

# PROCEDURES FOR MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL DEGREES

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. GENERAL

- 1.1 These procedures are based on the *Policy for Master's and Doctoral Degrees* and the *Processes for M and D Research Degrees* and relate to the research proposal and dissertation or thesis components of Master's and Doctoral degrees. They should be read in conjunction with the following other UNISA policies:

*Admission Policy*  
*Assessment Policy*  
*Research and Innovation Policy*  
*Tuition Policy*

The requirements for ethical conduct and clearance are set out in paragraph 3 of the *Policy for Master's and Doctoral Degrees*. The *Policy on Research Ethics* and *Policy on Conducting Research Involving UNISA Employees, Students or Data* must also be adhered to. Intellectual property rights are regulated by the *Intellectual Property Policy*. Candidates must also comply with the guidelines of the specific college in which they intend to register, or are currently registered, for their Master's or Doctoral degree.

- 1.2 The procedures for postgraduate studies are divided into different phases, namely:

- Master's and doctoral information prior to registration
- Application And Admission
- Registration
- Research proposal (supervision and assessment)
- Mini-Dissertation, Dissertation Or Thesis (Supervision And Assessment)
- Archiving
- Graduation And Reporting

These phases will be dealt with in the same order in the chapters below.

- 1.3 The Executive Deans of colleges, with the appointed Heads of the Offices of Graduate Studies and Research are responsible for the implementation of the *Policy and Procedures on Master's and Doctoral Degrees*.

- 1.4 All information and study material in respect of Master's and Doctoral degrees are available online only. General information is verified annually by the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee and is posted on the UNISA website prior to the opening date for application and departmental websites regarding matters regulated by UNISA policies and procedures must first be approved by Senate.

## DEFINITIONS

Candidate	refers to a student who has been formally accepted into a Master's or Doctoral programme at UNISA;
Deferment	is the suspension of a student's registration on application by the student for good reason;
Dissertation	refers to the written research project required in a Master's degree by dissertation only as described in the <i>Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (2013) (HEQSF)</i> ;
Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee	is a sub-committee of the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee and is authorised by Executive Management to approve all policies and procedures relating to Masters and Doctoral studies;
Mini-dissertation	refers to the dissertation required in part-fulfilment of the requirements of a Master's by coursework and mini-dissertation as described in the HEQSF;
Nominee	means the person, or committee, to whom a specific function has been delegated by the Executive Dean of a college;
Prospective student	refers to a person who has not yet been formally accepted as a Master's or Doctoral student at UNISA;
Thesis	refers to the written research product required to be submitted for examination in fulfilment of the requirements for the completion of a Doctoral degree as described in the HEQSF;
UNISA	refers to the University of South Africa.



## CHAPTER 2

### PHASE 1: MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL INFORMATION PRIOR TO REGISTRATION

- 2.1 Details of formal admission requirements for individual qualifications are available on the UNISA website [www.unisa.ac.za/qualificationsMD/](http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualificationsMD/). All pre-registration requirements have to be met before a prospective student will be allowed to register. Colleges may have specific language admission requirements.
- 2.2 Prospective students who have not previously studied for a formal qualification at UNISA must first apply for a student number and thereafter apply for admission during the prescribed application dates (except where Senate permission has been granted to deviate from these dates) for Master's and Doctoral qualifications. The application fee for a student number is non-refundable.
- 2.3 The application process and selection criteria set by colleges, schools or departments and approved by Senate, are made available on departmental websites prior to the commencement date for application for Master's and Doctoral studies. Such information includes specific focus areas or research projects identified by departments and/or colleges and the number of new Master's and Doctoral students that can be accommodated in a particular academic year and is aligned with section 37(3) and (4)(b) of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997.
- 2.4 Starting from the 2021 cohort, Doctoral candidates shall deliver an oral defence (*viva voce*) of their theses or dissertations. The oral defence may take place in person, or through videoconferencing or other appropriate technology. An oral defence of a doctoral thesis is always required as part of the examination process. The same examiners are appointed to assess the thesis and adjudicate its oral defence. Master's candidates may be called upon to deliver an oral defence (*viva voce*) of their dissertations.
- 2.5 The HEQSF allows a Master's student's candidature (Master's by full research) to be upgraded to a Doctoral programme, provided the candidate has the necessary competence and the 50/50 rule is adhered to. Since the minimum requirement for admission to a Doctoral programme is an appropriate Master's degree, the quality of the candidate's work on the basis of which the upgrade is considered must be at the level of a completed Master's degree. The upgrading request must be recommended by the supervisor to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee, supported by the College Executive Committee and approved by Senate and must take place during the thesis or dissertation phase prior to submission for examination.
- 2.6 From 2020, first time Master's and Doctoral candidates are required to submit a manuscript(s) for publication to a peer reviewed accredited journal as part of the thesis or dissertation phase. Colleges should notify prospective students of this requirement prior to registration. Acknowledgement of submission of manuscript (s) from the journal editor should be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies: Master's and Doctoral Examination section by the supervisor. The submission of the manuscript(s) should be done before the final submission of the thesis or

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dissertation for external examination. The submitted manuscript(s) should be based on the research undertaken during Master's and Doctoral studies; and should be deemed acceptable to the supervisor. Results will not be released until the submission of proof of acknowledgement by the Journal Editor is submitted by the supervisor.

- a) In the case of:
  - (i) a mini-dissertation, no manuscript is required
  - (ii) a dissertation, one manuscript; and
  - (iii) in the case of a thesis two manuscripts should be submitted for publication.
- b) Candidates should play a role and/or major role (in formulating the ideas and the results) in writing the manuscript for publication. The candidate should be the first author in a co-authored manuscript.



## CHAPTER 3

### PHASE 2: APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

- 3.1 The minimum qualifications for admission to Master's and Doctoral studies are set out in the *Admissions Policy* and are informed by the *Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework* (2013). UNISA is, however, not obliged to accept any prospective student who meets the minimum requirement as there may be other factors on the basis of which the prospective student cannot be accepted. Factors that will be considered before admitting the prospective student to register include, but are not limited to, the following: the prospective student's academic record, the topic he or she wishes to research, the capacity and expertise to supervise the prospective student and possible limitations imposed by enrolment planning. Such factors will be indicated on the college websites.
- 3.2 Applications for admission are made online to the College of Graduate Studies: Master and Doctoral Administration Support section at [www.unisa.ac.za/md/applications](http://www.unisa.ac.za/md/applications) within the prescribed dates. The prospective student must indicate his or her preferred focus area. Some colleges allow prospective students to suggest an alternate title or focus area if his or her interest is not covered in the list provided by the college.
- 3.3 The College of Graduate Studies: Master and Doctoral Administration Support section verifies compliance with the formal requirements as communicated on the website <http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualificationsMD/> and then refers the application to the academic department concerned for selection. The academic department considers the application, the prospective student's academic record, his or her academic background, language competence, factors set out in supervisory capacity and other relevant matters and, in accordance with the provisions of section 37(3) and (4)(b) of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, recommends approval or rejection to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee. The Chair of Department conveys, in writing to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee, the reasons for the non-acceptance of an application in cases where a prospective student complies with the minimum requirements but is unacceptable to the academic department for academic or other reasons as set out in paragraph 3.3 above.
- The Department notifies College of Graduate Studies: Master and Doctoral Administration Support section, via the *MyUnisa* admission system, of the final outcome of the application for admission.
- 3.4 When a prospective student's or candidate's application to register for a research proposal module is approved, the academic department notifies the College of Graduate Studies: Master and Doctoral Administration Support section via the *MyUnisa* admission system of the name of the supervisor, the focus area or the working title.
- 3.5 The College of Graduate Studies: Master and Doctoral Administration Support section informs the prospective student of the department's decision as well as the reasons on which the decision was based.

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- 3.6 An appeal against non-admission on academic grounds may be addressed to the College of Graduate Studies: Master and Doctoral Administration Support section which section will refer it to the Executive Dean of the relevant College, or to his or her nominee. If the appeal is rejected, such rejection must be substantiated and submitted to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee for consideration. The Committee considers the matter and informs the College of Graduate Studies: Master and Doctoral Administration Support section of the outcome. This section communicates the outcome to the applicant, the Executive Dean and the academic department.



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## CHAPTER 4

### PHASE 3: REGISTRATION

- 4.1 A candidate whose application for a Master's degree by dissertation, or a Doctoral degree, is accepted, is advised by the College: Graduate Studies, Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section to register for the appropriate compulsory research proposal module. The outcome of this module is an approved research proposal.
- 4.2 In the case of a Master's degree by coursework and mini-dissertation, a candidate whose application for registration is accepted must register for at least one of the coursework modules and/or the research proposal module. Colleges may make recommendations in respect of the order in which candidates should register for the modules in the programme, but a candidate must, if he or she wishes to do so, be able to complete the 180 credit qualification within one year as set out in the HEQSF.
- 4.3 A candidate's registration is not finalised before all the admission and registration processes have been completed and full payment of the fees prescribed for the relevant module(s) has been received.
- 4.4 A letter is issued to the candidate as soon as his or her registration is finalised. In the case of a candidate registered for a research proposal module or dissertation or thesis, the letter includes the working title or focus area and the name of the candidate's supervisor. Copies of this letter are forwarded to the designated contact person in the Department and/or the supervisor and co-supervisor (if applicable) and the library.
- 4.5 The supervisor(s) will guide the candidate for the duration of his or her study period.
- 4.6 A candidate should establish contact with his or her supervisor as soon as possible either personally or by e-mail if a face-to-face meeting is not possible. Upon registration, a personal librarian will contact the candidate.
- 4.7 Candidates who are registered for a Master's or Doctoral degree may, if they comply with the prescribed admission requirements for those modules or papers, also register in the same academic year for two undergraduate modules or for one Honours or Master's paper or the corresponding number of modules on the same level for non-degree purposes (NDP).
- 4.8 An application for concurrent registration must reach the Registrar at least three weeks before the closing date for registration for the NDP paper/module(s).
- 4.9 Candidates must annually reregister online and pay the fees for the academic year by the date published on the Unisa website.
- 4.10 Re-registration depends on satisfactory progress by the candidate as determined in the *Admission Policy* and on approval by the supervisor. Given the high demand for admission to Masters and Doctoral degrees at UNISA, a candidate who has been admitted to such studies

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should demonstrate satisfactory progress for the duration of his or her studies (i.e. the research proposal and dissertation or thesis phases) towards the postgraduate qualification. The supervisor approves re-registration annually by capturing the candidate's academic activities on *myUnisa* and indicating that the candidate may re-register. Supervisors must be cognisant of the maximum duration allowed for a qualification (refer par 4.12). The supervisor also submits a Research Proposal Result form in which the supervisor indicates whether or not the student may re-register and motivates accordingly. This form is submitted according to college requirements.

The academic department monitors the progress of the candidate. Colleges may require a six-monthly or annual progress review. The supervisor should, at least three months prior to reregistration, alert a candidate to the fact that he or she is not making sufficient progress in terms of the *Admission Policy*. Should a candidate still not make satisfactory progress, the supervisor indicates unsatisfactory progress on *myUnisa*, thus blocking automatic re-registration, and the candidate is sent a warning letter by the College: Graduate Studies, Masters and Doctoral Administration Support Section. The Executive Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Office of the college where the candidate is registered are copied in on this letter. If the candidate's progress still does not improve, the Chair of Department submits a written and substantiated recommendation to the Executive Dean for decision by the College Executive or Management Committee, that the candidate be excluded for academic reasons. The relevant Committee may recommend to the College of Graduate Studies, Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section that the candidate should be excluded for academic reasons and that he or she should therefore not be allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same College. The student will, accordingly, be informed in writing by the College of Graduate Studies, Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section

- 4.11 A candidate may, within thirty days of receipt of written notification of such exclusion, address an appeal against his or her exclusion to the College of Graduate Studies, Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section. This section refers it to the Executive Dean of the relevant College. If the College Executive or Management Committee recommends that the appeal should be rejected, such rejection must be substantiated and submitted to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee for consideration. The Committee considers the matter and informs the College of Graduate Studies, Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section of the outcome. This section communicates the outcome to the student, the Executive Dean and the academic department
- 4.12 In terms of the *Admission Policy*, a candidate must complete a Master's qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on the recommendation of the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on the recommendation by the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.
- 4.13 A Doctoral degree requires a minimum of two years' study. A candidate registered for a Doctoral degree must have been registered for at least two academic years before the thesis may be submitted for examination. If a candidate registered for a Master's degree has been upgraded to a Doctoral programme (see par. 4.5 above) the period registered for the Master's degree is taken into account when calculating the candidate's period of registration.

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- 4.14 Candidates who wish to defer their studies must, before the closing date for re-registration for a particular year, submit a substantiated application to the Registrar. A candidate may not defer his studies in the first year of registration. The application form is available on the website. Such deferment must be recommended by the supervisor, Chair of Department and Executive Dean of the College concerned and, if granted, is for a period of one year only, after which a further application must be submitted. Deferment will not be granted more than twice, except in exceptional circumstances determined by the Registrar or the Executive Dean of the College. Periods during which a candidate was permitted to defer his or her studies are not taken into account when calculating the candidate's period of registration. The deferment of studies will be captured by the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section and will reflect on a student's academic record.
- 4.15 A candidate may not be supervised or receive study guidance or library services during the period for which he or she has deferred his or her studies. The approved title for his or her dissertation or thesis will be reserved during the period of deferment.
- 4.16 If a candidate does not register for a particular year(s) and did not obtain prior permission to defer his or her studies, the approved title of his or her projected dissertation or thesis will not necessarily be reserved for him or her and the year of interruption will count as one of the years allowed to complete the qualification in terms of the *Admission Policy*. The candidate must re-apply online for admission for the qualification.
- 4.17 The normal rules regarding the cancellation or reduction of study units apply in respect of the coursework modules (for which fees are charged per module or paper) of candidates who are registered for the Master's degree by coursework and mini-dissertation subject to any rules applicable to the specific degree.
- 4.18 Candidates who cancel their registration for a research proposal module, or for a dissertation or thesis remain liable for the full fees for the year for which they were registered. In exceptional cases, the Executive Dean or his or her nominee may recommend cancellation with or without full refund to the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administration Support.
- 4.19 If a candidate/supervisor are of the opinion that the student's registration must be transferred to another qualification, the form, "Request to transfer to another qualification" must be completed by the student, signed by the supervisor, who must provide reasons for the change, and submitted to the Chair of Department and the Head: Research office & Graduate Studies of the college for approval. The signed form must be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administrative Support section who must ensure that the student meets the minimum admission requirement for the new qualification and transfer the student's registration. The request should be submitted before 30 June of the academic year. The College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administrative Support section will inform the candidate and the supervisor(s) of the change.



## CHAPTER 5

### GENERAL PROVISIONS

#### A. TITLES

- 5.1 Candidates who apply for admission to a Doctoral degree or a Master's degree by dissertation, submit a working title with their admission applications. Candidates who apply for a Master's degree by coursework and mini-dissertation may be required to submit a working title for the mini-dissertation with the application for admission.
- 5.2 The working title is captured by the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section when registration for the research proposal module is being finalised. The working title remains on the student system until such time as the research proposal is approved.
- 5.3 On approval of the research proposal the supervisor should provide the approved title and supervisor/co-supervisor on the Research proposal result form according to college procedures to have the title amended if required. The amended title is submitted by the College to the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section.
- 5.4 Titles should not be changed throughout the duration of the dissertation or thesis phase. When a candidate is nearing completion of the dissertation or thesis, the supervisor and candidate should assess the working title and, if necessary, apply to the relevant College Committee for a title under which the dissertation or thesis will be submitted for examination. Colleges must address the quality of titles, including possible submission of proposed titles to language editors before submission to College Board or the College Executive for recommendation to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee for approval. The supervisor and candidate must consider the January and November submission dates (see par. 7.15 below) to ensure that the titles are approved before final submission for examination.
- 5.5 Titles are maintained by the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section. The manager of this section will provide the Head: Research and Graduate Studies of each College with a list of approved titles on request for recommendation to College Board or the College Executive for recommendation to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee for approval.
- 5.6 Examiners may recommend changes to the registered title of a candidate's dissertation or thesis. In this instance the College: Graduate Studies, Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support are requested to amend the title when the final results are submitted to them by the College and before the results are released to the candidate. The candidate must submit the post-assessment copies under the amended title.

## **B. SUPERVISOR AND CO-SUPERVISOR**

### **General**

- 5.7 As stipulated in the *Assessment Procedures Manual*, supervisors of candidates doing Master's dissertations must hold at least an equivalent (Master's) qualification, but preferably a Doctorate, and must have a research record that is deemed acceptable by the College for the appointment. Supervisors and Co-supervisors of doctoral candidates must themselves hold a Doctorate and have a research record that is deemed acceptable by the College for the appointment. In exceptional circumstances, the Executive Dean may request the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee to approve the appointment of a supervisor with specific expertise but who does not have the stipulated academic qualification or research record.
- 5.8 Immediately after registration has been finalised, the candidate and his or her supervisor sign a Supervision agreement setting out their respective roles regarding the proposed research. Colleges, schools or departments may draw up their own agreement.
- 5.9 In order to increase supervision capacity, supervisors external to UNISA may be appointed. Their remuneration and conditions of employment are determined from time to time by the relevant UNISA structures. External (co-)supervisors are appointed as independent task-based contractors by the Department hosting the particular qualification. This Department recommends the appointment of an external (co-)supervisor to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee substantiated by a *Curriculum Vitae* that should include any supervisory experience. The remuneration of external supervisors is funded from UNISA's Academic Human Resource Allocation Model (ACHRAM) (departmental discretionary funds).
- 5.10 The following criteria are taken into account when appointing external supervisors: academic qualification, expertise in the field and supervisory experience at the level of the qualification they will be required to supervise.
- 5.11 A co-supervisor or panel of supervisors may be appointed. Co-supervisors or panel members should be experts in an aspect of the field of the proposed dissertation or thesis. They provide academic support and expertise in co-operation with the supervisor.
- 5.12 A novice supervisor must co-supervise with experienced supervisors.
- 5.13 A supervisor or candidate may address a duly motivated request to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee for the appointment of a co-supervisor, or for the replacement of the supervisor by another supervisor.

### **The role of the supervisor**

- 5.14 The supervisor must be mindful of the relevant policies and associated documents governing postgraduate supervision at UNISA as well as the stipulations of any supervision agreement entered into between the supervisor (and co-supervisor where applicable) and the student.

- 5.15 The supervisor should initiate a discussion with the candidate on a research plan; requirements in respect of ethical clearance for the research, appropriate deadlines and timetables, and other relevant matters concerning the research to successfully complete the research.
- 5.16 He or she must provide timeous feedback on work submitted by the candidate and indicate such feedback on *myUnisa* (see par. 5.25 below).
- 5.17 The supervisor must provide appropriate guidance by alerting the candidate to helpful scholarly sources as well as provide guidance with regard to the structure and content of the dissertation or thesis. However, it remains the candidate's responsibility to conduct independent research. It should be pointed out to the candidate that it is his or her duty, and not that of the supervisor, to trace sources.
- 5.18 The supervisor should draw the candidate's attention to linguistic errors, inadequately substantiated or poorly formulated statements and incorrect referencing, but it is the candidate's duty to improve them.
- 5.19 The supervisor must treat the candidate with courtesy and fairness and should suggest appropriate developmental goals and assistance towards those goals by directing the candidate to workshops or lectures designed for this purpose, including training in the use of databases and research software such as AtlasTi, Mendeley, RefWorks, SPSS and SAS for which UNISA has site licenses.
- 5.20 The supervisor should not rewrite parts of the candidate's work but must merely point out deficiencies to the candidate. The candidate should also be provided with feedback on his or her technical presentation and methodology.
- 5.21 Before the dissertation or thesis is presented for examination the manuscript must be submitted in its final form to the supervisor. The supervisor should ensure that it meets the requirements set out in paragraph 7.2 and should advise the candidate on the need for language editing. The candidate is responsible for the arrangement and payment of editing services.
- 5.22 A dissertation or thesis may not be submitted for examination without the supervisor's consent. The rule may be waived only with the consent of Senate (see par. 7.21 below).
- 5.23 If formal Doctoral examinations are to be conducted or a formal study programme is prescribed, the supervisor (with the assistance of colleagues if there are subsidiary subjects) has to see to the compilation of a reading list for the candidate. If a doctoral defence (*viva voce*) is a condition of the College, School or Department, the supervisor must assist the candidate to prepare for this oral defence (see also par. 2.4 above).
- 5.24 The supervisor has to advise the candidate on the academic standard of the dissertation or thesis. If the thesis entails statistical processing, an expert should be consulted at the outset when the research instruments, e.g. questionnaires are being developed.
- 5.25 The supervisor must capture information on the progress of Master's and Doctoral candidates on *myUnisa*. All activities must be captured by the census date of any given year, which date will be communicated to Colleges by the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral

Administration Support section. The supervisor must further provide information on the candidate's progress as requested by College Management (see also par. 4.10 above).

- 5.26 The supervisor should inform the candidate of his or her non-availability to provide guidance in the case of, for example, conference attendance.
- 5.27 A supervisor remains responsible for the supervision of Master's and Doctoral candidates during his or her research development leave and during any other periods of approved research leave, such as fellowships and academic qualification improvement initiatives.
- 5.28 Supervisors must test the integrity of research conducted by interpreting the results after the candidate has submitted the research to an appropriate plagiarism detection system. The results must be accurately recorded and interpreted. Supervisors should be trained to use the relevant system. UNISA provides training in respect of the software which it officially supports.

Plagiarism detection systems are primarily intended to be educative, to inform and assist researchers, and not punitive. Research should, therefore, be submitted to such a system on receipt (e.g. of a chapter) and not only shortly before submission for examination. This allows the supervisor the opportunity to advise the candidate if unacceptable results are obtained during the initial phases of the research, including the research proposal phase, and to provide the candidate with the opportunity to improve the submission. The candidate should again submit a copy of the final dissertation or thesis to an appropriate plagiarism detection system before submission for examination.

If the plagiarism detected is of such a serious nature, or is detected during advanced stages of the research and the supervisor is convinced that the matter may warrant disciplinary action, it must be referred to the URERC Academic Integrity Sub-committee, or any other designated structure, for investigation.

### **Co-supervision**

- 5.29 If a co-supervisor has been appointed, he or she is expected to play an active role in the candidate's supervision. The co-supervisor has to be mindful of the stipulations of any Memorandum of Understanding entered into between the supervisor and co-supervisor and the student.
- 5.30 The supervisor and co-supervisor must liaise regularly about the candidate's work.
- 5.31 The supervisor and co-supervisor should agree on their respective roles and responsibilities and the mode of communication with the candidate. This arrangement should be communicated to the candidate at the commencement of the research and set out in the supervision agreement. In the case of a panel of supervisors, the respective roles of the panel members should be very carefully delineated.
- 5.32 It is advisable that the supervisor take responsibility for all communication to the candidate, including feedback and commentary provided by the co-supervisor. The supervisor remains the main contact person between the student and co-supervisor and takes final responsibility for the communication, feedback and administrative issues related to the student. The supervisor should

also do regular checks to determine if all information regarding the co-supervision, title of the dissertation or thesis and any other relevant information is captured on the system. Supervisors and co-supervisors should agree on their respective roles.

### **The role of the candidate**

- 5.33 The candidate takes primary responsibility for all aspects and phases of his or her own research from application to graduation. If the candidate makes use of external expertise (e.g. editing, statistical support) the costs incurred are for the candidate's own account.
- 5.34 As soon as the candidate's registration has been finalised, he or she must activate the *myLife* email and his or her *myUnisa* account. This account should be maintained as it is the primary channel of communication between UNISA and Master's and Doctoral candidates.
- 5.35 The candidate must be familiar with and adhere to UNISA's policies and associated documents regarding the postgraduate study.
- 5.36 The candidate must ensure that his or her registration is current until graduation. The candidate, supervisor and co-supervisor (if applicable) must ensure that the qualification is completed within the prescribed timeframes for completion of the qualification, that is, within three years for a Master's and six years for a Doctoral degree (refer to par. 4.12)
- 5.37 The candidate must record and regularly update the research plan, target dates et cetera agreed with the supervisor (see par. 5.15 above) and provide the supervisor with a copy of such record. He or she must, to the extent possible, keep to timetables and target dates and plan and submit work on a regular basis.
- 5.38 He or she must treat the supervisor with courtesy and fairness and must communicate with the supervisor about any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect the postgraduate study.
- 5.39 The candidate must undertake research with commitment; develop initiative and independence and keep thorough records of all data, research findings, relevant research meetings/discussions and adherence to ethical requirements.
- 5.40 The candidate must keep copies of submitted work and comments by the supervisor and must keep backups of all electronic data and documents.
- 5.41 The candidate must critically engage with all relevant information as pointed out by the supervisor.
- 5.42 He or she must adhere to the principle of academic integrity and ethical standards in research.
- 5.43 It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the quality of the language of the dissertation or thesis, and all technical aspects, are acceptable. If necessary, the candidate should, at his or her own cost, arrange for language editing and, if so advised by the supervisor and/or the examiner, must do so (see also par. 5.21 above and par 7.14 below). Various external and UNISA funding options may be available and will be published on the web.

- 5.44 Before the thesis is submitted for examination the manuscript must be approved by the supervisor. It remains the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the correct version of the manuscript is submitted for examination.
- 5.45 The candidate should discuss his or her intention to submit the dissertation or thesis for examination with the supervisor prior to giving such notice (see par. 7.3.2 below).
- 5.46 The candidate should investigate and attend relevant UNISA workshops or lectures, including training in the use of databases and research software such as AtlasTi, Mendeley, RefWorks, SPSS and SAS for which UNISA has site licenses. The student must familiarise themselves with Turnitin at <http://www.turnitin.com> (available on the myUnisa home page). The supervisor should also advise the candidate in this regard.
- 5.47 Any issues that may arise during the research that cannot be resolved between the candidate and the supervisor, should be communicated to the Chair of the Department and if these remain unresolved, should be escalated to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee.

In terms of the Policy on Master's and Doctoral Degrees, all Master's and Doctoral candidates have the right to appeal against the unfair practice in supervision or examination<sup>1</sup>. Appeals are monitored and resolved by the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee unless they have been satisfactorily concluded at the college level<sup>2</sup>. A candidate who wishes to appeal on these grounds, should notify the Executive Dean or his or her nominee, and if the matter is not satisfactorily resolved at the college level, the appeal is referred to the College of Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support. The reasons for the appeal must be set out in the notification.

## **C. ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

- 5.49 According to the *HEQSF*:

*“Master’s degree graduates, in general, must be able to reflect critically on theory and its application. They must be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, design and critically appraise research, 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 with a theoretical underpinning and continue to advance their knowledge, understanding and skills.*

*The research component or components of a general Master’s degree should be commensurate with the characteristics of the discipline and field as well as the purpose of the programme ....*

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<sup>1</sup> Par 7.2.1 of the Policy

<sup>2</sup> Par 7.2.2 of the Policy

*The doctorate provides training for an academic career. It requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis. ...*

*The defining characteristic of this qualification is that the candidate is required to demonstrate high-level research capability and to 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.”*

- 5.50 The thesis or dissertation shall be written in a language that complies with the UNISA *Language Policy* as well as the accepted standards for presentation of research and knowledge in the discipline(s) of the particular candidate. It must also comply with the referencing style prescribed for the discipline(s) by the College(s). In the case of a thesis or dissertation undertaken within the domain of multi-inter or transdisciplinary research, the candidate shall comply with the referencing style agreed on with the supervisor. The layout shall conform to UNISA thesis or dissertation layout guidelines as published on the UNISA website. The supervisor has an advisory role in this regard, but it is the candidate’s responsibility to ensure that the thesis or dissertation meets the required standards.

The UNISA Language Policy provides that postgraduate research students are allowed to write their proposals, theses or dissertations in:

- a) the language of the subject in which the proposal, thesis or dissertation is offered, or
- b) any of South Africa’s official languages, or
- c) any other language as approved by the relevant College Higher Degrees Committee provided that there is sufficient supervisory and examination capacity available for the estimated duration of the study.

The student’s choice of language has to be negotiated and agreed formally at the start of the study. Supervision in all official languages will be encouraged.

## **D. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

- 5.51 UNISA is, in terms of the *Intellectual Property Policy*, the owner of all intellectual property created by candidates during their postgraduate studies.
- 5.52 Should the possibility arise to file for the protection of any intellectual property rights (excluding copyrights) emanating from the research undertaken by a postgraduate candidate registered at UNISA, the Directorate for Innovation and Technology Transfer shall be immediately informed of such a possibility prior to any public announcements or publication of such intellectual property in any form. This shall happen irrespective of whether UNISA has a claim to any share in the intellectual property. Filing for patents or any other actions related to the assertion of intellectual property shall be undertaken in collaboration with Directorate for Innovation and Technology Transfer in accordance with the Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act 51 of 2008.

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- 5.53 Although copyright of the final thesis is vested with the candidate after successful completion of the degree, the intellectual property rights related to established research projects joined by candidates for the purpose of postgraduate studies will be determined by the contracts governing these projects and established intellectual property rights to these projects.
- 5.54 A candidate shall grant UNISA a non-exclusive copyright license to reproduce, in any manner or form, and disseminate for archival, teaching and research purposes a dissertation or thesis submitted to UNISA in fulfilment or part-fulfilment of a Master's or a Doctoral degree. In exceptional circumstances, a candidate may apply to be exempted from granting this copyright license. Such an application must be fully substantiated.
- 5.55 The value of publication of parts (e.g. chapters) of the thesis or dissertation, or co-publication by a candidate and supervisor in order to receive peer-reviewed feedback on original research is recognised. It is also recognised that there is a strong tradition of publication of research work by postgraduate candidates in order to build and enhance their academic standing in their respective research communities. It is therefore recommended that supervisors and candidates come to a prior agreement on the number and type of publications to emanate from the candidate's thesis or dissertation, within the normal academic traditions of the discipline in which the candidate is enrolled. In such instances of publication, if the publication is to be co-published by the candidate and supervisor(s), the candidate shall be the main author, followed by the supervisors' names according to the conventions of the particular discipline.
- 5.56 UNISA subscribes to an open policy regarding the creation and dissemination of knowledge. However, the university accepts that in some exceptional cases the research work undertaken by a student may involve proprietary or classified information. In such an instance it is the responsibility of the student to inform the relevant academic department of the situation as soon after registration as possible and to seek formal permission to base a thesis or dissertation on such proprietary or classified information. The permission must be formally granted by the Executive Dean or his or her nominee. The candidate must also, when submitting the intention to submit the thesis or dissertation for examination, formally notify the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support of the confidential nature of the thesis or dissertation in order to allow the section to make appropriate arrangements.

Although the university will, for governance reasons, include the thesis or dissertation in its normal institutional repositories, an embargo will be placed on the content for an initial period of two years after archiving, renewable on request by the candidate. Renewal of embargo requests should be submitted to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or his or her nominee.

## **E. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND HONESTY**

- 5.57 UNISA is committed to research that is conducted, produced and disseminated in an ethical and responsible manner.

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- 5.58 It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the entire content of a thesis or dissertation is his or her own original work. A declaration to this effect must be included in the submission documentation (see par 7.12 below).
- 5.59 A candidate may under no circumstances commit plagiarism, and the supervisor or other authorised parties may use any means at their disposal (including plagiarism detection systems) to detect instances of plagiarism.
- 5.60 A candidate may under no circumstances falsify or fabricate data. All records of studies, sources, experiments, data et cetera must be accessible to and verifiable on request by the Executive Dean or his or her nominee.
- 5.61 A candidate may not submit a thesis or dissertation for examination or evaluation at UNISA if it was previously submitted for examination at another institution. A declaration to this effect must be included in the submission documentation (see par 7.12 below).



## CHAPTER 6

### PHASE 4: RESEARCH PROPOSAL

- 6.1 The outcome of the compulsory research proposal module in the Master's and Doctoral programme is the submission of an acceptable research proposal within one year (and in exceptional cases, two years) after registering for the module, as stipulated in the *Admission Policy*. The module is non-credit bearing. No mark is awarded for the research proposal.
- 6.2 Candidates should be guided in submitting drafts of the research proposal to their supervisors and be given the opportunity to rework drafts after feedback from the supervisor. Colleges, schools or departments should draw up guidelines for supervisors and candidates that stipulate the submission of draft work and the dates and manner of the final adjudication of the research proposals in each department. Ethical clearance should be considered during the research proposal phase (see Chapter 7 below).
- 6.3 When the supervisor is satisfied with the research proposal, it will be evaluated in accordance with college guidelines. Colleges should have appropriate assessment criteria and procedures in place to evaluate the research proposal.
- 6.4 If the research proposal is accepted, the completed research Proposal Result Form is submitted to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee for recommendation to the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section. This form is confidential and may not be disclosed or provided to candidates.
- 6.5 If the research proposal is not accepted, or the candidate has not submitted a research proposal by the due date as prescribed by each College, the completed Research Proposal Result Form is submitted by the supervisor or other authorised people to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee. A substantiated recommendation in respect of re-registration for the research proposal module or exclusion of the candidate must be included.
- 6.6 If the research proposal is not accepted within the time prescribed in the *Admission Policy*, a candidate may not re-register for a research proposal module in the same college for a period of two years. Should he or she re-apply after this period, the application will be dealt with as a new one and will be subject to college admission procedures.
- 6.7 Irrespective of the outcome of the module, the supervisor must see that all activities have been recorded on *myUnisa* when the outcome of the research proposal module is recorded. It must also be indicated whether or not the candidate may re-register for the research proposal module for the following year. In the case of an external supervisor, it is the responsibility of the Chair of Department to ensure that activities are captured.
- 6.8 The Executive Dean or his or her nominee must forward the result of the research proposal module to the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section. This section captures the result, ensures that activities have been recorded on *myUnisa*, informs the candidate in writing of the result and if the research proposal was accepted. From 1 July, the candidate is registered for the following year but will still have access to *myUnisa* and the library

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system. The registration is activated upon payment of the registration fees. Under no circumstances may the result be conveyed to the student by any other party.

- 6.9 For quality assurance purposes records should be kept by the Executive Dean or his or her nominee. They should include at least the supervisor agreement, research proposal, assessment rubric and result, and the confirmation of ethical clearance if available at this stage.
- 6.10 Candidates results for the research proposal module will be captured on their academic records as; either “Failed” or “Comply with requirements” or “*Did not comply but may re-register for the proposal module*”.
- 6.11 A candidate who is dissatisfied with the result of his or her research proposal module, may appeal the decision in writing to the Executive Dean of the College offering that module within 30 (thirty) days of receiving the written confirmation of his or her result. The Executive Dean will refer the matter for investigation to the College Head: Office of Graduate Studies who will inform the Executive Dean or his or her nominee of the outcome of the investigation within 30 (thirty) days of the date of referral. The matter may be referred to an external academic. The Executive Dean notifies the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section of the outcome within 10 (ten) days of its receipt. The Directorate then informs the candidate.



## CHAPTER 7

### PHASE 5: MINI-DISSERTATION, DISSERTATION OR THESIS

#### A. ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH

- 7.1 All research must in terms of the UNISA *Research Ethics Policy* be considered for ethics clearance before it may commence. All research involving human participants, data, animals, or other living or genetically modified organisms must have ethics clearance from an appropriate Research Ethics Committee. If the research involves UNISA employees or students, permission to do the research must be obtained from the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee in terms of the *Policy on Conducting Research Involving UNISA Employees, Students or Data*.
- 7.2 The ethical implications of the proposed research must be considered when the student is developing the research proposal. Ethical clearance approval should be obtained during this phase before the candidate commences with the data-gathering process. The candidate will be guided by the respective College in this regard, in accordance with the procedures and processes set out by the relevant College Research Ethics Committee.
- a) The College of Graduate Studies in collaboration with UNISA research integrity office will oversee, monitor and improve the process of ethics clearance application and approval for

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postgraduate studies.

- b) A simple much more bespoke version of ethics clearance application process (documentation and turnaround time for approvals) should be ensured by the College of Graduate Studies to enhance quality assurance of ethical clearance application process and students' centeredness.
- c) An application form should be developed by the colleges for postgraduate students that will align with the
  - (i) UNISA Policy on Research Ethics,
  - (ii) UNISA Policy and Procedures for Conducting Research involving UNISA Employees, Students and Data.
- d) No ethical clearance will be granted *ex post facto*.

7.3 Candidates must be able to include an appropriately issued ethics clearance certificate (confirming approval or exemption) when submitting a thesis or dissertation for examination purposes.

## **B. FORMAL/TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE DISSERTATION OR THESIS**

7.4 The length of a dissertation and a thesis will vary according to the particular study and/or discipline. The number of pages does not determine the academic quality of the research. As a rough estimate, the mini-dissertation in a Master's degree by coursework and mini-dissertation will be approximately 10 000 – 15 000 words; the dissertation in a Master's degree by dissertation will be about 25 000 - 45 000 words and a Doctoral thesis about 40 000 - 100 000 words (excluding the bibliography and other annexures).

7.5 Guidelines in respect of the formal requirements for dissertations and theses are posted on the websites of the Departments, Schools or Colleges. Links to these websites are provided on the UNISA website.

7.6 The University will not accept a thesis or dissertation that has previously been submitted for a degree at another university (see par. 5.61 above). A candidate may, however, include material from any of his or her existing publications in the thesis or dissertation, provided that they are clearly indicated as such.

7.7 The thesis or dissertation must be in A4 format, using at least one and a half spacing (except footnotes and quotations which may be in single spacing) and leaving a left margin of at least 3 centimetres. The recommended font size for text is size 12 and for footnotes size 10.

7.8 A summary of not more than 350 words for doctoral theses, or 150 words for Master's

dissertations, in the language in which the thesis or dissertation is written, must form part of the final examination copy of the thesis or dissertation, between the title page and the table of contents. If the thesis or dissertation is not in English, each copy must also contain a summary in English, which must be in the front of the final copy of the thesis or dissertation, between the title page and the table of contents.

Summaries of not more than 350 words for doctoral theses, or 150 words for Master's by research dissertations, in at least three official South African languages, one of which must be English, and also in the language in which the thesis or dissertation is written, if not an official South African language, must be included in the front of the electronic post-examination copy of the thesis or dissertation, between the title page and the table of contents. After the examination has been completed and the candidate's thesis or dissertation has been approved, the supervisor may contact Language Services to provide translations of the English summary in the additional official South African languages if the candidate has not already provided such summaries. The student does not incur any costs in this regard and his or her graduation should not be delayed if the translations are not obtained timeously.

- 7.9 In order to assist the Library with the retrieval of information, candidates must give approximately ten key terms which describe the topic of the thesis or dissertation at the end of the summary of the thesis or dissertation. If the thesis or dissertation is not written in English, the key terms must be given in English at the end of the English summary.
- 7.10 The final thesis or dissertation must be uploaded to a link that will be provided to the student by the College of Graduate Studies: Assessment, Research and Examination Support section after approval to submit and the panel of examiners have been appointed.
- 7.11 The title of the thesis or dissertation and the name of the candidate must appear on the front page of the copy for examination.
- 7.12 The examination copy must be accompanied by:

- (a) the following statement by the candidate:

*'I declare that ..... (title of thesis) is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.*

*I further declare that I submitted the thesis/dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.*

*I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.'*

(The dissertation or thesis will not be examined unless this statement has been submitted.)

- (b) A Doctoral candidate must also submit his or her *curriculum vitae* which should not exceed 350 words.

The supervisor should make the formal requirements available to the candidate when he or she commences the research.

## **C. ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

7.13 The assessment process of dissertations or theses comprises three phases:

- Phase 1: Notice by the candidate of intention to submit the dissertation or thesis for examination and the subsequent nomination and approval of a panel of examiners.
- Phase 2: Upload of the final examination copy, electronic distribution to the examiners and examining.
- Phase 3: Approval and release of the examination result, and post-assessment submission of the electronic copy to the library

### **PHASE 1: NOTICE OF INTENTION TO SUBMIT FOR EXAMINATION AND APPROVAL OF A PANEL OF EXAMINERS**

#### **Notice of intention to submit**

7.14 When a candidate's thesis or dissertation is nearing completion, he or she should inform the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support of his or her intention to submit it for examination. This notice must be given at least two months before the date of submission. The Notice of intention form is available on the Unisa website: <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Apply-for-admission/Master%27s-&-doctoral-degrees/Policies,-procedures-&-forms>. College Graduate Studies: Assessment, Research and Examination section should acknowledge receipt of the intention to submit form to the student, the supervisor and the academic department within 5 working days.

7.15 Candidates who submit their thesis, dissertation or mini-dissertation by 15 November may qualify for the Autumn graduation ceremony of the following year and by 15 June for the Spring graduation ceremony of the current year, provided that the results are finalised in time.

7.16 A candidate must be registered for the current academic year in order to have his or her dissertation or thesis examined. If submission takes place after the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, but before the end of January of the following year, the candidate will only graduate at the following Spring graduation ceremonies but need not re-register and pay registration fees for the latter year. Should submission take place after the end of January, the student must formally re-register and pay the full fees. No extension of this date is considered.

If the candidate submitted before the end of January and the result of the candidate is not available by the end of May, the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination will provide the College of Graduate Studies: Masters and Doctoral Administration Support section with a list of such students. The College of Graduate Studies: Masters and

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Doctoral Administration Support section must administratively (free registration) register these students for the current academic year.

- 7.17 The College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support notifies the supervisor and Chair of Department of the receipt of the Notice of Intention to Submit a Dissertation or Thesis for Examination and requests formal permission for the submission of the dissertation or thesis. After consulting with the co-supervisor (if applicable), the supervisor gives permission for the candidate to submit the dissertation or thesis on the prescribed form.
- 7.18 If the candidate does not submit the dissertation or thesis within three months after having given notice of his or her intention to submit, the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support informs the Executive Dean accordingly. If the candidate submits the dissertation or thesis more than three months after the Notice of Intention to Submit, the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support requests confirmation from the academic department of the continued availability of any previously appointed panel of examiners.
- 7.19 The Notice of Intention to Submit the Dissertation or Thesis for Examination must reflect the finalised title as agreed between the candidate and the supervisor, (see also par 5.4 above). The post-examination copies must be submitted with the approved title as reflected in the Statement of Completion.
- 7.20 A supervisor's permission that a candidate may submit his or her dissertation or thesis for examination only implies that the supervisor considers the dissertation or thesis to be ready for examination but does not guarantee a successful result.
- 7.21 A candidate wishing to submit his or her thesis without the supervisor's permission must have the consent of Senate to do so. This permission is requested by submitting a fully motivated application to the Executive Dean who refers it to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee with his or her recommendation. The Committee considers the application and makes a recommendation to the Vice Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation. The final outcome is conveyed to the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support. This division communicates the outcome to the candidate, the Executive Dean and the academic department. Under no circumstances may the result be conveyed to the student by any other party.

### **Appointment of panel of examiners**

- 7.22 Once permission has been granted for a candidate to submit his or her dissertation or thesis for assessment, the Chair of the Department recommends the panel of examiners. The Chair of the Department should consult the supervisor and other senior members of the academic department regarding the appointment of examiners and the non-examining chairperson regarding his or her availability. The Chair of Department must require an abbreviated *curriculum vitae* and/or other evidence, indicating his or her expertise to assess a dissertation or thesis on the particular topic from the examiner. The Head: Office of Graduate Studies must ensure that such records are maintained. The names of the recommended examiners are forwarded to the Executive Dean or

his or her nominee for approval. A student and the supervisor must recuse themselves from the examination process until it is totally completed.

- 7.23 Students or supervisors may not engage with the examiners, but supervisors must engage with the NEC and students must engage with the supervisor. Students may also contact the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination for enquiries during the examination period.
- 7.24 For quality assurance purposes the Head: Office of Graduate Studies of each college must keep a record of external examiners and the frequency of their appointment. As many external examiners should be considered for appointment as is possible in the discipline and care should be taken that the same external examiner is not too regularly appointed for the same supervisor.
- 7.25 The Chair of Department; or delegated must consult examiners about their availability to examine the dissertation or thesis before their names are submitted for approval and must confirm their contact details and their e-mail addresses
- 7.26 The candidate may not be informed of the names of the approved examiners.
- 7.27 The panel of examiners must consist of the following members:
- a) A non-examining chairperson, usually an experienced permanent senior member of the department; or the Chair of a department in the College or School other than the department that hosts the qualification, or the Director of the School, Deputy Executive Dean or the Executive Dean of the College.
- AND
- b) Two examiners for a Master's degree of which at least one is external; and three examiners for a Doctoral degree of which at least two are external with one preferably being an international scholar.

External examiners must sign and return an acceptance form to the address indicated.

- 7.28 The supervisor may not be a member of the examining panel (with an exception of a *viva voce*) but must submit a non-evaluative report to the non-examining chairperson after the dissertation has been submitted for examination. This report is not made available to the candidate, nor to the examiners. The supervisor and examiners should not discuss the assessment of the dissertation or thesis prior to finalisation of its result.
- 7.29 External examiners are appointed on the Oracle system by the relevant academic department in accordance with the approved abbreviated process by designated officers in the college where the candidate is registered. External examiners are remunerated by the relevant academic department on submission of their reports (see pars 7.39 – 7.41 for the minimum requirements for examiners' reports) and claim forms to the non-examining chair (see also par 7.51)
- 7.30 Form V35 is used for the supervisor's consent to, or refusal of, submission for examination; the approval of the panel of examiners and the amendment of the title.

- 7.31 The College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support communicates with the candidate regarding permission to submit the dissertation, the link to upload the final examination copy, and the relevant deadlines.
- 7.32 The College: Graduate Studies, Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support communicates with the examiners and provides guidance to them on the process and the, report to be submitted.

## **PHASE 2: SUBMISSION OF EXAMINATION COPY, DISTRIBUTION TO EXAMINERS AND EXAMINING**

### **Submission**

- 7.33 Candidates who submit their thesis, dissertation or mini-dissertation by 15 November may qualify for the Autumn graduation ceremony of the following year and by 15 June for the Spring graduation ceremony of the current year, provided that the results are finalised in time.
- 7.34 The candidate submits an electronic copy of the thesis or dissertation by means of a link emailed to the student by College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support once permission to hand in has been obtained. The candidate must, with the examination copy, submit a declaration by the supervisor to the effect that the originality checking software report obtained by the candidate has been considered by the supervisor and that he or she confirms the thesis or dissertation meets an acceptable standard of originality.

### **Distribution**

- 7.35 The UNISA Records Management Division distributes the electronic copy of the dissertation or thesis to examiners with an accompanying letter explaining the University's policy regarding examination. The College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support also sends a letter to the NEC, the supervisor(s) and to the candidate.
- 7.36 Guidelines for examination are provided to all examiners by the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support.
- 7.37 The College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support also provides guidance to the supervisor on the non-evaluative report to be submitted to the non-examining chairperson.

### **Examiners**

- 7.38 Examiners are allowed six weeks to examine a thesis and to deliver a comprehensive report and their recommendation regarding the result to the non-examining chairperson.
- 7.39 Examiners may compile their reports as they see fit, but their reports should include comments on the following, taking into account the requirements of the HEQSF set out in par. 5.49 above:

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- a) Scientific and academic standard of research
  - i) research procedures and techniques;
  - ii) methodology;
  - iii) demarcation and scope of research;
  - iv) theoretical substantiation;
  - v) exploration of the literature;
  - vi) grasp of the field of research;
  - vii) footnotes and bibliography
  
- b) Scientific and academic quality of processing and presentation
  - i) processing;
  - ii) presentation and analysis of data;
  - iii) structure and logical development/arrangement of content (internal coherence and classification);
  - iv) critical findings; and
  - v) recommendations
  
- c) Language and editing
- d) Technical presentation and layout
- e) Examiners should also indicate whether they regard parts and/or the substance of the dissertation/thesis as publishable

A Master's dissertation should demonstrate the candidate's ability to work independently and to reflect critically on theory and its application. The dissertation must demonstrate the candidate's ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively; to design and critically appraise research; make sound judgments and communicate their conclusions clearly.

A Doctoral thesis must 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.

Examiners of mini-dissertations should be provided with clear guidelines which may deviate from the above-mentioned list depending on discipline-specific requirements. They should be made aware of the limited scope of the mini-dissertation and its relative weighting in relation to the other modules towards the particular degree.

7.40 Examiners should clearly indicate on the result form whether the dissertation or thesis is:

- accepted unamended
  
- accepted only after improvements (as specifically requested) have been made to the satisfaction of the supervisor in the additional copies. For this recommendation to be made, it should be possible to attend to the required improvements within two months after release of the result. This option will typically be used where minor improvements are required (e.g. editorial improvements, corrections of citations and minor revisions of content).

- referred back for revision and resubmission for examination. This option should be used if the recommended changes require substantial revision of content and/or structure.
- rejected.

Where a thesis is examined after it was referred back for revision and resubmission for examination, the examiner should only indicate whether the result is:

- pass, or
- fail

- 7.41 Doctoral degrees are not awarded with distinction and consequently no percentage mark is assigned to doctoral theses. Percentage marks are assigned only to Master's dissertations. The pass mark is 50% and the distinction mark is 75%.
- 7.42 Examiners of Master's dissertations should clearly indicate in their reports whether a distinction should be awarded.
- 7.43 Examiners must arrive at their findings and compile their reports independently from one another.
- 7.44 Examiners should complete the result form and submit it with their reports directly to the non-examining chairperson of the panel of examiners. The recommendation on the completed form must correspond with that in the written report. Nevertheless, the completed form is regarded as the examiner's final recommendation.
- 7.45 If an examiner finds that a dissertation or thesis is unacceptable in its current form, he or she may recommend that the candidate revise it and resubmit it for examination. In that case the examiner must furnish the non-examining chairperson with an indication of suggested improvements.
- 7.46 When a dissertation or thesis is referred back for revision, the examiners' reports will be made available to the candidate. If at all possible, the revised dissertation or thesis should be examined by the same panel. No dissertation or thesis may be revised and resubmitted for examination more than once without special permission of Senate.
- 7.47 When a dissertation or thesis result is a fail, the candidate is excluded from studies in the same college for a period of two years. The student may reapply for admission for the same qualification but must provide a different focus area or working title.
- 7.48 Examiners may recommend changes to the registered title of a candidate's dissertation or thesis. In this instance the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support is requested to amend the title when the final results are submitted by the College and before the results are released to the candidate. If different titles are suggested by examiners, the non-examining chairperson recommends the amended title. The candidate will be required to submit the post-assessment copies under the amended title.

7.49 External examiners should complete the claim form and submit it to the non-examining chairperson on submission of their examination report

### **The Non-Examining Chairperson**

7.50 The College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support provides clear and comprehensive guidelines to the non-examining chairperson.

7.51 The non-examining chairperson must not have a qualification lower than that being considered for examination; and that the non-examining chairperson must have examined at least three theses at the same qualification level being considered.

7.52 As soon as he or she receives the letter of appointment, the non-examining chairperson must ascertain whether the examiners have received the dissertation.

7.53 The non-examining chairperson does not examine the dissertation or thesis.

7.54 The non-examining chairperson must follow up on progress by examiners and endeavour to ensure that results and reports are received by the due date.

7.55 The non-examining chairperson receives all the examiners' reports and the supervisor's non-evaluative report (see par. 7.27 above) and after having critically considered them compiles a report in which he or she justifies the final recommendation based on all the reports received. Pending finalisation of the recommendation (if 1.2) or result, the non-examining chairperson should not discuss any aspect of it with the supervisor unless the discussion is to clarify any aspect of the supervisor's report, or with the candidate. Examiners' reports should not be made available to the student or supervisor before all reports have been received and the non-examining chairperson's recommendation or report has been finalised. The names and addresses of the original examiners must be deleted from the copies of the reports. If the non-examining chairperson needs any assistance regarding the finalisation of his or her report, it should be discussed with the Head: Office of Graduate Studies and may be referred to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee.

7.56 A unanimous result is preferable in the context of agreement between the examiners to:

- a pass (disagreement about an outright pass and minor corrections first to be made still constitutes agreement about a pass)
- a distinction mark in respect of a Master's degree
- failure with the concession of revision within one year (in which case the dissertation or thesis must be re-submitted and examined again, and the candidate must re-register online for the next academic year and pay the fees.
- an outright fail.

7.57 If the result is unanimous, the non-examining chairperson submits his or her report and final recommendation, the examiners' reports and the supervisor's non-evaluative report to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee. The Executive Dean or his or her nominee submits the

final result to College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support.

- 7.58 If there is no consensus between the examiners, the non-examining chairperson must indicate this in his or her report and recommend a result for consideration by the Executive Dean or his or her nominee (which may be a College Examinations Committee established for this purpose) and the College Executive Committee. This result is recommended, via the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support to the Vice Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or his or her nominee for approval. When there is sharp divergence of opinion, and no other result is agreed upon, an arbitrator may be appointed by the College or School Executive Committee.

The arbitrator will be sent a copy of the thesis as well as copies of the reports of the original examiners. His or her decision is final.

The names and addresses of the original examiners will be deleted from the copies of the reports sent to the arbitrator who is required to take them into account and comment on the recommendations of the original examiners. The report of the arbitrator is forwarded to the College or School Executive Committee for recommendation via the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support to the Vice Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or his or her nominee for approval.

The final decision must be communicated to the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support and the Executive Dean.

If the outcome of this process is a recommendation of resubmission after extensive revision, the original panel of examiners should be appointed to re-examine the thesis. If any of the original examiners are not available to re-examine the dissertation or thesis, or there is a sound reason for not appointing the same panel of examiners, another examiner or other examiners may be appointed. The Chair of Department should provide a motivation in this regard.

- 7.59 The result of a Master's dissertation, be it pass, pass with distinction or fail, is not decided on the basis of the average of the marks awarded by the different examiners but on a judicious appraisal of the examiners' reports. The non-examining chairperson may substantiate and recommend a mark that deviates from the average to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee for his or her consideration.
- 7.60 The non-examining chairperson or any other person involved in the examination process may not change or amend the examiners' reports or forms under any circumstances.
- 7.61 If the examiners recommend a pass but require that minor amendments be made to satisfaction of the supervisor, the non-examining chairperson must establish via the supervisor whether the improvements (if specifically so required by any of the examiners) have been made or obtain from the supervisor acceptable reasons why the required improvements need not be made. The non-examining chairperson only submits his/her final report to the Executive Dean or his/her nominee after the supervisor's statement confirming that the required improvements have been made and the final electronic copy of the dissertation or thesis containing such amendments have been

received from the supervisor. The supervisor's statement and final electronic copy of the thesis or dissertation are submitted with the report by the non-examining chairperson.

- 7.62 If the approved result is one of revision and re-submission, the non-examining chairperson must submit the required reports; compile a detailed excerpt from all the examiners' reports concerning points (both technical and substantive) to be revised and forward it to the supervisor who must forward it to the candidate; and inform the college Head: Office of Graduate Studies that this has been done. The revision has to be accomplished within a year unless Senate should decide otherwise. After being revised, the entire dissertation or thesis is examined by the same panel of examiners. The candidate must again submit a Notice of Intention to Submit the Dissertation or Thesis for Examination. If any of the original examiners are not available to re-examine the dissertation or thesis, or there is a sound reason for not appointing the same panel of examiners, another examiner or other examiners may be appointed. The Chair of Department should provide a motivation in this regard. No dissertation or thesis may be revised and resubmitted for examination more than once without special permission of Senate.
- 7.63 Where a majority report in favour of a failure, pass or revision is clearly acceptable to the non-examining chairperson, he or she may, recommend the majority report as the final result (via the Executive Dean or his or her nominee) to the Vice Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or his or her nominee.
- 7.64 In special circumstances and with appropriate substantiation, the non-examining chairperson may also via the Executive Dean or his or her nominee recommend a minority report in favour of revision or a pass to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee on the basis of the examiners' reports. The examiners' reports must accompany the non-examining chairperson's recommendation.
- 7.65 A distinction for a Master's dissertation should be awarded on a unanimous recommendation by the examiners. If one examiner awards a distinction and the other examiner is clearly not in favour of awarding a distinction, the non-examining chairperson must submit a report to that effect including his or her recommendation whether or not the candidate should pass with distinction, to the Executive Dean or his or her nominee (which may be a College Examinations Committee established for this purpose) and the College Executive Committee for a recommendation. This result is recommended, via the College Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support to the Vice Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or his or her nominee for approval. A distinction awarded for a mini-dissertation does not imply that the degree will be awarded with distinction.
- 7.66 The final result of matters referred to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee or the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees Committee should be conveyed to the College: Graduate Studies Divisions: M&D Qualification Support and Assessment, Research and Examination Support. The responsible division informs the candidate, the supervisor and the NEC. Under no circumstances may the result be conveyed to the student by any other party.
- 7.67 The examination copy remains the property of UNISA.

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## **PHASE 3: APPROVAL AND RELEASE OF THE EXAMINATION RESULT AND POST-ASSESSMENT SUBMISSION OF COPIES**

### **Approval and release of the examination result**

- 7.68 The Executive Dean or his or her nominee signs off on the examination report and forwards the result to the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support for processing.
- 7.69 The Report of the Panel of Examiners must be submitted to the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support by the middle of March for the student to graduate during the Autumn graduation ceremony and by the middle of August for the Spring ceremony.
- 7.70 The College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support checks reports received, ensure that the proof of submission of the manuscript(s) is included and the approved result to ensure compliance with policy and procedure. If the candidate has passed the dissertation or thesis, the College: Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support checks the candidate's curriculum to ensure that the qualification has been completed; calculates (where applicable) the degree average and checks for a possible overall distinction; captures the result and average awarded (where applicable) on the student system; and informs the candidate officially of the result. It also issues an official statement of compliance with the requirements for the award of the degree, and informs the supervisor, co-supervisor, Chair of Department, Executive Dean or his or her nominee and the Library of the result. It further authorises, by means of a permanent examination card, the Graduation Section to proceed with graduation arrangements and the awarding of the degree.

If the final result is that the candidate should revise and resubmit, he/she is informed accordingly.

If the final result is that the dissertation or thesis is rejected (see par 7.41 above) the candidate is informed accordingly and he or she is regarded as having been excluded for academic reasons (see par 4.10 above)

- 7.71 Once the result of a candidate's thesis has been approved, the non-examining chairperson must
- (a) write to each of the external examiners,
    - (i) thanking them for their participation in the examination and their recommendations;
    - (ii) informing them of the result; and
    - (iii) informing them that their suggested improvements, if any, have been taken into account to the satisfaction of the University; and
  - (b) make available the examiners' reports, without disclosing their names, to the supervisor, co-supervisor and candidate if requested. The College: Graduate Studies Division:

Assessment, Research and Examination Support will refer the candidate's file to the non-examining chairperson for this purpose.

### **Post-assessment submission of electronic copy of thesis or dissertation**

- 7.72 After approval of the dissertation or thesis and before conferment of the degree, the candidate must submit the final electronic copy of the dissertation (excluding mini dissertations) or theses, including the candidate's statement (par 7.12(a) above) and the summaries in additional South African languages (par 8.1 below) in electronic .pdf format to his/her supervisor who must submit it by e-mail to [lib-drc@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lib-drc@unisa.ac.za) for uploading on the UNISA institutional repository. By such submission, the supervisor confirms that it is the final electronic copy of the dissertation or thesis (see also par 8.1 below)
- 7.73 In the case of a thesis completed in the College of Law, the Executive Dean: College of Law or his or her nominee will send the final copy of the doctoral thesis to the library of the Supreme Court of Appeal.
- 7.74 The degree will not be awarded unless the candidate complies with these requirements by a date set by the University.
- 7.75 Guidelines are provided on the website for electronic submission of dissertations and theses.



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## **CHAPTER 8**

### **PHASE 6: ARCHIVING**

- 8.1 The supervisor must submit the final electronic version of an accepted thesis or dissertation including the candidate's statement (par 7.12(a) above) and the abstracts in additional official South African languages (par 7.8 above) for purposes of archiving (see also par. 7.75 above). The .pdf copy of the thesis or dissertation is archived in the UNISA Institutional Repository as the final reviewed and approved dissertation or thesis. The thesis or dissertation may be harvested from the UNISA Institutional Repository by Proquest or other research databases. The supervisor must therefore confirm that the version submitted is the final copy and no amendments will, after submission, be allowed to the final copy. Access may be restricted on the recommendation of the non-examining chairperson based on the examiners' reports. Mini-dissertations are not archived in the UNISA Institutional Repository. Final copies of mini-dissertations are kept on record in the Office of the Head: Office of Graduate Studies of the college where the student is registered.



## **CHAPTER 9**

### **PHASE 7: GRADUATION, REPORTING AND OTHER MATTERS**

- 9.1 When it has received the examinations card from the College: Graduate Studies, Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support, the Graduations division contacts the candidate in respect of the conferment of the degree.
- 9.2 The Department: Institutional Statistics and Analysis is responsible for Higher Education Management Information Systems (HEMIS) capturing and reporting and retrieves information from the relevant UNISA system(s) for this purpose.
- 9.3 Subsidy generated by postgraduate supervision is allocated to the department(s) of the supervisor(s) and contributes to determining staff cost units. Co-supervision by members of different academic departments of UNISA has the effect that the departments will share the subsidy generated by the supervision. The department(s) to which the subsidy should be allocated are indicated when activities are recorded on *myUnisa*. Where the supervisor's portfolio is not funded by the Academic Human Resource Allocation Model, the subsidy will accrue to the department in which the candidate is registered.



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