

THE TOOLS FOR UNDERTAKING THE RESEARCH JOURNEY AT UNISA

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UNISA



OBJECTIVES

Welcome to this first theme which introduces you to the Unisa research environment. At the end of this theme you should be able to:

- Identify some sources that are used in research methodology by social scientists
- Know who are closely holding you hand during this journey(which we refer to as a social activity, by the way)
- Appreciate the contribution of research to the national innovation system
- Differentiate between the attributes of master's and doctoral qualification in the context of South Africa
- Familiarise with master's and doctoral processes and procedures
- Acquaint with the processes leading up to the completion of the research proposal phase

SOMEONE IS WATCHING YOUR BACK

- We want you to enjoy your research experience and you are the center of what we do
- The pyramid below shows the various layers of the system that support you



UNISA POLICIES

At the upper level of the pyramid are UNISA policies including:

- Admission Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Research and Innovation Policy
- Tuition Policy
- Integrated Quality Assurance Policy
- Policy on Research Ethics
- Policy for Master's and Doctoral Degrees

All these policies inform the Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees, an important document which should be your reference point throughout this research journey (it guides you on what to do in all the stages of the process)

The underlining principle behind all the policies is to transform UNISA into a truly decolonized African university

UNISA is informed by many national instruments including the National Development Plan, Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, as amended, and Level descriptions for the South African Qualifications Framework (SAQA 2012)

Our discussion is focusing on the National Qualification Framework because it has an immediate bearing on the competencies of a master's and doctoral graduate produced by the South African education system

NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

- 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
- The defining characteristic of the master's and doctoral qualifications is that the candidate is required to demonstrate high level research capability and to make a significant 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.

MASTERS vs DOCTORAL

- Masters thesis (“mastering the craft of scholarship”)
- Doctoral thesis (“making a contribution to the body of scholarship in a particular field”)
- Implications of the latter
 - Novelty and originality
 - Comprehensive (not “exhaustive”) coverage of the relevant scholarship in the literature study
 - The imperative of theory (or interpretation)
- Now you know the attributes you should have for you to be regarded as master’s or doctoral graduate
- You need to work hard to achieve these attributes under the guidance of the University system
- The coalface of the University is your librarian, supervisor, head of graduate studies in your College/Department and the College of Graduate Studies (CGS)The mandate of the CGS is to provide you with support in your research journey (its you important partner in you research network)
- The roles of these structures in your research network are articulated in the Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees

HOUSEKEEPING INFORMATION(I)

- As you conduct your research remember that you can suspend your registration on application for a good reason
- You cannot be supervised or receive study guidance or library services during the period for which you have deferred your studies
- 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 (See Section 2.6 of the *Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees*)
- A supervisor will guide you for the duration of your study (I assume that you are already in contact with your supervisor(s))
- You must annually reregister online and pay the fees for the academic year by the date published on the Unisa website
- A candidate must complete a Master's qualification within **three** years (**aim for two years**)
- For a Doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within **six** years (**aim for three to four years**)
- Your working or registered title may change as the study progresses

HOUSEKEEPING INFORMATION(II)

- Once registration is completed you should sign a Supervision agreement with your supervisor setting out your respective roles regarding the proposed research as stipulated in Section 5.14-5.47 of the *Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees*
- Supervision in all official languages is encouraged (refer to UNISA *Language Policy*)
- UNISA is, the owner of all intellectual property created by candidates during their postgraduate studies (refer to the policy mentioned in the *Procedures*)
- Your research should be conducted ethically (you will learn more about ethical clearance later on and there is a theme dedicated to the subject)
- You may under no circumstances commit plagiarism (Turnitin will assist you to determine the similarity index of your work)
- **Make sure that you start using Turnitin when you submit your first assignment to your supervisor** (there is information on Turnitin on the website of CGS: (<https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/College-of-Graduate-Studies/Research-support/Turnitin>), and there is a theme dedicated to Turnitin)
- Importantly claim your Mylife e-mail account on MyUnisa (the information in the box is very important):

- All official correspondence comes through this email
- You cannot access the library without this email
- You cannot access Turnitin without this e-mail

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

- Now that you are registered, familiarised yourself with the Unisa context and you have claim your Mylife e-mail address you are good to go
- You must submit an acceptable research proposal within one year under the guidance of your supervisor
- You will be given an opportunity to rework you drafts until they are acceptable (there is a theme that is dedicated to research proposal writing)
- Remember that all the themes in this phase of the workshops deal with the various components of the research proposal
- Take you time to read the work and the suggested readings before you [proceed to the next theme
- Show your supervisor some respect, dedication and commitment by submitting a well considered draft that has been meticulously and rigorously worked on
- Know yourself and be considerate in your research journey
- Work towards producing an acceptable proposal within the stipulated time to avoid being deregistered from a period of two years before you may register again
- Application for ethical clearance should be considered during the research proposal phase (You supervisor will guide you and you cannot conduct research without ethical clearance)
- Welcome on board, please read the next themes and the suggested additional resources and submit an acceptable research proposal before the end of 2020

CONCLUSION

- Ensure that you go through all the themes in the training workshop before you attempt to submit your research proposal
- The suggested readings should be used to complement what you are already reading
- Bear in mind that recent sources reflect recent developments around your field (They are preferred to dated sources. Avoid sources that are older than you unless they are seminal works 😊)
- These themes are meant to give you the necessary tools to develop your research proposal
- Remember the fulcrum of your research is your research question
- "In much of society, research means to investigate something you do not know or understand. " -Neil Armstrong
- Take the cue from him in formulating the problem statement of your research

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- All these sources are available in the Unisa Library
- Please make a follow-up on some of the references of interest that are listed in these sources
- These sources are on your Unisa Library databases and <https://www.pdfdrive.com>
- Please try this website and I am sure you wont be sorry

Thank you...

