

## FACULTY OF SCIENCE

### FACULTY STANDING ORDERS FOR THE DEGREES OF MSc AND PhD

These standing orders are intended to serve as guidelines for Supervisors, Heads of School, Postgraduate Coordinators and the Faculty Office. They should be read in conjunction with the Senate standing orders on higher degrees.

In the Faculty of Science, all Heads of School have appointed Postgraduate Coordinators to be responsible for higher degree matters within the School.

#### USE OF TERMS:

**“School”**: Unless indicated otherwise, “School” should be taken to include departments or divisions where these exist within Schools.

**“Faculty Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)”**: This is a Faculty Committee which deals with all matters pertaining to postgraduate studies.

**“Faculty Registrar”**: Where the term “Faculty Registrar” is used this may refer to the work carried out by a member of the Faculty Registrar’s staff, but the accountability will rest with the Faculty Registrar.

**“Thesis”** is the term reserved for an extended piece of writing based on research that makes an original and significant contribution to knowledge that may incorporate creative work or publications integral to the overall argument, and is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy qualification.

**“Dissertation”** is the term reserved for a Master’s qualification by research, which is an extended piece of written work, which may incorporate creative work or publications.

**“Research report”** is the term reserved for the written document which forms the research component of a Master’s qualification by coursework and research report.

**“Senior Doctorate”** A significant body of work that makes a distinguished contribution to the advancement of knowledge in a field is required for the award of a senior doctorate.

**“The Supervisor”** is the person who takes primary responsibility for the supervision of the candidate, and is responsible for more than 50% of the supervision.

**“The Co-Supervisor”** is the person who is responsible for more than 10%, and less than 50% of the supervision of a candidate.

**“Postgraduate Coordinator”** is the person appointed by the Head of School who is responsible for postgraduate matters at School level.

#### INTRODUCTION

Higher degrees conferred in the Faculty of Science are PhD, MSc (Dissertation) and MSc (Coursework and Research Report). A candidate registering for an MSc (Coursework and Research Report) is expected to attend and pass an appropriate number of coursework courses counting 90 credits of the 180 credits. The curriculum for coursework shall extend over not less than one academic year of study.

#### 1 APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO HIGHER DEGREE CANDIDATURE

Applications are done online <https://www.wits.ac.za/about-wits/>

##### 1.1 Application Process

An applicant must apply online. The application is then forwarded electronically to the Head of the School/Postgraduate Coordinator who will make a recommendation regarding admission. The application will thereafter be captured by the Faculty Office.

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A Supervisor or Supervisors will normally be approved by the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator at the time of submission of the electronic application. For a Master's (by dissertation) and PhD qualifications supervisors must give their consent to supervise a candidate.

## **1.2 Applicants from local Universities**

Applicants are required to submit the following documentation together with the electronic application:

- i. Certified photocopy(ies) of original degree certificate(s);
- ii. Official academic record/transcript and certificate of good conduct; and
- iii. Curriculum vitae.

## **1.3 Foreign candidate applications**

Applicants are required to pay an application fee and submit the following documentation together with the electronic application:

- i. Certified photocopy(ies) of original degree certificate (s);
- ii. Official academic record/transcript and certificate of good conduct;
- iii. Curriculum vitae;
- iv. SAQA evaluation; and
- v. Proof of English proficiency.

## **1.4 Recommendations by Heads of School**

The Senate's powers in respect of higher degree matters have largely been delegated by the Faculty Board to the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) which, in turn, relies heavily on the recommendations of the Heads of School/Postgraduate Coordinators.

Heads of School are under no obligation to recommend the admission of any person who wishes to pursue research for a higher degree – the fact that an applicant may be qualified for admission in terms of the rules is NOT in itself grounds for admission. Only those applicants found to be satisfactory in all respects should be recommended to the GSC. This includes the appointment of Supervisors for Master's (dissertation) and PhD applicants.

The Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator and the Supervisor should consider the following points whilst making a decision:

### **a) Qualifications and Capabilities of Applicant:**

- i. The applicant should have the necessary academic qualifications, in terms of the rules, for admission to the candidature which he seeks. An applicant for admission as an MSc candidate is usually expected to have at least 65% at Honours level. A candidate with a first class pass at the Honour's level may register directly for a PhD with the approval of the Head of School; and
- ii. The applicant should have the necessary training and background and the intellectual ability to carry out the research project.

### **b) Adequacy of Research, Research Facilities and Supervision:**

- i. The proposed research should show clear promise of a sufficient contribution to knowledge to fulfil the requirements of the degree concerned;
- ii. The proposed research should be feasible – i.e. Adequate laboratory and/or library facilities should exist, and the requisite research materials or data should be readily accessible; and

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- iii. Effective and appropriate supervision should be available for the minimum period of registration.

## 2 REGISTRATION AND RENEWAL OF REGISTRATION

### 2.1 Initial Registration

A candidate for a Higher Degree in the Faculty of Science is required to register after the application is approved by the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator.

### 2.2 Renewal of Registration

A candidate is required to renew her/his registration **annually**. A candidate who has submitted her/his research is required to remain registered until she/he has been **qualified**.

### 2.3 Lapse of Registration

It is the responsibility of the Faculty Registrar to ensure that all candidates are duly registered, and to report unregistered candidates to the Head of School or Postgraduate Co-ordinator. The Head of School or Coordinator shall then investigate, through the Supervisors, the reasons for non-registration. Any candidate not registered by the end of March, provided that they are in good standing, will be assumed to have allowed their registration to lapse and will be required to reapply.

### 2.4 Minimum and Maximum Periods of Registration

A FULL-TIME candidate is a candidate who is working full-time on her/his research.

A PART-TIME candidate is normally in other full-time or part-time employment.

A member of the University staff may register as a full-time candidate. This decision should be made in consultation with the Head of School and should be related to the actual time spent carrying out research.

**The normal minimum and maximum periods of registration are as follows:**

Degree	Minimum (n) HEQSF	Wits (n+1)	Maximum
MSc (Full-time)	1 year	2 years	3 years
MSc (Part-time)	1 year	3 years	4 years
PhD (Full-time)	2 year	3 years	4 years
PhD (Part-time)	2 year	4 years	5 years

A candidate exceeding the maximum period of study will incur a penalty fee. The fees of a candidate exceeding the maximum period of study will escalate by 20% for each additional year.

## 3 EXTENSIONS

Extensions should be the exception rather than the rule. Only **TWO** extensions are permissible for the entire duration of Master's and PhD Degrees. Extensions can be approved by the GSC either during the research proposal preparation stage, or to extend the period of registration. Once a candidate has completed n+1 years of study, he/she must apply for an extension to the Faculty GSC, which will not be granted unless there is a convincing motivation and a realistic timeline for completion of the Degree which is approved by both the supervisor and the Head of School. A hold will be placed on online registration at the end of the n+1 period so that this can be facilitated. After n+2 years a candidate will not be allowed to re-register in the Faculty without the recommendation of the GSC and the permission of the Dean. A candidate will not be allowed to extend their registration beyond n+3.

Extensions can be applied for by completing the Faculty Amendment Form.

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## **4 CONVERSION OF CANDIDATURE FROM MSc TO PhD IN TERMS OF RULE G 12.2 (a)**

**4.1** In the case of an MSc (dissertation) a candidate who has been registered for twelve months or longer, the GSC may be asked by the Supervisor to consider whether the candidate's progress in research warrants conversion of candidature to PhD.

**4.2** If the Supervisor(s) recommends a conversion, the Head of the School/Postgraduate Coordinator concerned must submit a motivation, as well as a PhD proposal which has been approved by the School, to the GSC, for the consideration of the conversion.

*The motivation should be based on answers to the following questions:*

- i. Is the candidate of PhD calibre?
- ii. Is the research project of PhD standard?
- iii. Does the candidate show independent and original thought and strong motivation towards the research?
- iv. Reference should be made to any relevant papers published or presented at conferences by the candidate.

**4.3** If the conversion of a candidature from MSc to PhD is approved, the candidate shall be deemed to have commenced the research for the PhD at the time of her/his admission as a candidate for the degree of MSc, or such later date as the Senate may determine in her/his case. In terms of Rule G 12.2 (a), the Master's Dissertation is neither written nor submitted for examination.

## **5 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE GSC**

**5.1 All matters relating to Master's and Doctoral degrees must be approved by the GSC or, in urgent and controversial cases, the Board of the Faculty of Science, or the Senate.**

All higher degree matters, such as applications for admission to candidature, approval of research proposals, nomination and approval of Examiners, approval and changes of Supervisor(s), extension of candidature, cancellation of candidature, requests for abeyance, conversions, changes in registration such as title or line of research, or approval of examiners' reports, must be submitted for approval to the GSC. Applications or requests will not normally be considered unless they are recommended in writing by the Head of the School/Postgraduate Coordinator concerned and have the support of the Supervisor/s. The minutes of the GSC meetings form part of the Faculty Board documentation.

### **5.2 Approval of Title**

The title of the thesis/dissertation/research is approved along with the project proposal. If necessary, a candidate can change the title before submitting for examination by completing the postgraduate amendment form.

### **5.3 Abeyance**

This is applicable to all Master's and PhD candidates. In exceptional circumstances a candidate may apply to have her/his candidature put into abeyance, i.e. where their circumstances prevent them from continuing their research. The maximum period of abeyance is two years (non-continuous). Abeyance must be for a pre-specified length of time. If a candidate does not apply for re-instatement before the abeyance period expires, her/his candidature will be cancelled.

### **5.4 Closing date for receipt of applications and other items for consideration by the GSC**

The deadline for receipt by the Faculty Office of applications and other items for consideration by the GSC is 10 working days before the date of each GSC meeting. Any urgent matters may be circulated to members of the GSC.

## **6 SUPERVISION**

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## **6.1 Duties of Supervisors**

It is the responsibility of the Head of School or Postgraduate Co-ordinator to ensure that a Supervisor is familiar with the University's and Faculty's Standing Orders on higher degrees. A copy of these duties (and/or relevant code of responsibility/conduct) along with the appropriate Style Guide, the Policy on Plagiarism and the University Grievance Procedure for Postgraduate Candidates and the Statement of Principles must be made available to candidates at registration, and should form the basis of a negotiation between the Supervisor/s and the candidate as to how they will work together.

The Statement of Principles must be discussed with the candidate, and it may be changed by mutual agreement. It must be signed by the Supervisor(s) and the candidate at the time of submission of the research proposal.

### **The duties of the Supervisor shall be:**

- 1.1.1** To report, after consultation with the Head of the School or Postgraduate Co-ordinator concerned, any change in the proposed title for the approval of the Faculty Board, Faculty GSC, panel, or Chairperson of the Faculty GSC.
- 1.1.2** To assist the candidate's research in all possible ways the Supervisor should take care to encourage the candidate to use her/his own initiative, and should not watch over every detail of the work. S/he should rather make suggestions wherever necessary, and encourage the candidate to apply them.
- 1.1.3** Supervision entails both oral advice on the candidate's research, and constructive written comments on drafts of the proposal and on draft chapters. A record of the supervision process must be kept by the Supervisor.
- 1.1.4** To ensure that the candidate knows the conventional techniques of presentation for a research report/dissertation/thesis.
- 1.1.5** To ascertain the cause should the candidate, for any reason, fail to make adequate progress. If the candidate is at fault and does not, after a written warning, make better progress, the Supervisor shall bring the matter to the attention of the Head of School or Postgraduate Co-ordinator. Any further instruction which emanates from this should also be in writing and, if it in turn is not acted on by the candidate, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Faculty GSC which may at that stage instruct cancellation of registration. It is essential that a candidate be given the opportunity to put forward her/his case at all stages of this process before cancellation is decided upon by the Committee. In cases where there is more than one Supervisor, the Supervisors shall consult one another on the progress of the candidate at regular intervals.
- 1.1.6** To report once a year to the Faculty GSC, or its Chairperson, on the progress of the candidate's work. The dates will be decided by each Committee and the basis of the Supervisor's report will be a yearly report from the candidate. A very brief report will suffice if the candidate's progress is satisfactory. The report must be an open one and signed by the Supervisor, the candidate and the Head of School or Postgraduate Co-ordinator. The form should contain provision for comments by the candidate. The Chairperson may draw the Committee's attention to particular cases and the Committee may call for more frequent reports in a particular case. The Faculty Registrar is required to monitor the submission of reports and to ensure that copies of these reports are filed on the candidate's file.
- 1.1.7** To draw the attention of the candidate to the minimum and maximum periods of study for the degree.
- 1.1.8** To nominate Examiners, in consultation with the Head of School, a minimum of three months prior to the submission of the research report/dissertation/thesis. At this point, the title must be confirmed.
- 1.1.9** To inform the candidate of any planned absences.

## **6.2 Supervision of one candidate by another**

- 6.2.1** Normally, a candidate for a higher degree who is appointed to supervise another candidate for a higher degree will be a member of the staff of the University.

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- 6.2.2 A member of staff, who is registered for a higher degree, is permitted to supervise another candidate at a lower level, or co-supervise a candidate at an equivalent level, provided that the Supervisor holds a degree at the equivalent level.
- 6.2.3 Two candidates at the same level may not supervise or co-supervise each other.

### **6.3 Responsibilities of the candidate**

- 6.3.1 The Statement of Principles must be discussed with the Supervisor(s), and must be signed by the candidate and the Supervisor(s), and submitted together with the research proposal to the Faculty Office.
- 6.3.2 The candidate should meet as frequently as agreed with the Supervisor, and shall, at these meetings, present a detailed account, in writing, of her/his progress, in a manner as is acceptable to the field of study being pursued.
- 6.3.3 The candidate shall take into account all written and oral advice given by the Supervisor, and provision should be allowed for adequate, mutually respectful discussion around these recommendations.
- 6.3.4 The candidate must ensure that the appropriate literature directly pertinent to her/his chosen topic has been identified and consulted. The candidate has a reasonable expectation that the Supervisor keep abreast with developments in her/his own area of expertise.
- 6.3.5 Once the focus/area of research is approved, the candidate is responsible for ensuring that the research remains focused on the agreed areas or, where substantive changes are necessary, that these are agreed by the candidate and Supervisor, and reported appropriately to the Faculty GSC. It should be noted that there should be appropriate consultation with the Supervisor with respect to changes, especially where these may lead the work outside of the field of expertise of the Supervisor.
- 6.3.6 The candidate must obtain the agreement of the Supervisor for any absences.
- 6.3.7 The candidate must produce a written document for examination that meets the requirements of the degree being pursued.
- 6.3.8 The candidate must make adequate progress to enable the successful completion of the degree within the stipulated time frame.
- 6.3.9 The candidate must bring problems in the supervision relationship to the attention of the Supervisor In the first instance and, if such problems are not resolved, to bring the matter to the attention of the Head of School or Postgraduate Co-ordinator.
- 6.3.10 The candidate must comply with all administrative processes, including making the necessary declarations with respect to the work complying with the policies on ethics, plagiarism and intellectual property.
- 6.3.11 The candidate shall submit a progress report to the Faculty annually. The Faculty Registrar is required to monitor the submission of reports and to ensure that copies of these reports are on the candidate's file.

### **6.4 Absence of a Supervisor**

A Supervisor of a higher degree candidate who is granted leave of absence for more than six months from the University shall make arrangements with the relevant Head of School.

### **6.5 External Supervision**

In terms of the Senate standing orders, supervision by a member of staff of another University, or by a member of staff of a research organisation or industry, must be motivated for and approved by the GSC.

### **1.6 Appointment of Co-Supervisors**

The appointment may take place in the following circumstances:

- 6.1.1 Where a Supervisor proposed for a new candidate is due to retire in a year or less;
- 6.1.2 Where a proposed Supervisor is supervising a higher degree candidate for the first time;
- 6.1.3 Where an external Supervisor is appointed, in which case the principal Supervisor must be from the relevant School at this University;

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- 6.1.4** Where a valid case can be made for a particular research topic (e.g. in an interdisciplinary area of research) which includes aspects of two different fields of study; and
- 6.1.5** Co-supervisors of a higher degree candidate are required to consult each other at regular intervals concerning the progress of their candidate.

### **6.7 Changes in Supervision**

Any change in Supervisory arrangements for a candidate must be approved by the GSC. The Head of the School/Postgraduate Coordinator concerned should submit brief reasons for the change.

## **7 MATTERS RELATING TO CANDIDATURE**

Procedure is to be followed when a higher degree candidate is approaching the maximum permitted period of registration.

The normal maximum periods allowed for completion of higher degrees are set out in item 2.4.

**7.1** A system generated email is sent to a candidate and her/his Supervisor(s) who is approaching the end of the registration asking them to report on progress and state when she/he is likely to submit the thesis/ dissertation/research report.

Depending on the candidate's reaction, one of the following results:

- i. A candidate submits her/his thesis/dissertation/research report within the required period.
- ii. A candidate, supported by her/his Supervisors and the Heads of the School/Postgraduate Coordinators, applies for extension of her/his registration for a maximum period of one year. An extension request will be granted only in exceptional circumstances.
- iii. A candidate, supported by her/his Supervisors and Head of the School/Postgraduate Coordinator, request the Faculty to place her/his candidature in abeyance for a maximum period of two years (non-continuous – see 6.3).
- iv. In the case of a candidate not responding, she/he may be informed by email that her/his candidature will be terminated. A candidate has the right to appeal to the Dean of the Faculty.

**7.2** A candidate whose candidature has been extended should be reminded by the Faculty Office that she/he is required to submit before the end of the extension period.

Depending on the candidate's response, one of the following results:

- i. The candidate submits her/his thesis/dissertation/research report.
- ii. In exceptional circumstances, if the maximum period of candidature plus the extension period of one year has expired, the candidate, strongly supported by the Supervisor and the Head of the School/Postgraduate Coordinator, requests the GSC to allow one further extension or to place her/his candidature in abeyance.
- iii. The candidature is terminated.

**7.3** A person whose candidature has been placed in abeyance shall inform the Faculty Office when she/he wishes to renew her/his registration.

**7.4** If termination of candidature is recommended by the School, the candidate has the right to appeal and follow due procedure.

## **8. SUBMISSION OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

A candidate is required to prepare a carefully written and argued research proposal in which she/he is advised, amongst other things, to:

- i. Supply a title (this should be brief and precise, and avoid redundancies and unnecessary phrases such as “a study of”, “an investigation to establish whether”);
- ii. States concisely and specifically the aims of the research;
- iii. Gives a review of the relevant literature;
- iv. Lists the specific problems to be investigated and the specific hypothesis to be tested;
- v. State the design of the study and the procedures to be adopted for collecting data;

- vi. Ensures that the proposal complies with the university's safety and ethics clearance procedures where the study involves humans or animals or biohazardous substances or genetically modified organisms;
- vii. Describes the materials, tests or apparatus that will be used;
- viii. Describes the methods that will be used to assess, analyse and process data;
- ix. Sets out a work plan, with dates and budget if necessary; and
- x. Gives a brief outline of the proposed thesis/dissertation/research report to give a clear indication of the way in which the material will be arranged.

A copy of the proposal, approved and signed by the candidate, the Supervisor/s and the Head of the School /Postgraduate Coordinator, must be emailed to the Faculty Office.

A candidate must submit a research proposal within the following periods:

- i. Full-time masters (dissertation) – four months
- ii. Part-time (dissertation) – eight months
- iii. Full-time doctorate – six months
- iv. Part-time doctorate – twelve months

## **9. ETHICS**

### **9.1 Clearance of research being conducted on human participants or animals or biohazardous substances or genetically modified organisms**

If a research candidate wishes to carry out research of any kind on human or animal subjects or biohazardous substances or genetically modified organisms the University has to scrutinise proposals on ethical and/or biosafety grounds, and various procedures must be complied with, depending on the type of research:

### **9.2 Animal experimentation**

- i. All experiments performed on non-human vertebrates, vertebrate foetuses, vertebrate embryos and cephalopods by staff or candidates are to be scrutinised by the Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC, a sub-committee of the University Research Committee) prior to the commencement of such studies, irrespective of the origin or ownership of the animals, or source of funding.
- ii. If the Animal Research Ethics Committee approves the experiment, it may prescribe restrictions or conditions under which the activity may be conducted, define substantial changes in the research plans, and/or request reports on the progress of the experiment.
- iii. The Director or Veterinary Director of the Central Animal Service (CAS) is required to submit a written report on any irregularities relating to the use of animals in approved studies, which are brought to her/his notice. Such reports will be investigated by the Animal Research Ethics Committee.
- iv. The regulations apply to all staff members (academic, non-academic and honorary) and to all candidates (undergraduate and postgraduate), irrespective of where the experiment is carried out, and with whom it is conducted.
- v. The Faculty Board, Faculty GSC panel, or Chairperson of the GSC, when scrutinising a research proposal, is required to draw the attention of a candidate to the need for clearance to be sought by the candidate from the Animal Research Ethics Committee, through the office of the Deputy Registrar (Academic and Research), and for a Protocol Number to be obtained by the candidate before commencement of research. Such a number must appear on any publication resulting from the research.
- vi. Very strict controls and procedures must be complied with throughout the period of research. (As prescribed by the National Code, the Veterinary Director of CAS has ultimate responsibility for the clinical care of animals, and can withdraw any animal from an experiment at any time for clinical reasons.)

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- vii. The candidate must obtain a clearance certificate/number from the University Research Office before commencing her/his research.

### **9.3 Research on human subjects**

There are two sub-committees of the University Research Committee: a Medical Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), and a Humanities HREC:

- a) The HREC (Medical) has been constituted to monitor the ethics of research to be carried out on human subjects, primarily in the Faculty of Health Sciences whether or not physically invasive techniques are used.

The HREC (Medical) is charged with ensuring that all research in which human subjects are involved (excluding that in (b) below) carried out in the University, by undergraduates, postgraduates, staff or affiliated staff, in the name of the University, using University resources or University property, is ethical and, in particular, safe, soundly based, respects the rights of individuals, and includes informed consent.

The research proposals that require screening include all therapeutic and diagnostic research on patients, as well as research on healthy subjects/participants, whether through physical research, questionnaires or examination of records.

Therapeutic research involving drug trials must first be cleared by the Pharmaceutical and Therapeutic Committee of the relevant hospital.

If the Chairperson of the HREC (Medical) feels that the Committee is not the appropriate one, she or he will refer the proposal to the HREC (Humanities).

The Head of School, Supervisor and/or Chairperson of the Faculty GSC, when scrutinising a research proposal, is required to draw the attention of a candidate to the need for clearance to be sought by the candidate from the HREC (Medical), through the office of the University Research Office, and for a clearance certificate and Protocol Number to be obtained by the candidate before commencement of research. This number must appear on any publication resulting from the research.

The Committee may delegate to the Chairperson the power to act in urgent cases.

- b) The HREC (Humanities) has been constituted to monitor the ethics of research protocols primarily in the Humanities and Social Sciences, including the risks and benefits to the informant or subject or participant.

The HREC (Humanities) is required to provide a set of guidelines for Faculties against which the need to refer proposals to the HREC (Humanities) can be assessed.

It is the Committee's responsibility to look at critical factors such as the extent to which research could be socially or psychologically invasive or damaging. (Research involving physically invasive techniques is scrutinised by the HREC (Medical) as set out in (a) above). The Committee's role is to ensure that all research in which humans are involved, either as informants or subjects, carried out by undergraduates, postgraduates, staff or affiliated staff in the name of the University, respects the rights of individuals.

The Committee's procedures should include the scrutinising of any research proposals referred to it. The Committee must also vet any research instrument (e.g. a questionnaire) planned by the researcher and referred to the Committee to preclude the use of questions likely to violate the rights of participants.

The Faculty Board, Faculty GSC, Supervisor, panel or Chairperson of the Faculty GSC, when scrutinising a research proposal, is required, where necessary, to draw the attention of a candidate to the need for clearance to be sought by the candidate from the HREC (Humanities), through the University Research Office. (Updated in 2021 and approved by the Science Faculty Board by circulation on 15 November 2021)

Office, and for a clearance certificate (which includes a Protocol Number) to be obtained by the candidate before commencement of research. The Supervisor is accountable in the first instance for raising issues of concern with regard to ethics with the candidate.

It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to obtain from the candidate a copy of the clearance certificate/number from the HREC (Humanities) prior to the commencement of the research.

If the Chairperson of the HREC (Humanities) feels that the proposal referred to that Committee is more relevant to the HREC (Medical), she or he will refer it to that Committee.

The Committee may delegate responsibility for ethics clearance to a properly constituted sub-committee. The Committee may delegate to the Chairperson the power to act in urgent cases.

#### **9.4 Research with biohazardous substances or genetically modified organisms**

Any research using genetically modified organisms or substances must be cleared by the Bio-Safety Review Board prior to its commencement. Where a research project involves the use of biohazardous substances (biohazardous substances are defined at point 3 in the document entitled "General Information", which may be found at the first bullet at the foot of this page: <http://www.wits.ac.za/academic/researchsupport/25279/>). This is also the place to go to learn more generally about the IBC) it will be necessary to apply to the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) for clearance, unless the work is taking place in a laboratory which has already been granted IBC approval, or the project is being carried out in association with a Supervisor who has obtained IBC approval for that specific project, stating in her/his application an intention to involve postgraduate candidates. Research involving GMO's needs to comply with the Department of Agriculture and Forestry regulations. All research must comply with the requirements which are available on the University Research Website.

### **10 SUBMISSION OF THESES/DISSERTATIONS/RESEARCH REPORTS**

**All forms and the Faculty Style Guide are available on the Faculty of Science website**  
<https://www.wits.ac.za/science/postgraduate/forms/>

#### **10.1 Procedure for Submission**

The candidate is required to complete a form informing the Faculty of the intention to submit her/his research. This form needs to be completed three months prior to the submission of the research. The completed thesis/dissertation/research report must be submitted electronically to the Faculty Office together with a submission form signed by the candidate and an acquiescence form signed by the Supervisor.

#### **10.2 Requirements for Submission of Thesis/Dissertation/Research Report for Examination**

A candidate is required to submit a Submission of Doctor of Philosophy/ Master of Science form, an Acquiescence form and a PDF version of the thesis/ dissertation/ research report as well as a plagiarism report electronically.

The candidate is required to check with the Supervisor and/or the Faculty Office if bound copy/copies to be submitted for examination prior to submission.

The electronic version (or bound copies) are sent to the Examiners; it is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the electronic/bound copies are complete, readable and identical.

#### **10.3 Submission of a Supervisor's report**

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A Supervisor's report is submitted with the candidate's submission of the thesis/ dissertation/ research report. The report will only be seen by the GSC for quality assurance purposes and will also form part of documentation if an ad hoc committee meeting is called. The report should be short and should comment on the supervision process as well as briefly assess the quality of the thesis/dissertation/research report. The Supervisor's report will NOT be sent to the Examiners.

#### **10.4 Submission of a Thesis/Dissertation/Research Report against the Advice of a Supervisor**

In terms of the Senate standing orders, candidates are entitled to submit their thesis/dissertation/research report for examination against the advice of their Supervisor/s.

The Faculty's policy in such cases is that the Supervisor should submit the Supervisor's report to the Chairperson of the GSC giving the reasons for advising the candidate against the submission of the thesis/ dissertation/ research report. The Head of the School/Postgraduate Coordinator should be asked to nominate Examiners. No internal Examiner is nominated. If necessary, the GSC shall appoint an ad hoc committee to consider the appointment of Examiners.

#### **10.5 Submission of a PhD Thesis**

The Faculty requires submission for publication of a paper to a peer-reviewed journal prior to the submission of the PhD thesis for examination. If there is a compelling reason for waiving this requirement, the Supervisor would have to motivate, and the Heads of School will use their discretion in the matter.

The Senate Standing Orders (and Policies) for Higher Degrees defines a PhD thesis as an extended piece of writing based on research that makes an original and significant contribution to knowledge, that may incorporate creative work or publications integral to the overall argument and is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy qualification. This definition is in the current Rules and Syllabus book.

#### **10.6 Structure of the Thesis**

The definition of a thesis requires that a PhD thesis that includes publications must be an extended piece of writing that presents a coherent argument or set of arguments. The publications must be integrated into the thesis to maintain its overall coherence.

The content of a PhD thesis should include:

- i. A clear statement of the research hypothesis, question or problem;
- ii. A rationale for the research which clearly shows how the research makes an original contribution to knowledge;
- iii. A framework for how the various chapters of the thesis contribute to the overall integrated argument of the thesis;
- iv. A critical review of the literature that locates the proposed research in relation to relevant published work.
- v. A clear account of the research design where appropriate;
- vi. The necessary ethics clearance where needed;
- vii. Data analysis and interpretation where appropriate;
- viii. Discussion or conclusion that synthesizes the preceding chapters and provides an argument for how together they have made an original contribution to existing knowledge in the field;
- ix. A consolidated reference list of all material referred to in the thesis, using one standard referencing style appropriate to the discipline; and
- x. Appendices: additional material related to the thesis.

#### **10.7 Publishable Manuscripts**

The number of publications that are required in order for a significant contribution to be made to Science should be left to each School to decide in accordance with practices for knowledge production in their

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different disciplines. This decision should be taken by the candidate together with the Supervisor, the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator using the processes for postgraduate administration in that School. It is recommended that all publications that will be included in the thesis should have been accepted for publication in either ISI or DHET accredited journals. Authorship (including co-authorship and order of authors) of publications should be discipline-specific and agreed upon by all parties.

### **10.8 Declaration of Unaided Work**

This should include reference to sections where other contributions (authors and editors) are declared.

In the case of multiple authorships, a detailed account of the contribution of each author in each multi-authored paper must be provided.

### **10.9 Examination**

Publication in peer reviewed journals will contribute to the standing of the thesis but does not replace the assessment of the Examiners. The examiners' assessment of the thesis will continue to be governed by the University's guidelines to Examiners.

## **11. EXAMINATION OF THESES/DISSERTATIONS/RESEARCH REPORTS**

### **11.1 Nomination of Examiners**

Save in exceptional circumstances, the Head of School (in consultation with the Supervisor) shall nominate, for the approval of the Faculty GSC, at least one internal Examiner and at least two external Examiners (of whom at least one should, if feasible, be a person who would normally be working outside South Africa) for a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and at least one internal Examiner and one external Examiner for a dissertation/research report for a degree of Master of Science. In the event of there being no suitable internal Examiner an additional external Examiner must be nominated.

For the degree of Master of Science by dissertation, Master of Science by a combination of coursework and research report and the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the internal Examiner of a thesis shall normally be a member of staff of the University and may NOT be the Supervisor of the candidate. Where a suitable internal Examiner cannot be identified within the University, an additional external Examiner shall be appointed.

In nominating Examiners, the Head of School (in consultation with the Supervisor) must submit the name, address, present post and CVs of each Examiner, together with a brief statement concerning the suitability for appointment as Examiners (information provided should include: disciplinary area, postgraduate supervision and a list of recent publications). In exceptional circumstances, Examiners may hold a degree of a lower status than the one being examined; however, their role as Examiners must be motivated in advance.

For the purposes of these Standing Orders, an external Examiner is defined as a person who has not in any way been involved in the preparation of the work, and who is preferably not a member of the University staff. If the external Examiner is a member of the University staff, this must be motivated and approved by the Faculty GSC.

The Head of School, Postgraduate Coordinator of the School or Supervisor should approach Examiners informally before nominating them officially for consideration by the Faculty GSC. Possible Examiners should be informed that the expected turn-around time is six weeks from the day they receive the research report, dissertation or thesis. A copy of the research report, dissertation or thesis are forwarded electronically to the examiner. In exceptional circumstances the examiner may request a hard copy of the dissertation.

Internal and external Examiners should not be nominated if they have been supervised, worked with, or published with the Supervisor within the last 5 years and they must not have supervised that person in the last ten years. A short motivation should be given as to why the Examiners are appropriate.

### **11.2 Confidentiality of names of Examiners (both external and internal)**

The names of the Examiners should be confidential during the examination process but should be revealed to a candidate when she/he is qualified. Examiners should be advised of this at the point at which they are approached to examine the research.

### **11.3 Consultation on the examination process**

Examiners shall not consult one another except by permission of the Dean and Chairperson of the Faculty GSC, usually in response to a request for further information, until the examination process is completed. The Head of School and Chairperson, if they consider that the circumstances are exceptional, may give permission for Examiners to confer with one another in writing, provided copies of the correspondence are made available to the Chairperson of the Faculty GSC.

**Examiners, Supervisors and the candidate may NOT consult during the examination process.**

### **11.4 Examiners' Reports: Availability to Supervisors**

The Examiners shall send their reports to the Faculty Office. The reports are scrutinised by the Chairperson of the GSC who prepares a recommendation. The recommendation, together with the reports, is then circulated to the GSC for consideration and approval. Thereafter, the reports are made available to the appropriate School GSC representative who then passes the material onto the Supervisor. The Supervisor is then responsible for contacting the candidate and implementing the recommendation of the GSC. Examination reports may not be released to the Supervisor or the candidate until the Faculty GSC has finalised the recommendations based on an assessment of all the reports.

### **11.5 Unfavourable Examiners' Reports**

In terms of the Senate Standing orders, an ad hoc committee meeting will be held if a candidate receives any unfavourable Examiners' reports.

### **11.6 Disclosure of names of Examiners to candidates**

In terms of the Senate Standing orders, the names of Examiners are confidential, but should be disclosed to successful candidates if the Examiners consent to this after the examination process.

### **11.7 Awarding a MSc by Coursework and Research Report**

For the award of the degree a candidate must pass both the Coursework and Research Report components with a minimum of 50%.

### **11.8 Master of Science with distinction**

#### **MSc by Dissertation**

The degree of MSc shall be awarded with distinction only when the Examiners are unanimous in their recommendations. A mark of 75 percent and above must be awarded by both examiners. If only the external Examiner has recommended the award of the degree with distinction then the GSC may consult the internal Examiner on this issue.

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## **MSc by Coursework and Research Report**

For the award of the degree a candidate must pass both the coursework and research report components with a minimum of 75%.

### **12. AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETING**

If the Examiners are not unanimous in recommending the award of the degree, or if there is a 15% or more discrepancy in the marks awarded by the Examiners of a research report/dissertation, or if a candidate receives an unfavourable Examiner's report, or if the Chairperson of the Faculty GSC considers that the Examiners' reports are inconclusive, an ad hoc Committee shall be appointed to consider the reports in the first instance.

Refer to Senate Standing Orders on Higher Degrees for further details regarding ad hoc committee meetings. Minutes from these meetings are noted at the GSC.

### **13. TIME FRAMES FOR CORRECTIONS TO BE COMPLETED**

#### **Senate Standing Orders on Higher Degrees**

#### **A34 Revision**

A candidate is entitled to appropriate supervision while revising theses in response to Examiner's reports. Revision should be done within a three-month period. Faculties will not require a candidate to pay additional fees if revision is completed within three months. Beyond that, a candidate will be required to pay all fees. Failure to submit at the end of the period allowed for rev