NAME OF SUPERVISOR \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

## CO-SUPERVISOR INFORMATION (if applicable)

NAME OF CO-SUPERVISOR \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

The signatures below serve to confirm that all parties agree to the role and responsibilities as set out in this Memorandum of Understanding:

	SIGNATURE	DATE
STUDENT	_____	_____
SUPERVISOR	_____	_____
CO-SUPERVISOR	_____	_____
DATE	_____	_____

## Managing the project

*How do we want to work together? What are our expectations and assumptions about our roles? Use the questions below to clarify expectations, even if you do not want to answer as specifically as in the examples below.*

### 1. Meetings and communication:

**How often do we want scheduled meetings to take place?**

*Example: At least once every three months.*

**Alternative – How many scheduled meetings are we aiming for per academic year?**

*Example: at least 4 scheduled meetings*

---

**Duration of scheduled meetings (approx.)**

*Example: 1 -2 hours*

---

**Who has the responsibility for scheduling meetings and how far in advance should these be scheduled?**

*Example: Meetings to be scheduled in xxxx days in advance by xxxxxx (e.g. student or supervisor)*

---

**Who will set the agenda for the meeting? How is the meeting documented and by whom?**

*Example: The student will send the agenda to the supervisor xxxx days in advance and supervisor to make additions/amendments. The student will summarise key points from the meeting and send them by email to the supervisor no later than xxxx days after the meeting took place. The student and supervisor should both keep a record of meetings and other interactions, in case departmental requirements demand 'proof of supervision'*

---

**Procedure for changing the meeting date and time**

*Example: Any changes to proposed time and date should be communicated to the supervisor at least xxx days before the original scheduled time. If the meeting is cancelled, the person cancelling the meeting has the responsibility to arrange an alternative time as soon as possible after the original scheduled meeting. The number of times postponed as well as reasons for postponements should be recorded on the minutes of the meeting.*

---

**In addition to scheduled meeting, how often can we expect to see each other, what are our thoughts and expectations about *ad hoc* discussions?**

*Example: The student is very welcome to contact the supervisor at any time to discuss something or just to chat, as long as he or she is available OR Because we work in the same lab we will see each other daily. The student is expected to report to supervisor every morning OR the student is welcome to come and talk any time, but please schedule a meeting*

---

**Is there an expectation regarding regular email communication?**

*Example: Student will make contact via email at least once a week /month/fortnight with update on activities.*

---

**Other issues regarding contact (e.g. after hours, mobile phone, home telephone)**

*Example: We both prefer not to be contacted after hours/on our mobile phones except ....etc.*

---

## 2. Timelines and progress reports:

### Expectations regarding a project plan or timeline

#### Examples:

*A work programme (time chart) must be compiled by the student, in collaboration with the supervisor, within 60 days after the start of the project*

*This programme must indicate the following:*

- deadline for the submission of a project proposal/protocol,*
  - deadline for the completion of a literary survey,*
  - deadline for the completion of specific chapters*
  - deadline for the submission of progress reports.*
  - an indication of the time to be spent on each phase of the research project*
    - times of absence (study leave, university vacations, etc.)*
  - The student must indicate any matter(s), which may have an impact on the time chart he/she provided (e.g. external work pressure).*
  - The supervisor must set out, where applicable, his/her plans for providing supervision in terms of the time chart (developed by the student).*
  - The supervisor must indicate any expected absence, such as leave/sabbaticals (providing alternative arrangements for supervision if away for more than two months in any one year).*
- 

### Expectations regarding progress reports

#### Examples:

- The project should be completed as soon as possible within the time period as allowed by the University. Ideal date of submission of final assignment: xxxx*
  - Quarterly written reports from the student on his/her progress in relation to the indicated time frame/time chart.*
  - Written feedback regarding the progress of studies must be given annually by the supervisor to the head of department/postgraduate coordinator/dean.*
- 

### Expectations regarding submission and examination

#### Examples:

- When the project nears completion, the student must make the necessary submissions according to the specific requirements for graduation (see yearbook/policy guidelines ...) Note main points here...*
  - Supervisor expects to see final product xxxx days before submission*
  - Student may not submit for examination without supervisor agreement*
  - The student may not communicate with examiners directly*
-

### 3. Submission of work to supervisor, feedback and revision

#### Expectations regarding written submission of chapters and drafts

*Examples:*

- *Student will ensure that all written work is submitted according to the agreed deadlines.*
  - *Submissions must happen via email/dropbox/on.track planner/by hand (printed)*
  - *While the focus, especially initially, should be on developing content and argument, there is an expectation that it should be written in an acceptable standard of English or Afrikaans (so that it can be read easily).*
  - *Towards the end of the project, and in particular the final draft, the work should be free of language-, typing- and layout errors.*
  - *It is the student's responsibility to have final drafts and final submission proofread, technically edited and where necessary, to arrange for professional copy editing of the final submission.*
  - *Written work will be/may be submitted in English/Afrikaans/both.*
- 

#### Nature of the feedback

*Examples:*

- *Supervisor will make comments on an electronic copy of the submission/use track changes/prefers to write by hand.*
  - *Comments will cover content, argument, structure using highlighted areas of the submission text as examples.*
  - *The supervisor will not do language editing, except to perhaps highlight the fact that the document needs to be proofread/better edited.*
  - *Supervisor will make comments in English/Afrikaans/both*
- 

#### Agreed feedback response rate by all parties

*Examples:*

- *The supervisor aims to return all chapter draft submissions with comments within 1 month of receiving it.*
  - *The supervisor aims to return the final draft of the full thesis with comments within 2 months of receiving it/as agreed on the timeline.*
  - *The student will resubmit revisions of chapter only after receiving comments from the supervisor and aims to resubmit within one month of receiving comments.*
  - *The student will submit the previous version with supervisor's comments together with the new version with changes.*
  - *The supervisor again aims to review second and further submissions within...*
- 

### 4. Expected Outputs

## **What are the expected outputs the student needs to deliver through the course of his or her candidature and thereafter?**

*Examples:*

- *The student is expected to write at least xxx journal article(s) and submit for publication to a peer reviewed journal during the course / after completion of his or her candidature.*
- *The student is expected to present at least xxx academic paper(s) at an international/local academic conference during the course / after completion of his or her candidature.*
- *The student is expected to register at least xxx patent(s) during the course / after completion of his or her candidature.*
- *Should the student not complete the task(s) within the time agreed upon, the university reserves the right to appoint a writer to prepare the project for publication – in such a way so as not to disadvantage the student.*

---

## **5. Expectations around intellectual property and patents**

### **What are the expectations regarding intellectual property?**

*Where applicable, the student and the supervisor must acquaint themselves with the regulations applicable to intellectual property within the relevant environment. Give an indication here of which regulations decisions will be based on, e.g. provide a link to relevant documents and how you see this affecting your specific case.*

---

### **What are the expectations regarding authorship?**

*Both the student and supervisors will acquaint themselves with the conventions regarding authorship relevant to the specific discipline. Then write down how this will apply to you, examples:*

- *The student will be first author of any papers written if main contribution (xxx%) from article/paper is theirs;*
- *Supervisor and or co-supervisor will be first and second co-authors depending on relevant contribution (xxx %)*
- *etc.*

---

### **What are the expectations regarding ownership of data**

*Both the student and supervisors will acquaint themselves with the regulations and conventions regarding ownership of data relevant to the specific discipline, then write down how this will apply to your specific case.*

### **What are the expectations regarding registration of patents**

*Both the student and supervisors will acquaint themselves with the regulations and conventions regarding registration of patents relevant to the specific environment, then write down how this will apply to your specific case.*

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## 6. Expectations regarding Skills and Knowledge

**What knowledge or skills does the student have the responsibility to acquire before or during the study period?**

- The student must ensure that (s) he has the necessary computer skills or the appropriate support to complete the project satisfactorily. Indicate actions (planned or completed) by student to ensure this.
- The student (with the necessary input from the supervisor) undertakes to remain up to date with regard to the infrastructure and related rules of the Department and ..... University. In particular, ...
- The student is should acquaint him or herself with the **Code of Research Ethics of ..... University** (Available at xxx) and agrees to abide by this code.
- The student is should acquaint him or herself with the **Plagiarism Policy of ..... University/Faculty xxxx/Department xxxxx** (Available at xxx) and agrees to abide by this policy.
- The student should acquaint him or herself with the **Guidelines for keeping research records Faculty/Department xxxx** (Available at xxx) and agrees to abide by these guidelines.

---

**The student has identified the following skills or knowledge areas that he or she wants to develop**

*Give the skills and knowledge areas and agree priorities with regard to this as well as to what extent supervisor will be able to assist in these areas. Discuss possible alternatives.*

---

**The supervisor has identified the following skills or knowledge areas that he or she wants the student to develop**

*Give the skills/knowledge areas with suggestions for when and how to develop these.*

---

## 7. Expectations regarding funding

**Who will cover the costs related to studies and research? Indicate any scholarships and bursaries with timeframes, and how this might affect studies and research. Indicate any obligations or responsibilities in terms of scholarships and bursaries should these not be**

*Examples –*

- *Registration costs – Bursary from xxx, when available? When is registrations payment due, interim funding?*
  - *Living and Accommodation Costs – the student has arranged for funding to cover living and accommodation.*
  - *The bursary is awarded subject to the following terms: academic progress by the bursary-holder (indicate how progress will be demonstrated)*
-

- *Indicate how the bursary will be paid. The recommended schedule is quarterly but it depends on the amount of the full award.*
- *Indicate the consequences of non-compliance with the terms of the bursary: failure to comply with the aforementioned terms will entitle the award body to forthwith cancel the agreement, in which event the bursary-holder will be liable to refund the bursary in full, or in part, or awarded to date (whichever is applicable)*
- *Research Infrastructure and Equipment – what is available and what needs to be found elsewhere*
- *Research consumables and materials – who is responsible for costs, for making sure it is available*
- *Conference attendance – is there any funding, what are the guidelines – for number and type of conference attended*
- *Reading material, statistical services, other resources– who should pay, what is available*
- *Skills development – who pays for generic workshops, research methods, special equipment training*

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## **8. Expectations regarding work in the Department/Faculty/University**

### **Academic work**

- *Discuss opportunities and/or expectations for other academic work for the student– e.g. teaching, supervision, committee work, lab work, etc. How many hours per week on average? Will this be optional or compulsory? Is any of the work paid?*

---

### **Career plans**

- *Discuss student's own future plans, reasons for pursuing a postgraduate degree and Departmental work that might fit with aspirations.*

---

### **Outside work**

- *Discuss expectations around student taking on outside work, elsewhere in the university or further afield.*

---

## **9. Ground rules and regulations**

### **List any specific rules or regulations that the student should be aware of**

#### *Examples –*

- *Communication with Examiners*
- *Lab and Office rules*
- *Confidentiality of student data*
- *Communication with the press*
- *Permission for publication by the student*
- *Disciplinary procedures*
- *Ethical compliance\**

*\*Indicate where above policies and guidelines can be found (or attach here). Also indicate which are policy /compulsory and which are only guidelines or good practice.*

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**Discuss and agree on any other specific ground rules for your working relationship**

- *Especially things the supervisor has through experience learned about his or her preferred way of working and personal expectations from his or her students could be shared here.*
- 

**10. Mechanisms for dealing with disputes**

**List any official dispute resolution mechanisms applicable to your faculty or department**

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**Discuss and agree on ways to deal with potential disputes or differences of opinion**

*Examples –*

- *e.g. both student and supervisor agree to raise any current or anticipated concerns as early as possible, and to inform each other if any personal circumstances arise which will affect the work.*
  - *e.g. in the case of disagreements or differences of opinion about dissertation work, students and supervisor will first try to resolve them between themselves.*
  - *If this does not resolve the issue, either the student or the supervisor may approach the departmental chair or postgraduate studies co-ordinator of the faculty.*
  - *The student may also approach their Faculty Postgraduate student representative.*
- 

**11. Managing co-supervision**

**Discuss the role of the co-supervisor and expectations about communicating with the co-supervisor. Include the co-supervisor in this part of the MoU.**

*Examples – Should student meet separately with supervisor and co-supervisor?*

- *Are there specific roles for each of the supervisors and how does this affect communication, meetings, feedback and timelines*
- *What are the expectations regarding communication, feedback*
- *How will differences of opinion be dealt with?*
- *Are there expectations about co-authorship?*

**GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMAT OF TREATISES/DISSERTATIONS/THESES**

Unless Senate decides otherwise, examination copies of treatises/dissertations/theses shall be printed or typed in at least one and a half spacing on A4-format paper.

A treatise/dissertation/thesis shall contain at least the following:

- A title page with the following particulars:
  - Full title
  - Full name of the candidate
  - The following formula: “submitted in fulfilment of the requirements/partial requirement for the \_\_\_\_\_ degree in the Faculty of \_\_\_\_\_ at the Nelson Mandela University”.
  - Date of submission
  - Name(s) of supervisor and co- supervisor/co-supervisor (where applicable)
- A summary of the contents of the treatise/dissertation/thesis not exceeding 500 words in the case of a thesis and 300 words in the case of a treatise/dissertation. This summary must appear in the front of the treatise/dissertation/thesis following the table of content and must end with a list of not more than ten key words.
- A declaration that the treatise/dissertation/thesis is the work of the candidate and has not been previously submitted to another university. As stated in section 4.10.5, treatise/dissertations/theses shall not be accepted if they have been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of another degree.

In addition, the following guidelines are provided for treatises, dissertations and theses, except where faculties indicate otherwise in the Faculty Guide:

- a. A treatise or dissertation does not normally exceed 50 000 words of text (e.g. between 100 and 150 pages, one and a half spacing, A4 paper). While there is no strict limitation on the length of a thesis in some disciplines, between 80 000 to 100 000 words of text should suffice (e.g. about 250 pages, one and a half spacing, A4 paper).
- b. It is recommended that the structure of treatises/dissertations and theses should include the following components, though the requirements of certain types of study may require a different structure:
  - One or more chapters/sections on related literature.
  - One or more chapters/sections on the research design/methodology.

- One or more chapters/sections delineating the results/conclusions/recommendations of the study.
- A full bibliography or reference list of the material, whether published or otherwise, used in the preparation of the treatise/dissertation/thesis.

**ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE FOR TREATISES/DISSERTATIONS/THESES**

1. The Examinations Office provides each examiner, internal and external, with a copy of the dissertation/thesis, the prescribed evaluation form and guidelines to examiners and claim form (where applicable).
2. Examiners must conduct their assessment in accordance with the guidelines for examiners of treatises, dissertations and theses, complete the requisite evaluation form and return this together with a narrative report, to the Examinations Office by the date indicated.
3. Examiners should indicate whether all or part of their report may be made available to the candidate and whether they consent their names may be divulged.
4. Where examiners have indicated that the degree should be awarded with minor corrections or subject to minor changes, or that the dissertation/thesis should be revised and re-submitted, their reports should clearly indicate the nature of the corrections and revisions that are required, and/or return an edited copy where there is a surplus of revisions with the desired revision clearly indicated.
5. The Examinations Office forwards all the evaluation forms and examiners' reports to the relevant Faculty Officer who distributes copies of the individual reports and evaluation forms to the members of the FPGSC.
6. The FPGSC meets in order to discuss the evaluation reports and to make recommendations regarding the awarding of master's and doctoral degrees as outlined in Sections 6.8 and 6.9.

In cases where all the internal and external examiners reports have not been received in time for the FPGSC meeting mentioned above, the matter should be referred to an urgent Faculty Board meeting for resolution. If necessary, the FPGSC may need to appoint an alternative internal or external examiner. It should be noted, however, that no degree can be awarded without the receipt of all the requisite examiners' reports. The University acknowledges that candidates who have submitted their final treatises/dissertations/theses for assessment on or before the due date in December have a legitimate expectation that the assessment process should not delay the awarding of the degree, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that problems in the assessment process are addressed in a timely and pro-active manner. As stated in section 6.6 of this document, candidates who have not submitted their treatise/dissertation/thesis on or before the due date in August or December, accept that the assessment process may not be completed in time for the degree

to be awarded at the following graduation ceremony. Should the examination process not be completed in time for graduation, candidates will be required to register for another academic year. Candidates who submitted their treatises, dissertations or theses on or before the due date for submission will, however, be exempted from paying any additional registration or tuition fees.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR EXAMINATION/ASSESSMENT OF TREATISES /  
DISSERTATIONS / THESES**

Whilst it is acknowledged that the assessment criteria will depend on the field and nature of the study, the following generic aspects are likely to be applicable:

- a) Scope of Research:
  - The delineation of appropriate research objectives/aims/hypotheses.
  - The delimitation of the scope of the study as evident from the research objectives/aims/hypotheses.
  - The extent to which the focus of the study remains consistent with the aims and objectives of the research.
  - Specifically for PhD studies: the significance of the study and the contribution to the disciplinary body of knowledge
- b) The Title:
  - The formulation of an unambiguous title that conveys the focus of the study.
- c) Literature Study/Review & Theoretical Framework:
  - The relevance, contemporary nature and authority of the scientific sources and theories consulted by the candidate.
  - The comprehensiveness and depth of the literature study.
  - The candidate's ability to critically review and logically and coherently present the relevant literature in the field of study (especially with regard to PhD studies).
- d) Research Design and Methodology:
  - The extent to which the research design is a logical progression from the research objectives/aims/hypotheses.
  - The appropriateness of the research design in serving the research process.
  - The candidate's critical evaluation of the research design and methods employed.
  - The relevance and scope of the processes that are used to identify and collect the data for the research (documents, artefacts, specimens, compositions etc.).
  - The use of appropriate techniques for the analysis of the data in order to meet the objectives/aims/hypotheses of the study.



- e) Presentation and Discussion of Findings:
- i. The accurate interpretation and discussion of findings, well substantiated by the results of the analysis.
  - ii. The presentation of the results in terms of the research objectives/aims/hypotheses.
  - iii. Critical links with literature review
- f) Conclusions and Recommendations:
- Logical conclusions based on the results.
  - The application/implication/contribution of the research findings in practice, scientific and/or research fields.
  - Appropriate recommendations/proposals for future research.
  - The consideration of the limitations and shortcomings of the study.
- g) Technical Presentation:
- The overall linguistic and technical presentation of the treatise/dissertation/thesis.
  - The schematic division into chapters and the table of contents.
  - The abstract.
  - The consistent application of a particular referencing style.
  - The extent of the reference list or bibliography as well as the recency of sources cited.
  - The inclusion of appropriate annexures and/or appendices, such as questionnaires, computer programmes, and other research documents.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF A VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION**

**Conducting a *viva voce* examination**

Faculty PGSC may make use of a *viva voce* examination in various cases in order to inform the decision on the awarding of either a master's or a doctoral degree. Such cases include:

1. Cases where the candidate's work and/or the candidate's understanding and proficiency with respect to the research topic or broader research field are reviewed, for instance:
  - a. To establish that the candidate has an adequate understanding of a particular research topic/discipline and/or the broader field of knowledge to which his/her research contribution belongs;
  - b. To establish that the candidate can defend his/her contributions in a particular field.
2. Cases where the award of the degree is based or partially based on the candidate's ability to demonstrate technical competence, for instance by means of a practical design, a procedure or an artistic performance.
3. Cases where there is uncertainty as to whether the degree should be awarded.
4. For master's degrees, cases where there is a significant discrepancy in the marks awarded by the examiners.

Independent examiners who are appointed as arbiters in cases where there is a divergence of opinion concerning the awarding of the degree, may also make use of a *viva voce* examination to assist them in reaching a decision.

The *viva voce* panel should consist of:

1. The candidate;
2. A chairperson: preferably the faculty's Dean or his/her delegate
3. The relevant HOD/DOS, and
4. The internal and external examiners, and in relevant cases the independent arbiter. All the examiners should participate in the *viva voce* panel. Where an arbiter is appointed, the examiners are requested to participate in the panel, but do not make a further recommendation on the award of the degree. While it is preferable that all the examiners should be physically present at the proceedings, the appropriate use of electronic media such as video conferencing should be considered in order to make it easier for external examiners to participate.

Where the *viva voce* examination is part of the formal assessment procedure, it should be scheduled in conjunction with the other components of the assessment process, so that it will inform the decision of the Faculty PGSC on the awarding of the degree. Where the *viva voce* examination is used to supplement the formal assessment procedure, it should be scheduled as soon as possible with a view to finalising the assessment process in time for the graduation ceremony.

The Faculty Administration takes responsibility for:

1. Informing all relevant parties in writing of the proposed date, time and venue of *viva voce* sessions.
2. Organising an appropriate venue for the *viva voce* sessions. The *viva voce* examination will normally take place on one of the University campuses. However, in exceptional cases, the supervisor may seek the permission of the relevant faculty committee through the Faculty Officer for the *viva voce* examination to be held in another location, provided that the agreement of the examiners and the candidate is obtained and the proposed location is one that is deemed by them all to be suitable for the purpose. Furthermore, if circumstances demand it, a *viva voce* examination may be organised in another form (e.g. by a teleconference or videoconference) provided that permission is sought from the Faculty PGSC Committee. Before approving such a request the relevant faculty committee must be provided with detailed information on the procedure which will be adopted for the examination, and shall require written confirmation that the candidate and the examiners have agreed to the proposal.

The chairperson should ensure that the conduct of the examination adheres to the following procedures:

1. The examination panel should meet initially (without the candidate being present) and draw up an agenda. Here the committee should decide (*inter alia*) on issues such as:
  - The principle aims of the *viva voce* session.
  - The key questions which will be put to the candidate.
  - The examiner responsible for presenting a particular question to the candidate. In cases where an arbiter is appointed, the arbiter conducts the examination.
  - The amount of time to be allocated for questions.
  - The amount of time to be allocated for the candidate's oral defence.
2. The *viva voce* session normally should take the following form:
  - The candidate presents the essential contents of his/her research work, as contained in the treatise/dissertation/thesis or other forms of research output, in a specified period of time.

- The candidate may be required to physically demonstrate the operation of a piece of equipment, conduct a procedure etc.
  - The examiners may then question the candidate on the content of the treatise/dissertation/thesis, as well as other research outputs where appropriate, for a specified period of time.
3. Following the *viva voce* examination the examiners will complete and sign the joint report form (see Appendix K), indicating their unanimous recommendation on whether the degree should be awarded or not. In cases where an arbiter is appointed, that person completes the report.

The chairperson should submit the joint examination report to the Faculty Officer as soon as possible, so that the result can be recorded and so that the Faculty RTI Committee can consider the report in its deliberation on the awarding of the degree.

**GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORSHIP**

**AUTHORSHIP**

Within the academic environment there is often some level of expectation regarding authorship or acknowledgement on the part of those contributing to a work. As a result, it is an appropriate practice to address questions of authorship at the earliest practical stage of a research project. Such communication can clarify roles and expectations among the participants.

It is important to recognise that roles often change during the course of a project and it may not be possible to appropriately evaluate each author's relative contribution to the work until the manuscript (or presentation) is actually written or even finalised for publication. For this reason, it is important for all involved parties to re-discuss authorship whenever significant changes occur and make it clear to all participants from the start that final decisions about authorship can be extended until the time of submission. It is also the expectation that the senior investigator(s) associated with a given research project is/are responsible for anticipating possible disagreements concerning authorship credit and for initiating conversations on the matter before students and other collaborators have invested substantial time on the project.

Authorship is an explicit way of assigning responsibility and giving credit for intellectual work. Authorship practices should be judged by how honestly they reflect actual contributions to the final product. Authorship is important to the reputation, academic promotion, and grant funding support of the individual researchers involved as well as to the strength and reputation of their institution.

Major questions that should be addressed are the following:

- Who will be named as an author or acknowledged as a contributor if the study is submitted for publication or presentation?
- What will be the order of authorship?
- What are the responsibilities and expectations for each contributor to the study?
- Are there any intellectual property or confidentiality issues involved that may affect publication?

A salient fact about authorship is that markedly different traditions of joint authorship exist among different disciplines. Given these variances, it is thus difficult to provide specific and universal rules that are applicable across the institution. However, these guidelines are intended to spell out a set of general principles should serve as a guide for authorship inclusion across the University.

### **RECOMMENDED PRINCIPLES OF AUTHORSHIP FOR SUPERVISORS & CANDIDATES/GRADUATES**

Notwithstanding the general principles referred to in the sections below regarding authorship, the main goal in co-authorship involving research supervisors and their postgraduate candidates is to contribute towards growing the next generation of researchers. Within the context of postgraduate research it is expected that candidates and their supervisor(s) would collaboratively submit the research findings for publication as accredited outputs within one year of the completion of the study and its subsequent successful examination.

As soon as possible after the degree is conferred the research supervisor is expected to actively communicate with the candidate to engage the candidate regarding the publication process. A record of such interactions needs to be kept by the supervisor, which would serve as a basis for any disputes that may arise in future.

In the case of a master's study it is generally accepted that where a supervisor is responsible for the greater input to reshape the writing of an article after a year has elapsed, the supervisor becomes the first author. For publications emanating from a doctoral thesis, normally the doctoral candidate is retained as the first author.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

An important distinction that needs to be made lies in the area of acknowledging various contributions of a variety of collaborators in a research project in terms of acknowledging such contributions as distinct from the aspect of authorship. Contributions that do not justify authorship should be acknowledged separately in the notes to the manuscript. These roles may include general supervision of a research group, assistance with funding such as scholarships, project funding, or technical support.

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF AUTHORSHIP**

A person claiming authorship of a scholarly publication must have met each of the following criteria:

- 1) Substantial participation in conception and design of the study, or in analysis and interpretation of data; or other substantial scholarly effort;
- 2) Participated substantively in drafting, reviewing and/or revising the work;
- 3) Been part of the approval of the final version of the manuscript for publication; and
- 4) Ability to explain and defend the study and content of the contribution(s) in public or scholarly settings.

As a practical matter, with multi-authored publications it is usually important to designate or acknowledge one individual as the Lead Author or Corresponding Author, who takes responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole. The Lead Author has responsibility for

- 1) Including as co-authors all those who meet the criteria defined above; and
- 2) Obtaining from all co-authors their agreement to be designated as such.

There are differing conventions in disciplines regarding the order of authorship and thus, this should be a joint decision of the co-authors. If a decision cannot be reached, the Lead Author should have final say. Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of a research group does not justify authorship unless the individual also fulfils the above criteria. Anyone who does not meet the above authorship criteria but who has made other substantial contributions (such as technical help, writing assistance, etc.) should be acknowledged in the final product. Honorary or courtesy authorships are inconsistent with the principles of this guideline and, as such, are unacceptable.

**GUIDELINES FOR GRIEVANCE AND APPEALS PROCEDURES**

A faculty's procedure for resolving postgraduate candidates' grievances during the course of their studies should be reflective of the principles of fairness, transparency and consistency, thus protecting the rights of all parties to the postgraduate studies relationship.

1. The procedure should:

- Describe in simple and clear terms how a grievance or appeal will be handled.
  - Provide candidates with a full opportunity to raise matters of concern to them properly without fear of disadvantage and in the knowledge that privacy and confidentiality will be respected.
  - Ensure that procedures are fair and decisions are reasonable and have regard to any applicable law.
  - Indicate what further procedures are open to candidates who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint and wish to appeal.
  - Ensure that where a grievance or appeal is upheld, appropriate remedial action is implemented in a timely manner.
  - Reimburse reasonable and proportionate incidental expenses necessarily incurred by a successful complainant or appellant, for example, where registration or other fees had to be paid while awaiting the outcome of a grievance.
  - Be reviewed, monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, taking into account current good practice.
2. Each faculty must ensure that their grievances and appeals procedures are well-publicised, for instance by clearly specifying them in their written Faculty Guide to postgraduate candidates.
3. Each faculty needs to ensure that their staff are aware of these procedures and the circumstances in which they may be used.
4. Should any dispute arise between the supervisor and postgraduate candidate about supervision or any related academic matter that cannot be resolved within the department/school concerned, candidates should submit their grievances in writing to the Chairperson of the Faculty PGSC who will refer the matter to the sub-committee appointed to deal with grievances and appeals.



5. Ordinarily the number of members delegated the responsibility by Faculty PGSC as the Grievance and Appeals Sub-committee shall be comprised of at least three (3) members. Faculty PGSC has the right to determine the number of members and also to co-opt additional members because of the specific expertise. Co-option will be contingent on the nature of the matter that the sub-committee is deliberating on.
6. The Grievance and Appeals Sub-committee:
  - Appoints a Chairperson from within the sub-committee.
  - Serves as the first line of communication and should inform the candidates or supervisor of their decision within two weeks of receiving the written grievance.
  - Should be fully informed of the procedures and circumstances relating to grievances and appeals and should act competently in their consideration thereof.
  - May decide to deal with the matter internally (within the Faculty PGSC) or, in the case of a more serious grievance, refer it to the PGSC, who in turn may refer the matter for appropriate action by means of a decision by ECS. Matters that are referred to the PGSC should be dealt with within two weeks, unless the nature of the grievance necessitates a longer period.
7. The members of the sub-committee responding to, investigating or adjudicating upon grievances or appeals must do so impartially and members should recuse themselves from matters where they are deemed to have a material interest or in which any potential conflict of interest might arise.
8. The Chairperson of the Grievance and Appeals Sub-committee should keep a record of the nature and outcomes of postgraduate research candidates' grievances and appeals, and be able to supply such information to the Faculty PGSC who will in turn, inform the PGSC for noting.
9. In the event that a candidate wishes to appeal the decision of the Grievance and Appeals Sub-committee of the Faculty PGSC, such an appeal shall be submitted in writing to the Chairperson of the PGSC within ten (10) days of receiving written notice from the Faculty PGSC Sub-committee.

**PERMISSION TO SUBMIT A DISSERTATION/THESIS FOR EXAMINATION**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_ candidate for the

**DEGREE:** \_\_\_\_\_ in the

**FACULTY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT:** \_\_\_\_\_

has today submitted his/her treatise/dissertation/thesis for examination.

1. Has this treatise/dissertation/thesis been submitted with your knowledge and support?

YES

NO

*(Please tick the appropriate response clearly)*

2. Did the candidate's research involve animal experimentation or human subjects as defined in the Nelson Mandela University's Policy on Ethics in Research?

YES

NO

*(Please tick the appropriate response clearly)*

If YES, has clearance been obtained from the relevant Ethics Committee?

YES

NO

*(Please tick the appropriate response clearly) If YES, kindly provide ethics clearance form.*

<p><b>Name of supervisor:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Signature:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Date:</b> _____</p>
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<p><b>Name of Co-supervisor:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Signature:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Date:</b> _____</p>
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