POLICY FOR MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL DEGREES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy describes the broad framework for Master's and Doctoral degrees at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The specific processes and procedures are dealt with in the *Processes for Master's and Doctoral Degrees and the Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees*.

1.2 This policy reflects the ambitions of the Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation Portfolio to provide guidance and leadership in knowledge production, research and innovation. It is also guided by a commitment to research excellence, integrity, quality and rigour, and applies this specifically to Master's and Doctoral research.

1.3 This policy endorses the principle that responsible ethical practice and behaviour are at the heart of research and innovation.

1.4 This policy should be understood and read in conjunction with relevant university policies relating to research and innovation, teaching and learning, admission and registration, assessment, quality assurance, research ethics, copyright infringement and plagiarism.

2. STRUCTURES AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL RESEARCH

The following structures and academic processes are in place to give effect to the policy:

2.1 Senate

Senate is the highest decision-making structure for academic matters.

2.2 Senate Research, Innovation, Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee

2.2.1 Formulates policy on research, innovation and higher degrees.

2.2.2 Is responsible for implementation and waiver of higher degree rules, policies and guidelines and may approve the waiver of these rules in specific circumstances.

2.2.3 Recommends to Senate the approval or not of any new higher degree qualification.

2.2.4 Ensures quality of higher degrees by devising and implementing appropriate quality assurance measures.

2.3 Inter-college Postgraduate Studies Committee

2.3.1 Coordinates all research activities concerning Master's and Doctoral Degrees in the university across all colleges.

2.3.2 Provides a forum that co-ordinates university-wide strategies, interventions and solutions for Master's and Doctoral research, best practices, reforms and innovation.

2.3.3 Cases which colleges find difficult to resolve, such as conflicted examination results, appeals from candidates in respect of supervision and allegations of unethical research conduct, may be referred to the Committee for advice or a recommendation.

2.3.4 Reports to the Senate Research, Innovation Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee.

2.4 College Executive Committee

2.4.1 Is recognised as the body responsible for quality assurance of postgraduate degrees at college level by devising and implementing appropriate quality assurance measures.

2.4.2 Reports to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee and ultimately to the Senate Research, Innovation Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee on all research matters concerning postgraduate degrees via the College Research and Graduate Studies Offices and the College Board.

2.4.3 Is responsible for implementation and waiver of postgraduate degree rules, policies, guidelines and procedures, and may recommend the waiver of these rules in specific circumstances with approval of the Senate Research, Innovation Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee.

2.4.4 Recommends to Senate via the Senate Research, Innovation Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committees, the approval or not of any new higher degree qualification.

2.4.5 Reviews all annual progress reports on Master's and Doctoral research in the dissertation/thesis phase and refers cases of unsatisfactory progress via the Intercollege Postgraduate Committee to the Senate Research, Innovation Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee for a decision about re-registration.

2.4.6 Recommends Master's and Doctoral examination results and refers disputed cases to the respective Executive Dean, the Intercollege Postgraduate Committee and ultimately the Senate Research, Innovation Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee or its Chairperson.

2.5 College Examinations Committee[1]

2.5.1 Is a sub-committee of the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee.

2.5.2 Receives the names of all external examiners recommended by departments in the college and makes recommendations to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee which reports to the College Research, Innovation

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[1] Where deemed necessary by Colleges

Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee/College Executive Committee on their appointment.

2.5.3   Is responsible for quality assurance in respect of the assessment process.

3.   ETHICAL CONDUCT AND CLEARANCE

3.1   UNISA requires all Master's and Doctoral candidates and their supervisors to adhere to the research ethics policy and guidelines, as well as all other UNISA policies pertaining to responsible ethical practice and behaviour in respect of copyright infringement, plagiarism, intellectual property, research methods and procedures, social and environmental interaction and representational concerns.

3.2   Ethical clearance in accordance with the UNISA research ethics policy should be in place before proceeding with the planned research.

3.3   All medical/health-related research must be reviewed and approved according to the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) procedures and guidelines.

4.   APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

4.1   The minimum qualification for admission to master's and doctoral studies is provided for in the Admission Policy as informed by the HEQF.

4.2   Senate may approve additional administrative and academic requirements for admission to master's and doctoral studies.

4.3   The official Master's and Doctoral website of UNISA reflects the Senate approved requirements for the postgraduate qualifications offered in the respective colleges.

4.4   The official Master's and Doctoral website of UNISA provides information on research opportunities, including research focus areas, research projects and qualifications.

4.5   The principles of open and distance learning supported by appropriate virtual research environments, are applicable to Master's and Doctoral admissions, subject to managed access procedures which may involve both administrative and academic requirements

4.6   Admission procedures are dealt with in the *Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees.*

4.7   In exceptional cases, UNISA'S Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedures may also be applied, subject to the approval by the Registrar and the respective departments/ disciplines, as a means of access to Master's and Doctoral studies.

5.   REGISTRATION: RESEARCH PROPOSAL MODULE

5.1   After all due procedures regarding admission have been finalised, UNISA contracts successful candidates by means of a formal letter that is specific to the individual applicant. The terms of the letter are binding on the institution and, upon acceptance, on the candidate. The candidate then commences the research proposal phase.

5.2   UNISA will strive to maintain sufficient capacity and specialisation to support Master's and Doctoral candidates and will provide a context in which high quality research takes place. In particular, UNISA will attempt to appoint a supervisor(s) on registration for the research proposal module.

5.3   On the formal approval of the research proposal by the Department, and subsequently the College Research, Innovation Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee, 24 credits are awarded and the proposal is archived.

5.4   Procedures regarding the research proposal module are dealt with in the *Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees.*

6. REGISTRATION: DISSERTATION/THESIS

6.1   After all due procedures regarding the acceptance of the research proposal have been finalised, UNISA notifies successful candidates by means of a formal letter to the individual applicant on the outcome of the proposal submission.

The terms of the letter are binding on the institution and, upon acceptance, on the candidate. The candidate then registers for and commences the dissertation phase, in the case of a Master's degree, and the thesis phase, in the case of a Doctoral degree.

6.2   UNISA will strive to maintain sufficient capacity and specialisation to support Master's and Doctoral candidates and will provide a context in which high quality research is taking place. In particular, UNISA will ensure that (a) supervisor(s) is(are) appointed on registration for the dissertation/thesis and that continuity in this respect is provided, as far as possible.

6.3   UNISA expects candidates and supervisors to sign and adhere to the supervision agreement/code of conduct.

6.4   Annual re-registration is granted only on the basis of satisfactory progress, based on reports from both the supervisor(s) and the candidate.

6.5   Reporting on the progress of all Master's and Doctoral candidates by colleges to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee and/or Senate Research, Innovation, Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee will be required.

6.6   Procedures regarding the dissertation/thesis including notification of the intention to submit the dissertation/thesis and their assessments are dealt with in the *Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees.*

7. ASSESSMENT

7.1 Assessment of Master's dissertations and Doctoral theses

7.1.1   Assessment of Master's and Doctoral students will be rigorous, fair and consistent and will include reports from two examiners for a Master's degree of which at least one is external to UNISA and at least three examiners for Doctoral degrees, of which at least two must be external and one an international examiner from another country.

7.1.2   On successful completion of the dissertation/thesis it will be archived in the UNISA Institutional Repository in accordance with policy, and cognisant of restrictions relating to intellectual property, patents, grants and proscriptive institutional agreements.

7.2 Complaints and appeals

7.2.1   All Master's and Doctoral candidates have the right to appeal against unfair practice in supervision or examination.

> 7.2.2 Appeals are monitored and resolved by the Senate Research, Innovation, Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee unless they have been satisfactorily concluded at college level.

8. QUALITY ASSURANCE MEASURES

Quality assurance of all Master's and Doctoral research production is achieved by means of rigorous procedures, including monitoring and recording of progress via electronic archiving, to ensure improved completion rates. This process is set out in the *Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees.*

9. FINANCIAL AID

UNISA will supply all Master's and Doctoral candidates with the necessary information regarding financial support, including bursaries.

10. ALIGNMENT

All procedures for Master's and Doctoral research must be aligned to this Policy.

11. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

This Policy is replaced with effect from the date on which Council approves this revised Policy.

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