

PROCEDURES FOR PROTOCOL ASSESSMENTS – CENTRAL PG AS WELL AS SCHOOL BASED ASSESSOR GROUPS

Only enrolled candidate's protocol submissions will be accepted.

All **PhD** protocols are submitted and assessed by the Faculty Postgraduate Assessor Committee via the Faculty Office. All **Masters** protocols are assessed by School Postgraduate Assessor Committees via Schools.

Submissions of protocols must be made within 6 months of registration for a PhD, within 3 months for Masters degrees by dissertation and for Masters degrees by course work and research report, the protocol must be submitted as per the School, Department or Division specifications for the submission of protocols in relation to their rules for coursework.

Submission dates for PhDs are available in the Faculty Postgraduate Office and for Masters degrees, from the School Assessor Committee Coordinator or Chair. Deadline dates for submission of protocols cannot be extended – this means no late submissions will be accepted. These dates can also be viewed on the Faculty Almanac.

Students should submit their 6 copies of the protocols to the PG Office for verification of enrolment and for obtaining the faculty stamp and signature on their protocol cover sheets – all six copies should be retained for PhDs and for masters programs the PG office will retain one copy and give the other five copies back to the student so they may submit these to the School-based Assessor group co-ordinator / this requirement is different for the School of Pathology and candidates should inquire at the Postgraduate Office or at the School of Pathology for their approved process.

No submissions of protocols will be accepted over the November / December period for submission to assessor group meetings scheduled in January of the following academic session, as enrolment for the year in which students are being assessed should first be processed and verified before acceptance of submissions.

SCHOOL BASED ASSESSOR GROUPS - AGREED PROCEDURE:

Schools, Departments and Divisions will be assessing their student's postgraduate degree research protocols for Masters by dissertation and for Masters by research/coursework.

Where Schools, Departments or Divisions feel that they would like to include assessors from other Departments or Faculties within Wits, on their assessor panel, this would be welcomed – *please note, reference here is made to the core membership of the School-based assessor group and does not mean that a PG Assessor does not need to be assigned.*

PRE-ASSESSMENT:

NOTE TO THE School administrators assigned to manage the administrative process should:

1. Submission to the PG Office for inclusion on the Faculty almanac:
 - (a) the dates for deadlines of submission of proposals to be assessed
 - (b) the dates scheduled for the assessment of proposals(Information for the Faculty Almanac is usually requested in July of each year).

2. Submit to the PG Office at least two weeks before the assessor group meetings are to take place (in the case of Ad Hocs, at least one week):
 - (a) the list of names of all candidates, their supervisor names, and the titles of their proposals
 - (b) the names of the proposed school assessors.
3. The Chair of the PG Committee assigns members of the Postgraduate Committee annually to Schools for inclusion on their assessor groups. The School, Department / Division administrator should contact the assessor/s and ask them to be part of the assessor panel. Once the assessors have all confirmed availability or submitted comments in the case of those who are not available to attend, the administrator should then send out notice to all students and supervisor advising them of the time, date and venue of the assessor group meeting. Similarly, they should send copies of the scheduled times of assessments, together with the various notices to assessors and copies of the proposals to the assessor group panel for the proposals they are to assess.

NOTE TO THE Candidates:

Candidates submitting protocols for assessment must get proof of registration (faculty stamp and signature) on their protocol and submit one copy of this protocol to the PG Office. The other five faculty office stamped and signed copies are then submitted by the candidate to the School / Department / Division for the assessment process / this requirement is different for the School of Pathology and candidates should inquire at the Postgraduate Office or at the School of Pathology for their approved process.

ASSESSMENT OF PROTOCOLS:

NOTE to assessors:

One of the most important tasks of the PG committee is to assess all the new research protocols that have been submitted for assessment. Assessment takes place on various dates throughout the year and it is essential that all members of the assessor group panel be present. If members are unable to attend they should make available their comments on the protocols that they have been asked to assess, to the assessor group and school-based assessor group administrator before assessment takes place so they may circulate their comments to their fellow assessors.

FUNCTION of the assessor group meetings:

The purpose of these assessor group meetings is to ensure that the project to be undertaken by any postgraduate student is feasible. The aims of the project must be clearly stated. Furthermore, the methods used in the project should be described in sufficient detail for the assessor group to determine whether they are the best methods for accomplishing the stated aims of the project. Assessors, should ensure that the research is appropriate to the degree. A Masters student should thus not be expected to be involved in a project that would be more appropriate for a PhD, or vice versa. In addition the research should be accomplishable within the limits set by time, budgetary constraints, ethical considerations and equipment availability. The level of supervision of the project should also be considered by the assessors. The supervisor(s) should be an expert within the field covered by the project and should have sufficient time set aside to supervise the student. The PG committee does have the power to appoint a co-supervisor to any project if it is deemed that the current supervisor(s) does not have the necessary expertise. It is also very important that assessors check that each project involving human or animal experimentation has been approved by the appropriate ethics committee.

There will inevitably be protocol(s) that the assessor group does not feel is adequate as it stands. In such cases assessors must make both student and supervisor aware of the shortcomings of their project without being too harsh. Many PG students view the assessor group meetings as hurdles to be negotiated rather than stepping stones set up to help them on their path toward a PG degree. Assessors must therefore proffer useful advice and constructive criticism without curbing the enthusiasm of the student. If changes to the proposal are recommended by the assessors then the group must ensure that the student or supervisor has noted the changes.

POST-ASSESSMENT:

1. Once assessment has taken place, assessors should submit their assessor comments (carbon copy) to the student and the supervisor immediately after assessment / the original to the school assessor group administrator.
2. School assessor group administrators should then submit to the PG Office the original assessor group comment sheet and retain a copy for their records.

PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF REVISED PROTOCOLS:

If the overall recommendation regarding the protocol is:

(i) Revision of the protocol to the Supervisor / Head of Department:

Submit to the PG Office one copy of your revised protocol, together with a covering letter detailing all the changes you have made, referring to page paragraph in the revised proposal where you have made the changes, the coversheet signed by yourself and your supervisor(s) and a letter signed off by both your supervisor(s) and HOD indicating that the changes as recommended have been made to their satisfaction. This is then submitted to the Chair of the PG Committee for signing off on the final recommendation and tabled on the Postgraduate Committee agenda for ratification.

(ii) Revision of the protocol to the satisfaction of the Original Assessor Group:

Submit to the PG Office six copies of your revised protocol, with a covering letter detailing all the changes you have made, referring to page paragraph in the revised protocol where you have made the changes, the coversheet signed by yourself and your supervisor(s) and a letter signed off by both your supervisor(s) and HOD indicating that the changes as recommended have been made to their satisfaction. These are circulated in both hard copy and via e-mail to the assessors, who submit all their comments to the Chair of the assessor group. The Chair of the assessor group submits the final comments and recommendation to the PG Office. This in turn is submitted to the Chair of the PG Committee for signing off.

(iii) Revision of the protocol and resubmission of the revised protocol to the next Assessor Group Meeting:

Submit to the School once stamped by the PG Office five copies of your revised protocol, with a covering letter detailing all the changes you have made, referring to page paragraph in the revised protocol where you have made the changes, the coversheet signed by yourself and your supervisor(s) and a letter signed off by both your supervisor(s) and HOD indicating that the changes as recommended have been made to their satisfaction on or before the required deadline dates for the submission of protocols as listed by your School. One copy must be submitted to the PG Office to update your student record and for inclusion on the PG Committee agenda. The "new" candidacy details should then be captured by PG staff and then the comment sheet awaited to process and act on the new recommendations of the assessors.

It should be noted, that the Postgraduate Committee has the power to over-rule a decision made by an assessor group. In such instances, the student and supervisor will be notified after the meeting has been held.