

**GUIDELINES FOR HIGHER DEGREES  
RESEARCH IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Version Feb 2015

## **WHY THIS DOCUMENT**

We strive towards research that is locally relevant, internationally recognised and intellectually excellent. We wish to enable graduate research that is ethically mindful and makes an original contribution to the Arts and the Social Sciences.

In this vision, research has high prominence, together with the other strategic aims of the University. Research plays an important role in the institutional focus on four strategic areas, namely, (i) to broaden our knowledge base, (ii) to promote student success, (iii) to increase diversity, and (iv) to become systemically sustainable. It is clear from this vision that one of the strategic goals of the University, as a 21st-century institution, is to be a leading research intensive higher education institution on the African continent.

## **HOW THIS DOCUMENT WORKS**

This document serves as a roadmap for all processes involving Master's and doctoral degrees in the faculty. It is not a legal text intended to replace the <sup>1</sup>. Rather, it captures the values informing higher degrees, from planning, through execution to publication.

This set of guidelines is written around the three macro phases of higher degrees research:

- PART 1:
- PART 2:
- PART 3:

Information on these three clusters of matters is presented on two

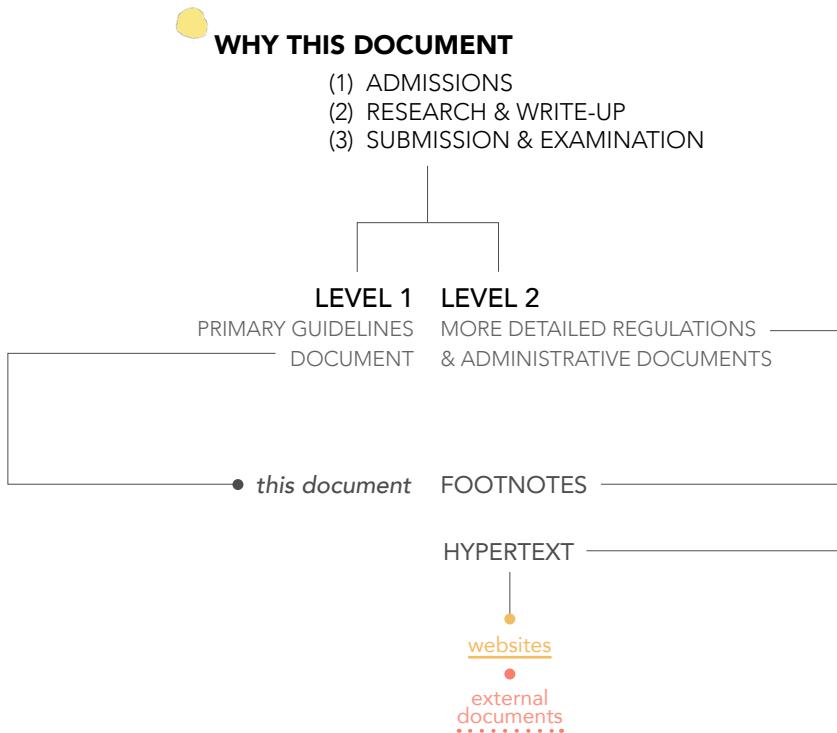
---

1 For the rules of postgraduate studies at SU, see Part 1 of the Calendar.

levels. The **FIRST LEVEL** is the document that you are reading now: a practical guide to the basic processes involved in higher degree research. The **SECOND LEVEL** complements the first level, using more formal language and presenting the rules as they are set out in the Yearbook and other formal prescriptions. This second level can be accessed via the **FOOTNOTES** and **HYPertext** in the primary document.

You will have noticed the two colours that highlight specific words. If you click on orange, solid underlined, the links will take you to relevant websites; if you click on pink, dotted underlined, you will be linked to external documents.

A key consisting of **KEY CONCEPTS** will appear at the top of each section. Clicking on these will automatically take you to the relevant sections in the document.



## **RESOURCES**

---

In addition to the various \_\_\_\_\_ on campus, students can also make use of several \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ provides services and information related to funding, scholarships and the ethics of research. Also, the \_\_\_\_\_ offers short courses on various aspects of higher degree research.



## PART 1: ADMISSIONS



### 1 WHO QUALIFIES FOR ADMISSION?

Specific **requirements for admission** differ from one department to another. In general, however, minimum requirements for admission to Master's and doctoral programmes are a good undergraduate degree and an excellent Master's degree, respectively. Students and supervisors should check with their host departments regarding specific admissions requirements and procedures.

Before recommending an applicant for admission to higher degree studies (via the Faculty Secretary to the Higher Degrees and Research Committee), the supervisor and department should be convinced that the student has the capacity to complete the study successfully, bearing in mind the nature and quality of **previous study**, commitment to research, and available time (in particular for working students who study part-time).

Students with **QUALIFICATIONS FROM FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES** who wish to proceed to postgraduate studies should contact the in time for their qualifications to be assessed.

In certain cases, candidates who do not have the minimum academic qualifications may be considered for admission on the basis of professional experience. This process is called '**RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**' (RPL), and is administered by the host department. (For more on RPL, see the faculty's yearbook).

## **2 ENROLMENT**

Enrolment (sometimes also called 'provisional registration') is an online process that precedes full registration, and provides students with a student number. This is used in all correspondence with the university, provides students with an e-mail address, and gives access to the library and other university resources.

The procedure for doctoral application is not the same for all departments. Prospective students should check this with the department concerned.

## **3 FORMATS OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS**

Doctoral dissertations in the Faculty can be offered in one of **four formats**:

- A dissertation in the usual/traditional format of a written document that reflects original research, and deals with one specific subject or central theme.
- A dissertation in which the theoretical component is integrated with creative processes (particular to the arts environment).
- A dissertation consisting mainly of a collection of scholarly articles in the discipline.
- A dissertation for a senior/second doctoral degree that in addition to a collection of previously published scholarly articles may also include other research output that was produced before the student registered for the doctoral study.

All doctoral degrees, irrespective of the kind or format, are managed uniformly with regard to all established procedures, requirements and regulations for doctoral degrees, unless otherwise stated.

For more information regarding the *Different kinds of doctorates* mentioned here, see .

## 4 COMPLETION OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

### 4.1 PURPOSE OF A PROPOSAL

The proposal functions as part of the screening process of higher degree candidates and gives departments and prospective supervisors a sense of (1) the candidate's ability to formulate their ideas, (2) the contribution of the study to the field of research, and (3) the feasibility of the project.

### 4.2 FORMAT OF A PROPOSAL

At a minimum, any research proposal should include the following elements: (1) title of dissertation, (2) introduction and rationale, (3) problem statement and research question(s), (4) theoretical points of departure, (5) research design and methods, (6) provisional chapter layout and timeframe, (7) budget, and (8) ethical considerations.

A template of the *Recommended format of the doctoral proposal* is available here ( ).

### 4.3 SUPERVISION

Who can supervise a higher degree?

- A supervisor of doctoral students should have a **doctorate**, and approved research and publication record. Deviations from this norm (e.g. in fields of study in which lecturers with doctorates are relatively rare) should occur only for sound reasons, and should a supervisor not yet have a doctorate, an internal co-supervisor who has a doctorate must be appointed. Supervisors of Master's students must have at least a Master's degree. Should a supervisor not yet have a Master's degree, a co-supervisor who does have a Master's degree must be appointed.

- Academic staff who **retire** from service to the university may be appointed as supervisors in order to continue supervising students. If appointed as a supervisor, they will be paid an honorarium by the Faculty for a maximum of two years for a Master's degree and three years for a doctorate. Individual departments in the faculty may add to honoraria at their own discretion.
- Where the nature of the subject is such that expertise in more than one field of study is required or where the research methodology requires it, the appointment of a **co-supervisor** from another field of study or an expert on the research methodology may be considered. (The supervisor of a doctoral candidate needs not be a lecturer at the university. If they are not, the co-supervisor must, however, be a lecturer at the university).
- Lecturers who have retired from service to the university may, likewise, be appointed as co-supervisors, if their expertise is
  - specifically suited to the research of a student and this expertise is not available in the department where the candidate is registered.
  - In such cases, the general remuneration tariffs for external supervisors and co-supervisors apply, as determined from time to time by the Dean.

#### 4.4 SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSAL

The process of submitting the proposal is quite simple:

- The preliminary proposal (sometimes also called a 'concept note') is submitted to the department along with a comprehensive CV and a full academic transcript (and any other documentation specified by the department).
- If the preliminary proposal is accepted and the department has the capacity to supervise it, they will assign a supervisor.
- The supervisor works with the student to finalise the proposal, and in the case of a doctoral study it should be submitted for review by an Admissions Committee.

#### 4.5 APPROVAL OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Once a supervisor is satisfied with a prospective candidate's research proposal, they nominate members of an **ADMISSION COMMITTEE**. The committee has at least five members, all of whom, usually, have doctorates: (a) the supervisor, (b) the chair of the department (or a senior colleague from the department or a related department if the chair is the supervisor) who acts



as the chair of the committee, (c) an additional member who is a senior colleague in the department or a related department, (d) two further members who each represent another department. If preferred, the committee may have more than five members, but the representatives must be drawn from at least three departments. The names and departments of the members of the committee must be submitted by the departmental chair to the Dean, and must be approved by the Dean before the committee can begin with its activities.

The committee uses the '*Pro forma cover page for doctoral submissions*' for recommending the research proposal ( ). The committee must write a recommendation of a hundred words in which it comments on the following:

- The merit of the study,
- The ability of the candidate to conduct the research, and
- Points of advice and potential concern, including ethical considerations.

The recommendation must be submitted to the Faculty Secretary for forwarding to the faculty's Higher Degrees and Research Committee in time to be included on the agenda for the next meeting. If accepted by the Higher Degrees and Research Committee, the proposal is recommended to the Board of Faculty, and the Senate. If the Higher Degrees and Research Committee does not accept the proposal, the candidate will be given the opportunity to revise and resubmit it.

## 5 REGISTRATION

Once the research proposal is approved by Senate, the candidate may register.

Students must register every year for the full period of study until the degree is awarded to them (Calendar, Part 1: "Rules regarding advanced degrees"). Should such students, before the degree is awarded, fail to register in any year before the prescribed date for that year, their registration will lapse. Should such students wish to be admitted again to the degree programme concerned, they will

have to apply in writing for admission and will have to register for the programme concerned from the beginning and pay the required fees from the beginning.

The annual registration of Master's students may be dealt with administratively twice and for doctoral students three times. Further registration will be allowed only if the departmental chairs/supervisors give permission for the students to continue with their studies.

A postgraduate student who **fails to register** for one or more years must, if given permission to reregister, pay on registration the full fee for the period for which they were not registered. In such cases a student is not registered retrospectively.

A degree cannot be awarded to a student at the March/April graduation who was not registered for the previous year. A student in this situation may obtain a declaration that they have satisfied the requirements for the degree and that the degree will be awarded in December the following year, on condition that the student registers in time and pays the fees for the year in which the degree is awarded.

The arrangement in the above two paragraphs applies to Master's and doctoral programmes.

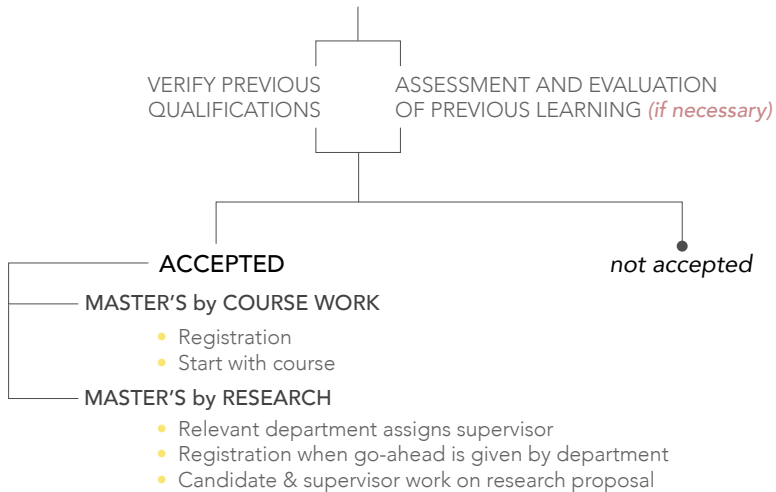
(For information on 'Interruption of Studies', see the relevant section in Section II).

The following two figures illustrate the **ADMISSION PROCESS** for Master's and doctoral studies respectively.



## ADMISSION TO MASTER'S

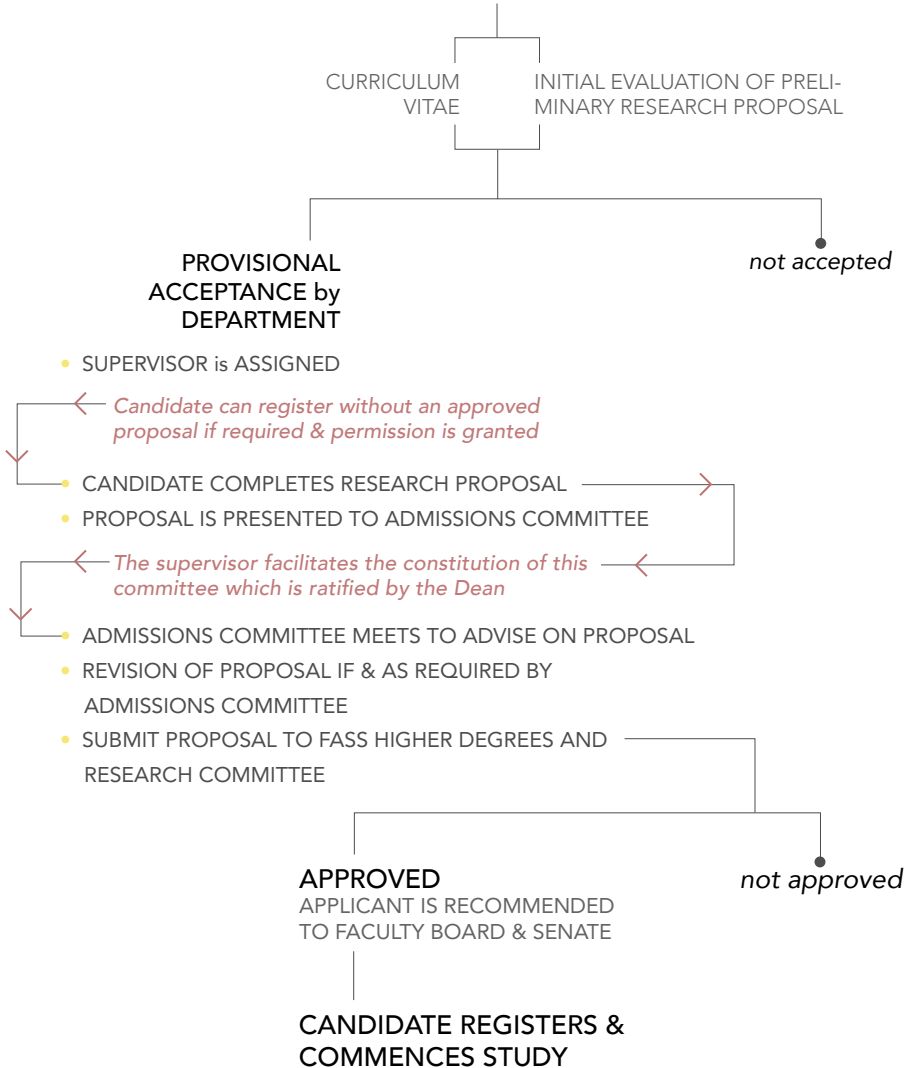
- (1) CONTACT RELEVANT DEPARTMENT
- (2) COMPLETE ONLINE APPLICATION / ENROLMENT to be dealt with by the faculty
- (3) DEPARTMENTAL SCREENING (*with OR without a proposal*)





## ADMISSION TO PHD

- (1) CANDIDATE CONTACTS RELEVANT DEPARTMENT
- (2) CANDIDATE COMPLETES ONLINE APPLICATION / ENROLMENT  
to be dealt with by the faculty
- (3) DEPARTMENTAL SCREENING





## PART 2: CONDUCTING AND SUPERVISING THE RESEARCH



### 1 MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The mutual responsibilities of the student and the supervisor should be discussed as soon as possible after admission and commencement of study. It is left up to individual departments to decide whether or not the outcome of such a conversation forms part of a written agreement between the supervisor and the candidate.

There are a number of courses on higher degrees research available to all students and supervisors in the faculty. See the website for details.

The student must keep sufficient contact with the supervisor.

### 2 INTERRUPTION OF STUDIES

The following acceptable reasons serve as guidelines for when a request must be considered for **interrupting** Master's or doctoral study. All requests must be accompanied by the appropriate supporting documents. These documents include, amongst others, letters of appointment, assignments, medical certificates, financial statements, sworn statements etc.:

- medical reasons,
- financial reasons,
- special, well-justified personal circumstances.

Procedure for applying for interruption of study:

- Applications for interruption of study must reach the Faculty Secretary concerned before or on 30 April of the year concerned. No applications for interruption of study will be considered after 30 April of the year concerned. (It is assumed that the student has already registered for the year concerned.)
- Approval of the application for interruption of study will be considered on the recommendation of the supervisor and the chair of the department concerned.
- Applications that have been approved in accordance with the internal procedures of the Faculty must be included in the next report of the Faculty and submitted to the Executive Committee of the Senate (EC(S)) for approval.
- Permission to interrupt studies will not be granted for periods shorter than a year.
- Permission to interrupt studies in a Master's programme will be granted once only in the course of the study and for a period of one year.
- Permission to interrupt doctoral studies will be granted no more than twice for periods of one year each or once for a period of two years during the course of the programme.

### **3 CHANGES IN THE RESEARCH TOPIC and/or TITLE**

Changes in the research topic in doctoral studies are submitted to the Faculty Board via the Faculty Secretary and the Higher Degrees and Research Committee. The Faculty Board must recommend the change before it is approved by the EC(S) and Senate. If the change in topic is not simply a focusing of the original topic, a new research proposal must be prepared and submitted to the Faculty Board via the Higher Degrees and Research Committee. See section ' ' and section ' ' in this document.

If the change is merely a focusing of one kind or another of the original topic, it must also be submitted, with a written justification, to the Faculty Board via the Faculty Secretary and Higher Degrees and Research Committee.

#### 4 CONVERSION OF A MASTER'S DEGREE TO A DOCTORATE

In very exceptional cases application may be made to the Registrar to have the registration for a Master's degree converted to that for a doctorate. Such applications must be accompanied by a written recommendation and justification by the supervisor. An *ad hoc* committee of experts, including a representative of the department concerned, will be appointed by the Dean to consider the application and make a recommendation to the Faculty Board via the Higher Degrees and Research Committee.

(For information on 'Continued Registration' and 'Failure to Register', see the relevant sections in the Admissions segment, above).



## **PART 3: SUBMISSION & EXAMINATION**

### **HOW THIS CAPSULE WORKS**

This document complements the university and faculty policies on doctoral degrees.

The submission and examination capsule is divided into two sections. The first, 3.1, is concerned with the final format of the text and all protocols around its submission. The second section, 3.2, focuses on all matters related to the

Note that doctoral dissertations in the Faculty can be offered in one of **four formats**:

- A dissertation in the usual/traditional format of a written document that documents original research, and deals with one specific subject or central theme.
- A dissertation in which the theoretical component is integrated with creative processes (particular to the arts environment).
- A dissertation consisting mainly of a collection of scholarly articles in the discipline.
- A dissertation for a senior/second doctoral degree that in addition to a collection of scholarly articles may also include other research output that was produced before the student registered for the doctoral study.

All doctoral degrees, irrespective of the kind or format, are managed uniformly with regard to all established procedures, requirements and regulations for doctoral degrees, unless otherwise stated.

For more information regarding the different formats mentioned here, see



## 3.1 COMPLETING & SUBMITTING THE THESIS/DISSERTATION



### 1.1 FORMAT of THESIS/DISSERTATION

Whilst there might be differences amongst the formatting specifications of each department, the following serve as general guidelines.

#### 1.1.1 LENGTH

Guidelines for the length of theses and dissertations are as follows:

- Doctoral dissertations: 80 000-85 000 words (about 220 pages);
- Full Master's thesis (180 credits): 40 000-42 000 words (about 100-110 pages);
- Master's thesis (120 credits): 30 000 words (about 90 pages);
- Master's thesis (90 credits): 20 000 words (about 60 pages);
- Master's assignment (45 credits): 10 000 words (about 30 pages).

#### 1.1.2 TITLE PAGE

Suggested templates for prolegomena can be found in Addenda E to this document: *Title page dissertation* can be found in \_\_\_\_\_ and *Thesis/dissertation declaration* in \_\_\_\_\_

### 1.1.3 PLAGIARISM CHECK & DECLARATION

All theses and dissertations must be submitted to **Turnitin** before the work may be handed in for examination. The supervisor must ensure, and confirm in their 'permission to submit' form, that the results summary of the plagiarism check on the thesis/dissertation from Turnitin is satisfactory.

## 1.2 SUBMISSION PROTOCOLS

### 1.2.1 DEADLINES

A *Notice of intention to submit dissertation/thesis for examination* (see ) must be sent to the PEO well in advance of submission, and prior to the deadline stipulated by the PEO. Theses and dissertations must be handed in to the Postgraduate Examinations Office (PEO) by the date stipulated at the start of every year. Examiners are allowed six weeks to complete the examination and submit their reports to the PEO.

### 1.2.2 PERMISSION TO SUBMIT

The *Declaration by supervisor with regard to submission of thesis/dissertation for examination* should be handed in along with the thesis/dissertation. See for the form.

If the supervisor does not give permission for the work to be submitted for examining, but the candidate nevertheless wishes to proceed, they may appeal to the Dean. The Dean may, after consulting the supervisor and/or the chair of the department, recommend to the Higher Degrees and Research Committee that the candidate should be allowed to submit the work for examination.

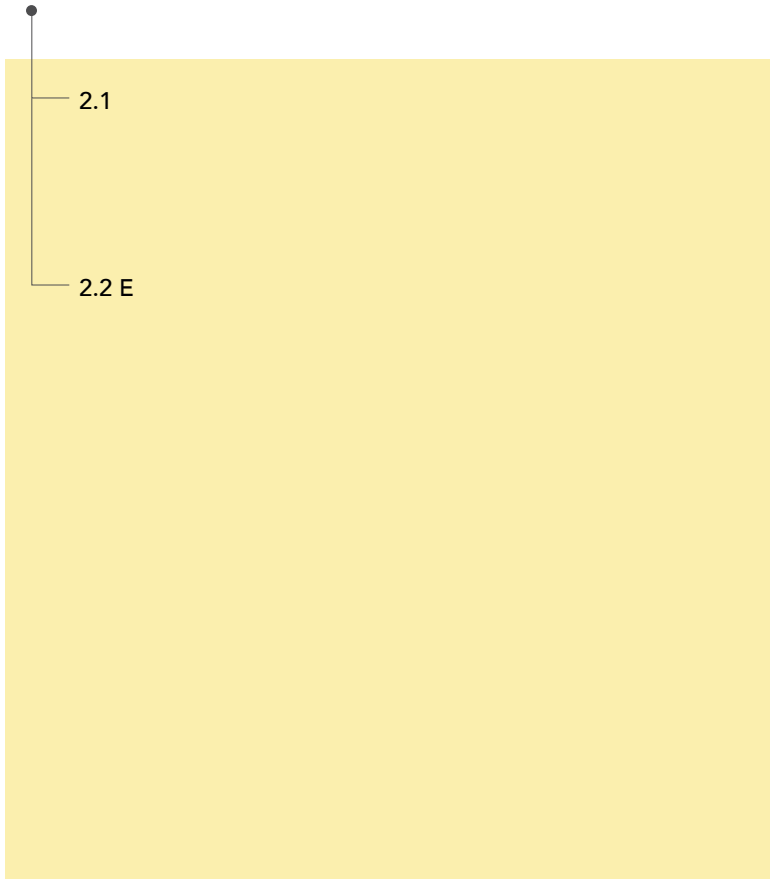
### 1.2.3 WHAT TO SUBMIT

Candidates need to hand in the following documents to the :

- one paper-bound copy of the work for each of the external and internal examiners;

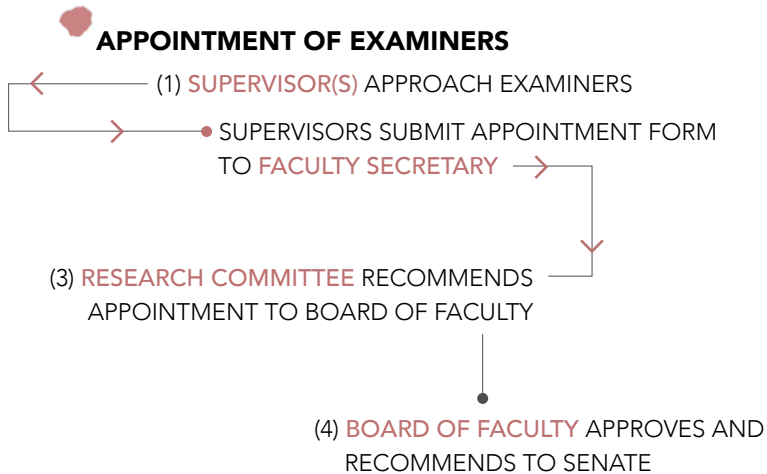
- a pdf in one document of the full and collated work is e-mailed to the PEO (to be forwarded by the PEO to the examiners);
- the declaration by the supervisor that the work may be handed in for examination (see [redacted] for the form);
- for Master's theses, a cover letter from the supervisor or department indicating the scope/credit weighting of the work.

## 3.2 EXAMINATION PROCESS



### 2.1 SELECTION & APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS

*The following figure illustrates the APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS for Master's and doctoral studies.*



### 2.1.1 APPOINTING EXAMINERS

- The supervisor approaches examiners in advance to find out if they are prepared to undertake the examination of the thesis/ dissertation. The procedure for appointing examiners for Master's and doctoral studies is the same, except that in the case of a Master's two examiners are required, whereas for a doctoral candidate three examiners are required.
- The supervisor carefully checks the institutional affiliations of examiners.
- All examiners must be unconnected to the writing of the work.
- One must have an academic affiliation at the University and the other(s) external (i.e. a member of staff of other tertiary institutions or suitably qualified person in the private or public sectors) (in the case of doctoral examinations, at least one should be from outside the borders of South Africa).
- Extraordinary professors and honorary professors may not act as external examiners, but may act as internals *pro bono*.
- Teaching associates and research associates may act as internal examiners during the period of their formal association at

the US, but may not act as external examiners for the first three years after leaving the employment of the US.

- Suitably qualified retired US academics may act as internal examiners for the first three years after their retirement, and thereafter as external examiners.
- A supervisor or co-supervisor may not act as an examiner.

### **2.1.2 DEPARTMENT'S ROLE IN APPOINTMENT**

- The departmental chair submits the names to the Faculty Secretary (using the form in \_\_\_\_\_ for Master's candidates or \_\_\_\_\_ for doctoral) for submission to the Higher Degrees and Research Committee (in the case of Master's examinations, the examiners may already have been nominated via the block appointment of examiners, in which case they do not need to be sent to the Faculty Secretary);
- The names of the examiners may be submitted to the Faculty Board at the same time as the research topic or at any time thereafter, prior to the deadline;
- Supervisors of Master's and doctoral candidates must check the examiners' full and correct contact details just prior to final submission;
- For the examination to be completed in time for a particular graduation ceremony, it is vital that the prescribed deadlines for the appointment of the examiners be met; missing the deadline will result in the graduation being delayed to the next graduation event;
- Higher Degrees and Research Committee refers the nominations to the Faculty Board for approval by the Senate;
- Once Senate has approved the nomination, the PEO sends a nomination letter to the external examiners for their written acceptance.

### **2.1.3 CHANGING EXAMINERS**

The procedures and documents for changing examiners are the same as for appointing examiners.

#### 2.1.4 APPOINTING A NON-EXAMINING CHAIR

The supervisor, in consultation with the chair of the department, decides on a suitable person to act as non-examining chair of the doctoral examination committee for the candidate, and approaches the colleague. The non-examining chair must be from a department other than the one in which the candidate is registered as a doctoral student. The names of the non-examining chair and the other members of the examining committee are submitted via the Faculty Secretary to the Higher Degrees and Research Committee for approval.

#### 2.1.5 APPOINTING AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR

Where no consensus can be reached by the examiners as to the outcome of the examination, an independent assessor is appointed. The process is managed by the non-examining chair of the examination panel, who acts as chair and who reports to the Higher Degrees and Research Committee, via the PEO, in accordance with the Faculty's established practices for processing examination results. The PEO is responsible for sending the copy of the thesis, copies of examiners' and supervisor's reports and necessary documentation to the independent assessor. The independent assessor is appointed in accordance with the following criteria, conditions of appointment, instructions, capacities/powers and remuneration:

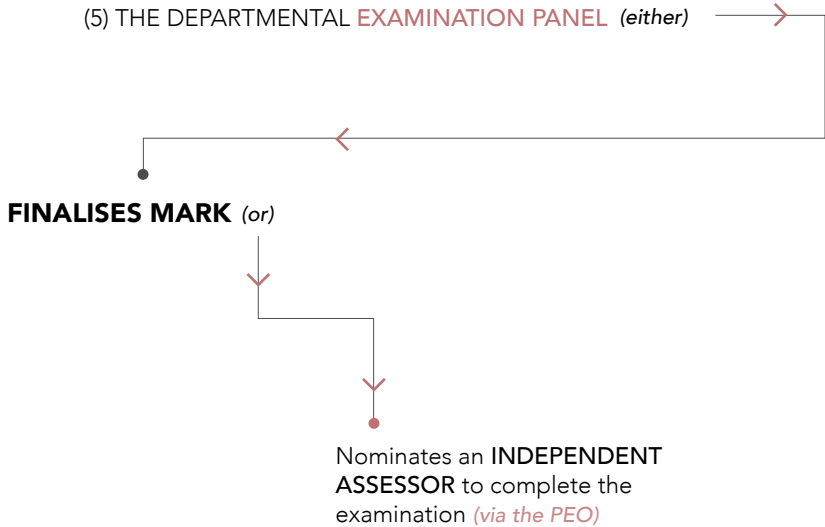
- **Criteria for the choice of the assessor:** The independent assessor must be a senior academic from another institution in the discipline in question and be an expert in the specific area/field/topic raised by the thesis.
- **Appointment:** The independent assessor is appointed by the chair of the examination panel in consultation with the supervisor on an ad hoc basis for each dispute case, following consultation with the panel. A written justification (by the non-examining chair of the panel) for the appointment of the specific assessor must be handed in to the Faculty Secretary as part of the documentation for the assessor's nomination. These documents are also sent to the PEO.
- **Remuneration:** The independent assessor is paid 1.5 times the remuneration of an external examiner. The PEO arranges the payment.

## 2.2 EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

The following two figures illustrate the EXAMINATION PROCEDURES for Master's and doctoral studies respectively.

### MASTER'S EXAMINATION PROCEDURE

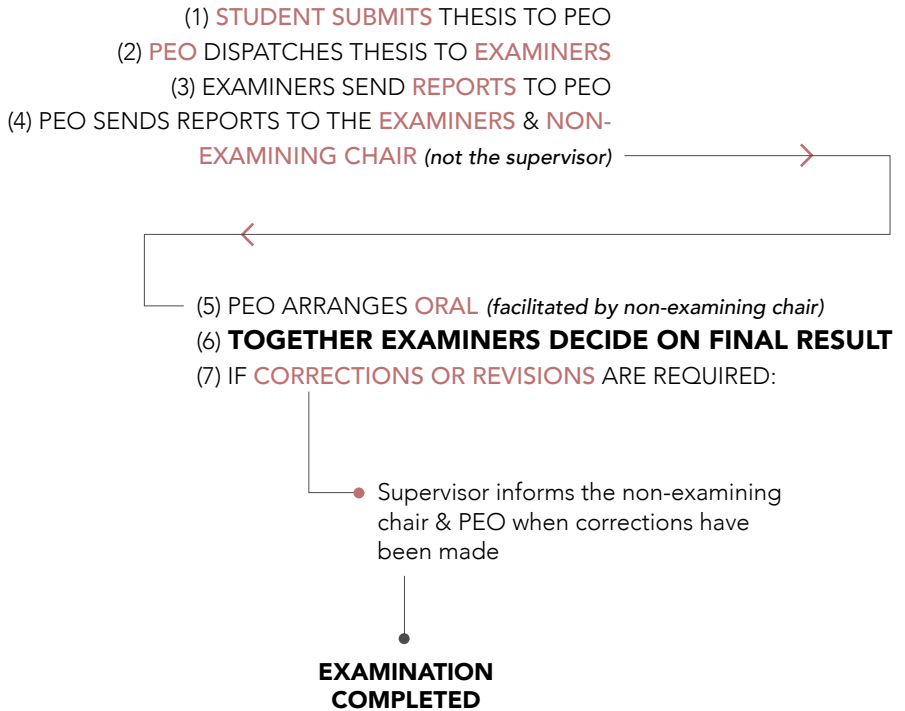
- (1) STUDENT SUBMITS THESIS TO PEO
- (2) PEO DISPATCHES THESIS TO EXAMINERS
- (3) EXAMINERS SEND REPORTS TO PEO
- (4) PEO SENDS REPORTS TO DEPARTMENTAL CHAIR
- (5) THE DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATION PANEL (either)







## PHD EXAMINATION PROCEDURE



## 2.2.1 COMMUNICATION WITH EXAMINERS

- Candidates should not be informed of who their examiners are;
- Candidates may not communicate with the examiners about the exam in the period between handing in the work and the announcement of the final result;
- In the interest of a fair and unbiased evaluation the supervisor should likewise not have contact with the examiners (and vice versa) regarding the examination until such time as the non-examining chair has informed the supervisor that a final result has been obtained.

## 2.2.2 SUPERVISOR'S REPORTS

The supervisors of Master's theses (but not doctoral dissertations) are required to submit a report on the supervision of the thesis which can provide the examination panel with information necessary for assessing the student's work. The report is not sent out with the thesis to the examiners, but is exclusively for the examination panel's information after the reports have been received from the examiners. The report may include the following:

- The contribution of the study to the field of research;
- The appropriateness of the methodological framework;
- How independently the student worked;
- Difficulties experienced by the student;
- Reflection on the use and correct quotation of published and unpublished works.

## 2.2.3 REQUIREMENTS OF EXAMINERS: MASTER'S

2.2.3.1 Instructions to, and functions of master's examiners (as sent to examiners) (see \_\_\_\_\_):

- Please take note of the attached information provided by the department with regard to the extent/weight of the thesis
- Each examiner must submit an assessment of the thesis, in the form of a written report drafted in terms of the following general criteria:

- adequate delimitation and conceptualising of the field and subject of research;
- adequate command of the relevant research method;
- adequate familiarity with the relevant literature;
- clear and systematic presentation of the material and logical exposition of the argument;
- proper documentation and support of the results of the research;
- the contribution of the study to the field of research;
- acceptable linguistic and stylistic presentation;
- list of improvements and corrections that should be made;
- acceptable ethical standards.

- The report should be thoroughly substantiated. The normal length of a report on a Master's thesis is about 1000 words (the PEO may return reports that do not fulfil the requirements).

- In addition to the written report, each examiner must complete the Standard Report Form (see ) indicating their specific recommendation. The final recommendation on the report form must be expressed as a mark out of 100. (The minimum pass mark for a Master's degree is 50. For a degree to be awarded with distinction a minimum mark of 75 is required.)

The following general guidelines for awarding a mark may be used:

<b>% MARK</b>	<b>GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR AWARDING MARKS</b>
86-100	Outstanding thesis. Large parts can be published.
75-85	Deserves a distinction. Meets all requirements excellently and shows extraordinary potential. Parts can be published.
65-74	A good thesis, showing a convincing grasp of what is required in the particular field of study.
55-64	Meets the requirements well.
50-54	Meets the minimum requirements.
40-49	Does not meet the minimum requirements, but can be improved in order to pass.
30-39	Does not at all understand the requirements.

- The examiner may on no account communicate with the candidate about the thesis.
- The written report and the Standard Report Form with the recommendation must be submitted for further processing to:

*Postgraduate Examinations Office  
 Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
 University of Stellenbosch  
 Private bag X1  
 MATIELAND  
 7602  
 Republic of South Africa*

*Fax: +27 (0)21 808 2123  
 E-mail: nek\_let@sun.ac.za*

### **2.2.3.2 Examiner's recommendation with regard to result (Standard Report Form ( )):**

- The degree may be conferred upon the candidate, provided that the revision (if any), in accordance with the recommendations of the examiners, is completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor.
- The degree may be conferred upon the candidate, provided that more substantive revisions are completed to the satisfaction of the examiners, as agreed upon by the examination panel.
- The candidate must revise and resubmit the dissertation for examination (i.e. it fails in its present form, but there is hope that it may pass if substantially revised and re-examined by the same examiners).
- The degree may not be conferred upon the candidate and the work may not be resubmitted for examination.

### **2.2.3.3 Managing the results of Master's examinations**

#### General procedures and consensus results:

- The examiners' reports and Standard Report Forms, showing the mark awarded, must be returned to the PEO.
- The PEO informs the chair of the department that the reports have been received, and the reports and forms are delivered to him/her.
- The departmental chair convenes an examination panel consisting of him/herself and the internal examiner to consider the reports and to decide on the final mark to be awarded.

- Any oral or written report by the supervisor or, where applicable, any marks obtained for course work are taken into account.
- If the departmental chair is either the supervisor, co-supervisor or internal examiner of the thesis, a senior member of the department or of a related department acts as chair of the panel;
- The supervisor (and co-supervisor) is invited to attend the meeting of the panel to provide information about the thesis, but takes no part in deciding the result.
- Where there is a substantial difference between the marks of the external and internal examiners, the chair invites a senior faculty member from another department to participate in the examination panel. The chair enters into a discussion with the external and internal examiners in an attempt to reach a consensus on the final mark. A 'substantial difference' may be one of (i) a difference of 15% or more between the marks; (ii) where the examiners disagree as to whether or not the thesis should be passed; and (iii) where the examiners differ on whether or not a distinction should be awarded to the candidate. At no time should pressure be placed on examiners to change their views.
- Where consensus is reached, the chair of the examination panel reports the results in writing (see *Standard Report Form for the non-examining chair of the examination panel for a Master's student*) via the chair to the PEO, explaining the final mark reached. It is important: that the original marks awarded by the examiners are not changed on the report form or otherwise, only that consensus has been achieved in terms of the final mark. The chair must address any discrepancies in examiners' reports, and explain the considerations and consultative processes which eventually led to consensus.
- The chair informs the candidate, in consultation with the PEO, of the result.
- Supervisors of Master's theses should report to the chair of the examinations panel to inform them of the completion of

all revisions and corrections indicated by the examiners. (This should happen before they sign the work off to be loaded onto the Library system).

- The department loads the mark onto the University system.

## RESOLVING DISPUTES WHERE THERE IS NO CONSENSUS

Where no consensus can be reached, an independent assessor is appointed. The process is managed by the non-examining chair of the examination panel, who acts as chair and who reports to the Higher Degrees and Research Committee, via the PEO, in accordance with the Faculty's established practices for processing examination results. The PEO is responsible for sending the copy of the thesis, copies of examiners' and supervisor's reports and necessary documentation to the independent assessor.

The independent assessor is appointed in accordance with the following criteria, conditions of appointment, instructions, capacities/powers and remuneration:

- **Instructions:** The instruction to the independent assessor is in all cases to take into account the anonymous reports of the examiners and supervisor (co-supervisor) and the thesis itself in his/her evaluation, and to come to a decision with regard to the specific dispute. The assessor submits a written report to the PEO substantiating the decision.
- **Capacities/powers:** The decision of the independent assessor is binding and final. There is no further appeals process.

(For information regarding the appointment and remuneration of independent assessors, see            in this document).

### Processes after the decision of the examination panel:

- Once the process has been completed, the chair makes the reports of the examiners, with the examination results, together with other relevant documents considered by the examination panel, available to the supervisor for their information and for advising the candidate of the requirements of the examiners

and examination panel, either for finalising the thesis for reproduction or revising the work for further examination;

- The reports of the examiners are to be treated confidentially and their names disclosed only with their express permission. At no time should the individual marks of the examiners be disclosed to the candidate. The Standard Report Forms should never be disclosed to the candidate. Only those parts of the reports (unless the examiner has given express permission for the whole to be passed on) which are relevant for the candidate to make the required changes may be passed on to the candidate. It is the supervisor's responsibility to make the necessary digest of the report;
- The chair returns the original reports of the examiners and their Standard Report Forms to the PEO for forwarding to the Student Records Division;
- The department is responsible for loading the final mark for the examination into the administrative system of the University;
- The PEO arranges for the remuneration of external examiners.

#### **2.2.3.4 Oral examination: Master's candidates**

All Master's candidates who are required to complete a thesis may also be subject to an oral examination. In the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, an oral examination may be held at the discretion of a department, but only if this has been agreed upon and clearly stipulated from the beginning of the programme.

## 2.2.4 REQUIREMENTS OF EXAMINER'S: DOCTORATE

### 2.2.4.1 Instructions to, and functions of doctoral examiners (As sent to examiners) (see ):

*\*NB The reports of examiners will be treated as confidential and will be made available to the candidate only with the examiner's explicit permission (see point 'e' below).*

e. The examining of dissertations comprises two complementary processes: the independent assessment of the dissertation by each examiner in the form of a written report, and an oral examination, where the examination committee (the examiners chaired by the non-examining chair) and the candidate engage in a conversation about the dissertation. The written reports of the examiners remain the primary evaluation instruments in the sense that they determine whether the candidate passes or not. The report written in accordance with the criteria below should be 1200-1500 words or 3-5 pages long. (The PEO may return reports to examiners if reports do not reflect these criteria). The examiners' reports are circulated by the PEO amongst the examiners prior to the oral examination (supervisors may only see the reports once the oral examination has been completed). The oral examination provides the opportunity for the examiners to clarify issues discussed in the written reports or other issues which might arise during the oral. The oral examination is a secondary evaluation instrument. Examiners may, if they wish, hand in an additional report (with a revised mark) after the oral, but this seldom happens in practice.

f. Each examiner submits a written report which is an independent evaluation of the dissertation in accordance with a set of general assessment criteria. The expectation is that examiners will stay within the criteria, give a clear statement of how the candidate meets each of the criteria and elucidate these statements with examples from the dissertation. The examiners may comment on any aspect of the dissertation which is not covered by the criteria.



The assessment should take into account and address the following general criteria:

- delimitation and conceptualizing of the field and subject of research;
- command of the relevant research method;
- familiarity with the relevant literature;
- clear and systematic presentation of the material and logical exposition of the argument;
- proper documentation and support of the results of independent research;
- whether the study conforms to recognised ethical standards;
- acceptable linguistic and stylistic presentation;
- the contribution made by the dissertation to knowledge in its field.

**g.** Each examiner is required to comment in the report on the suitability of all or parts of the dissertation for publication.

**h.** In addition to the written report, examiners are required to complete and submit the Standard Report Form (see ) which reflects their final assessment.

**i.** Examiners must indicate whether or not their comments or parts of them may be made available to the candidate.

The report and Standard Report Form should be directed only to:

*Postgraduate Examinations Office  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
University of Stellenbosch  
Private bag X1  
MATIELAND  
7602  
Republic of South Africa*

*E-mail: nek\_let@sun.ac.za*

*\*NB It is the function of the PEO to communicate the examiner's findings, via the non-examining chair, to the other examiners and the supervisor. The report and form should thus not be sent directly to either the supervisor or departmental chair.*

#### **2.2.4.2 Examiner's recommendation with regard to result (Standard Report Form) ( ):**

- a. The degree may be conferred upon the candidate, provided that the revision/s (if any), in accordance with the recommendations of the examiners, is completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor.
- b. The degree may be conferred upon the candidate, provided that more substantive revisions are completed to the satisfaction of the examiners, as agreed upon by the examination panel.
- c. The candidate must revise and resubmit the dissertation for examination (i.e. it fails in its present form, but there is hope that it may pass if substantially revised and re-examined by the same examiners).
- d. The degree may not be conferred upon the candidate and the work may not be resubmitted for examination.

*For procedures regarding examinations where examiners could not reach consensus, please consult the calendar.*

#### **2.2.4.3 Oral examinations: Doctoral candidates**

- An oral examination is required for a doctoral degree, apart from in exceptional cases for which sufficient justification must be given. An oral examination is not required in the case of a senior doctoral degree where already published scholarly work(s) of a high standard is required, and the research has made a considerable contribution of the highest standard to the enrichment of knowledge in the field concerned.
- The oral examination may deal with:
  - The dissertation;
  - Research articles (in the case of the PhD by publication); and
  - The field related to the dissertation.

- The oral examination is conducted by at least two of the three examiners. If examiners cannot be physically present, they may participate by means of a telephone/Skype conference. The absent examiner can submit questions/comments in advance, to be directed at the candidate by the chair.

#### **2.2.4.4 Sequence of events in managing the examination of doctoral candidates**

- The supervisor, in consultation with the chair of the department, decides on a suitable person to act as non-examining chair of the examination committee for the candidate, and approaches the colleague. The non-examining chair must be from a department other than the one in which the candidate is registered as a doctoral student. The names of the non-examining chair and the other members of the examining committee are submitted via the Faculty Secretary to the Higher Degrees and Research Committee for approval.
- The examiners, chaired by the non-examining chair, constitute the examination committee. The supervisor is invited to attend the oral examination as an observer but takes no part in the discussion unless requested by the chair.
- The PEO arranges the time for the oral examination in advance, in consultation with the non-examining chair of the examination committee.
- The examiners' written reports and Standard Report Forms must be submitted to the PEO.
- Once all the reports and forms have been received, the PEO sends them to the non-examining chair and circulates them to the examiners.
- The candidate and the supervisor do not see the reports and are not given insight into their content before the oral examination.
- The reports of the examiners are to be treated confidentially and their names disclosed with reports only with their express permission. The Standard Report Forms should never be disclosed to the candidate. Only those parts of the reports (unless the examiner has given express permission for the whole to be

passed on) which are relevant for the candidate to make the required changes may be passed on to the candidate. After the oral examination, it is the supervisor's responsibility to make the necessary digest of the report.

- The *Regulations for non-examining chairs of doctoral examination committees* may be found in .

- After the completion of the oral examination, the final result is filled in by the non-examining chair on the required form (see for the *Standard Report Form for the non-examining chair of the examination panel for a doctoral student*) and signed by the examiners.

- The non-examining chair may sign the form on behalf of examiners who are taking part telephonically in the oral examination.

- It must be made clear that any result communicated to the candidate at the oral examination is provisional until ratified by the Faculty Board and Senate. The official result is then communicated to the candidate by the Faculty Secretary.

- The non-examining chair delivers the final result to the PEO with an accompanying letter.

- The PEO delivers the letter, form and original examiners' reports and Standard Report Forms to the Faculty Secretary.

- Supervisors of doctoral candidates report to the PEO via e-mail before they sign the work off to be loaded into the Library system that final changes/amendments required/ suggested in examination reports have been completed.

- The PEO arranges for the remuneration of the external examiners.

#### **2.2.4.5 Due date for the submission of the report of the examination committee for a doctoral candidate**

The final report of the examination committee, with the original reports of the examiners, must be handed in to the PEO in time for submission via the Faculty Secretary in turn to the Higher Degrees and Research Committee, Faculty Committee, Faculty Board and Senate by the predetermined deadlines.

Reports of examiners do not serve before the Faculty board. Members of the Faculty Board do, however, have the right to inspect them.

#### **2.2.4.6 Composition & functions of the examination committee & management of examination results of dissertations**

The "Regulations for non-examining chairs" in Part 1 of the Calendar should be seen as complementary to the requirements for doctoral oral examinations.

#### **2.2.4.7 Publication of research results**

- The University encourages higher degree students to publish their research as accredited articles, and to present the results of their research at academic fora. The Dean makes incentive funding available to facilitate such publication.
- Students should mention their association with the University explicitly in these publications, otherwise the University forfeits its claim to subsidy on them.

## **ADDENDA**

- : Different kinds of doctorates*
- : Recommended format of the doctoral proposal*
- : Pro forma cover page for doctoral submissions*
  - : Nomination of examiners for Master's candidate*
  - : Nomination of examiners for doctoral candidate*
- : Title page dissertation*
- : Thesis/dissertation declaration*
- : Declaration by supervisor with regard to the submission of thesis/dissertation for examination*
- : Notice of intention to submit dissertation/thesis for examination*
- : Instructions to examiners for the assessment of MA theses*
- : Instructions to examiners for the assessment of doctoral dissertations*
- : Standard Report Form for an examiner of a Master's thesis*
- : Standard Report Form for an examiner of a doctoral dissertation*
- : Standard Report Form for the non-examining chair of the examination panel for a Master's student*
- : Standard Report Form for the non-examining chair of the examination panel for a doctoral student*
- : Regulations for non-examining chairs of doctoral examination committees*