



FACULTY COMMITTEE
FACULTY OF AGRISCIENCES

GUIDELINES FOR DECISION-MAKING REGARDING STUDENT REQUESTS

1. General matters

- 1.1 Academic standards must at all times be given top priority when recommendations are presented to the Faculty Committee.
- 1.2 The agenda for the meeting of the Faculty Committee is finalised one week ahead of the meeting. No doctoral affairs or other matters presented after the deadline of the agenda, and which the Faculty Committee is of the opinion that committee members were not given enough time to consider, will be discussed by the Faculty Committee.

2. Undergraduate matters

2.1 Exemption from practical work:

Applications for exemption from practical work, work experience, internships, etc., are dealt with by the chairperson of the relevant department, in consultation with colleagues of the department.

2.2 Substitution of modules:

- 2.2.1 When a student was previously registered for a module and failed or discontinued the module, he or she will not be allowed exemption from the module, or substitution with another module.
- 2.2.2 When a module from an institution other than SU is presented by a student as a substitute for a prescribed module, full information on the content and standard of the substituting module, officially provided by the institution that offered it, must be presented. Clearance must be obtained from the relevant SU department beforehand.
- 2.2.3 When another SU module is presented by a student to substitute a prescribed module, the student must motivate this application thoroughly. Recommendations from the relevant departments must accompany the application.
- 2.2.4 Substituting modules must satisfy the following conditions:
 - Have more or less the same number of credits;
 - Be on the same level (year) or higher;
 - Have similar or logical substitute content as the original module;
 - Be relevant within the programme and not duplicate content that the student has

already studied successfully, or is still to study in the programme.

2.2.5 Recommendations from chairpersons of departments must be briefly, but clearly and specifically, motivated. Generalisations are not persuasive and could lead to precedents that are difficult to manage in future.

2.3 Presentation of modules for a second degree:

2.3.1 Modules completed successfully for one qualification cannot be presented as is for a second qualification. There are certain minimum prescriptions in this regard:

- The student must be registered full time at SU for at least two years for the B qualification that he/she wishes to obtain;
- At least half of the programme curriculum (modules) must be new;
- Both major subjects (or the field of study) must be totally different from those of the previous qualification.

2.4 Modification of requirements, deviation from subject combinations and recognition of subjects:

2.4.1 Requests for modification of requirements, deviation from subject combinations and recognition of subjects with regard to first-semester and year modules will not be considered by the Faculty Committee later than the first meeting of the relevant year, and with regard to second-semester modules no later than the first meeting of the second semester of the relevant year. (The last day for modification of registrations for first-semester and year modules is at the end of February and for second-semester modules at the end of July of a particular year).

2.4.2 If a chairperson of a department recommends that the request for modification of a requirement not be granted, the request is handled administratively by the Faculty Secretary.

2.4.3 If a chairperson of a department recommends that the request for modification of a requirement be granted, the request is submitted to the Faculty Committee.

2.4.4 The Faculty Committee takes the following into consideration:

- Requests for modification of requirements are dealt with as an appeal.
- The student's academic record is strictly reviewed.
- Throughput rates must always be considered, but in such a way that quality is not compromised.

2.5 Recognition of subjects from other universities:

The Faculty Secretary has full authority to finalise the recognition of subjects that students completed at other universities, providing that:

- the relevant department is consulted, and
- in the case of conflicting recommendations from departments, the application and

recommendations are presented to the Faculty Committee for a final decision.

- Recognition of subjects passed at other institutions is only considered if the subjects were passed at those institutions for degree purposes.

2.6 The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences does not allow students to present equivalent final-year modules from another university as substitute modules in instances where they have not yet followed those modules at SU, qualified for exams, written the exam and failed. The Faculty of AgriSciences concurs with this.

2.7 If matters involving BAgricAdmin students serve before the Faculty Committee in future, the recommendation of the Department of Agricultural Economics will also be sought.

3. Postgraduate matters

3.1 In the case of an MSc programme following on a 4-year bachelor's degree, students who only have a 3-year bachelor's degree must have at least 96 credits on NQF 8 (i.e. the 400 series).

3.2 If a student's undergraduate studies are inadequate for the intended area of specialisation, and supplementary studies are required for his or her admission to postgraduate study, the student must register for all the prescribed additional modules, pay the required tuition fees and pass all these modules with a mark that meets the admission requirements for the relevant postgraduate programme.

3.3 If the chairperson of a department recommends that a student should complete additional studies towards a postgraduate degree, the student should also be advised whether he or she should first complete the additional studies as a special student, or whether such study could be completed concurrently with the postgraduate study.

3.4 If a department recommends that a student who obtained a mark of below 60% in a particular major subject in his or her final year be allowed to proceed with the honours or master's course (after baccalaureus) in the major subject, this recommendation should be accompanied by a sound motivation and does not have to be tabled at the Faculty Committee.

3.5 If the Faculty Committee raises objections to a proposal for admission to doctoral studies, the objections are to be formulated in writing by the Faculty Committee and presented to the chairperson of the relevant department or the recommended promoter by the Faculty Secretary of the meeting.

3.6 Admission to doctoral study without complete research proposal

3.6.1 The departmental chairperson, prospective promoter and the student fill in the form for

admission to doctoral study without an approved research proposal and send it to the Faculty Secretary, who will present it to the Faculty Committee.

3.6.2 The regulations for admission to doctoral study without a research proposal and dissertation topic require that the approved doctoral research proposal and dissertation topic be presented within a year after registration.

3.6.3 If this regulation is not adhered to, the student will not be able to register as a doctoral student the next year, and any bursaries awarded to the student may be forfeited.

3.7 Procedures for acceptance for PhD candidates

3.7.1 A prospective student can register for the PhD degrees in the Faculty in one of two ways:

- a. Registration, limited to one year, without an approved title or research proposal. The candidate has one year in which to fulfil the requirements of the latter.
- b. Registration with a title and research proposal that has been approved by the Department in question, and then recommended to the Faculty Committee, and then through to the Faculty Board and the Senate

3.7.2 Prospective PhD candidates will apply for the relevant PhD programme in the Faculty to the Registrar, either directly or through the International Office in the case of non-South African students. The Department, on receipt of the application from the office of the Registrar, puts in motion the following steps:

- i. The Department (either the Chair or the prospective supervisor as the case may be) liaises with the prospective candidate regarding the research proposal and funding for the project. In some cases the Department may have a researchable project at hand; in other cases the prospective candidate may have a project in mind;
- ii. In the event that the prospective candidate is not going to do the research on campus, i.e. will be a part time student, the Department may require the prospective candidate to spend time in Stellenbosch preparing the research proposal and choosing a supervisor. This is especially necessary for prospective candidates who have obtained their degrees elsewhere.
- iii. The Chair of the Department or the supervisor decides whether the candidate requires additional coursework prior to or as part of the PhD, and arranges this accordingly (either locally or on exchange elsewhere).
- iv. Once the supervisor or the Chair of the Department is satisfied that the prospective candidate has a research proposal that meets the requirements of the Department in question, the Department can either (a) organize a seminar that affords the prospective candidate the opportunity to present and defend the proposal in public; or (b) appoint an ad hoc committee (which could be the Departmental Academic Committee if such exists) to approve the protocol.

- v. On completion of this step, the prospective candidate and the supervisor prepare a 750 word research proposal for the agenda of the Faculty Committee.
 - vi. Candidates with a BTech qualification must have good results as well as relevant work experience and/or a number of research outputs, for example publications, to be considered for admission to MSc studies.
- 3.8 Refer also to the “Faculty guidelines for the nomination of MSc and PhD supervisors and examiners”
- 3.9 The Chairperson of the examination panel is responsible for all communications, regarding the final outcome of the dispute processes of PhD and MSc candidates.
- 3.10 The assessment panel is responsible for communicating the final recommendation from the department to the Faculty Board (via the Faculty Committee) regarding the conferment of a doctoral or master’s degree on the candidate, by means of the EKS-D-3 or the EKS-M-4 form, as applicable.
- 3.10.1 An independent, non-examining chair must be appointed in the case of both master’s and doctoral assessment panels.
- 3.10.2 Supervisors and co-supervisors may not serve on the assessment panel.
- 3.10.3 For the oral examination for a PhD, at least two of the three examiners must participate in the oral examination; for example, by means of telephonic and interactive telematic facilities.
- 3.10.4 Supervisors and co-supervisors have only observer status at master’s and doctoral oral examinations.
- 3.10.5 In cases where candidates fail the oral defence of their dissertation or thesis, the assessment panel is responsible for taking the process further. (Please note that an oral examination may be held only after the examiners have reached consensus that the dissertation or thesis does, in fact, comply with the requirements of the degree concerned.)
- 3.10.6 The assessment panel may, within limits, demand further changes to the dissertation or thesis; for example, by requesting further data processing and reporting of results. Should such changes be required, it is the assessment panel’s responsibility to ensure that the candidate and supervisor concerned be fully informed of everything that is expected of them.
- 3.10.7 Irrespective of the assessment panel’s requiring additional work on the dissertation or thesis, or not, the panel may request a second oral defence.
- 3.10.8 The candidate retains the right to declare a dispute regarding the outcome of these processes, which will be dealt with via the normal channels.
- 3.10.9 The assessment panel’s responsibilities include all communication to the dean regarding the final results of dispute procedures about doctoral and master’s degrees.

4. PROCEDURES FOR THE AMENDMENT OF A FINAL MARK FOR MSc/AGRIC CANDIDATES

If the **Assessment Panel** for a **Master's degree** is unanimous in their view that a mark awarded by an **external examiner** justifies a review, the **Chairperson** of the Assessment Panel in his report (**EKS M4 Mark Sheet**):

- a. Should reflect the proposed change in the mark awarded by a particular examiner,
- b. Provide a short motivation for the recommended change and
- c. Refer the report to the **Faculty Committee** for approval:
 - i. Chairperson: Prof Nick Vink (nv@sun.ac.za)
 - ii. Secretary: Mrs Gafsa Gamiet (ghgamiet@sun.ac.za)
- d. The Faculty Committee will forward its (final) recommendation to the **Faculty Examination Office**:
 - i. Administrator: Dr Natasja Brown (nbro@sun.ac.za)
 - ii. Secretary: Mrs Karin Vergeer (ccav@sun.ac.za)
- e. The Faculty Committee may request the Department to inform examiner of such a change in the allocated mark.

GUIDELINES FOR THE NOMINATION OF MSc AND PhD SUPERVISORS AND EXAMINERS

Preamble: The Faculty Committee has encountered several factors that are problematic in the appointment of supervisors and examiners for higher degrees. Given the increasing numbers of instances where examiners are nominated that the academic committee considers as being inappropriate and the short time interval between when the Faculty Committee meetings are held and the Faculty Board meeting, guidelines are provided in an attempt to reduce the need for finding replacement examiners at short notice. These guidelines are aimed at reducing the large number of submissions that require additional information. They are also aimed at assisting the Faculty Committee in their decisions and bringing a greater level of uniformity as to who qualifies as internal and external supervisors and examiners. The guidelines will be submitted to the Faculty Board for approval, to be attached to the “Faculty guidelines for decision-making regarding student requests”.

The most commonly encountered points of concern are presented below.

Nomination of Supervisors

Number of supervisors: The supervision of a Master’s student should include a full time academic member of staff from the hosting department, at least in a co-supervisory capacity. An additional internal or external (co)supervisor may be nominated, based on a short motivation provided on the nomination form, whilst the costs (if any) will be for the account of the host department.

The supervision of a doctoral student should include a full time academic member of staff from the hosting department, at least in a co-supervisory capacity. A second internal or external (co)supervisor may be nominated. Nomination of any additional co-supervisors will be considered based on a short motivation provided on the nomination form, whilst the costs (if any) will be for the account of the host department.

To prevent a conflict of interests no direct family relations of MSc and PhD candidates may be appointed as supervisors/co-supervisors, or promoters/co-promoters.

The Faculty Secretary will take responsibility to inform supervisors/promoters of the guidelines, due dates, etc.

Qualifications and experience of the supervisors:

The guiding principle is that the supervisor should hold a qualification that is at least of an equivalent level to that of the degree that the student is registered for. This means that in the case of MSc candidates, supervisors should at a minimum, hold an MSc themselves. At PhD level the requirement is a PhD or equivalent degree. There are times when a proposed supervisor may have years of work experience that is deemed to make them qualified to serve as a supervisor especially for M degrees, but since it is difficult to quality assure this experience, it is preferable not to use such supervisors unless provided with a strong motivation supported by documentary evidence for the suitability of such a person. This concession would not apply at the doctoral level. Where a less experienced supervisor is nominated, this should be balanced by using a co-supervisor that has high levels of experience.

Nomination of Examiners

Number of examiners: The Master’s examination panel should consist of one unattached internal examiner and at least one unattached external examiner. A second external examiner may replace the unattached internal examiner. If any additional examiners are to be nominated, a short motivation should be provided on the nomination form, whilst the costs (if any) will be for the account of the host department.

The doctoral examination panel consists of one unattached internal examiner and at least two unattached external examiners, of which one preferably should be from overseas. A third external examiner may replace the unattached internal examiner. If any additional examiners are to be nominated, a short motivation should be provided on the nomination form, whilst the costs (if any) will be for the account of the host department.

Departments will take responsibility to inform examiners of the guidelines, due dates, etc.

Qualifications of the examiners: The guiding principle is that the examiner should hold a qualification that is at least of an equivalent level to the qualification being examined. This means that in the case of MSc candidates, examiners should at a minimum, hold an MSc themselves. At PhD level the requirement is a PhD or equivalent degree. There are times when a proposed examiner may have years of work experience that is deemed to make them qualified to serve as an examiner especially for M degrees, but since it is difficult to quality assure this experience, it is preferable not to use such examiners unless provided with a strong motivation supported by documentary evidence for the suitability of such a person. This concession would not apply at the doctoral level.

Experience of examiners: Examiners should preferably have a track record of successful student supervision (i.e. graduated students) and recognized status in the field (as evidenced by publications and other tangible outputs). Where a less experienced examiner is nominated, this should be balanced by using other examiners (or examiner in the case of a M degree) that have high levels of experience. In some instances a potential examiner may not have supervised students because they come from a research institute or company. Where it is considered desirable that such a person should be an examiner, the other members of the panel should have substantial university experience. It is important to appoint a balanced examination panel.

Independence of examiners: Examiners must be in a position to give fully independent opinions. The appointment of two examiners from the same department is therefore not permitted and preferably two examiners from the same institution should be avoided. Similarly, examiners who are close collaborators or who may find themselves in a position where they are able to discuss the thesis/dissertation prior to submitting their reports should be avoided. The appointment of an examiner who is compromised by a relationship to the supervisor or student must be avoided (e.g. a recent PhD student, recent postdoctoral researcher, direct family, etc.).

Reusing examiners: To ensure the rigour of the examination process we caution against the reuse of examiners to the point where their independence becomes questionable. The recommendation is that a supervisor should not use the same examiner for his/her students more frequently than once in three years.

Definition of unattached: To qualify as unattached an examiner must not have been involved with the student in any way that would compromise their capacity to act as independent examiner of the thesis/dissertation. Examples of activities that would exclude an individual from serving as an examiner include involvement with supervision, assistance with dissertation preparation, publication co-authorship or being a research collaborator as well as financial association.

Unattached internal examiners: Any properly appointed academic staff member who qualifies as being unattached may be used as an examiner where their background and experience is suitable. Research officers may be used as internal examiners after taking qualifications, experience, independence and balance of the examination panel into account. The appointment of recent PhD students as examiners (themselves frequently students of the supervisor/co-supervisor and often friends of the candidate) is not permitted. If, for whatever reason, ex-students are named as examiners at either MSc or PhD level, sufficient time (typically five years or more) must have

elapsed to justify their recognition as independent researchers in their specific fields (this will be judged by information contained in the CV). The same consideration applies to postdoctoral researchers as they may have built a similar relationship with the supervisors or the candidate as if they were ex-research students. Extraordinary professors, because they have a relationship to the department, may be used as a replacement for the unattached internal examiner, but not in the place of an external examiner even though they may be considered as 'external' in respect to payment for their service.

Unattached external examiners: Suitably qualified persons who have no appointment at Stellenbosch University, whether remunerated or not, are considered to be external examiners. These may be national or international. In the case of PhD examiners, the faculty requires that at least one of these should be truly international. That is someone from an international training and experience background as opposed to an ex-colleague who has moved to a foreign country. **Ex-employees of Stellenbosch University do qualify to be external examiners after a period of two years preceding their employment.**

Oversight: The departmental head must take the above considerations into account when approving the nominations of examiners at both the MSc and PhD levels thus indicating the department's endorsement of the panel.

Remuneration:

In order to reduce the substantive cost to Faculty, external supervisors and examiners will be provided the option to waver the disclosed supervisory fee in favor of a Faculty post graduate bursary scheme (webpage). Internal examiners, internal supervisors or internal promoters are not compensated for this specific function they perform.

GUIDELINES FOR CONVERSION FROM MASTER'S TO DOCTORATE

In deserving cases, and with due regard for the best interests of the student concerned, the conversion of registration for the Master's degree (requiring a thesis) into registration for the Doctorate may be considered and recommended by the Faculty Board, provided that:

1. The student has shown exceptional progress with his research (after not less than one year's study); The application for conversion must be done within 18 months of registration for the MSc and is limited to good students who can be assessed on tangible outputs (see point 4 below);
2. In the course of the work done for the Master's study new and original insights that warrant further research at the Doctoral level have emerged. The conversion of the study requires more than simply increasing the volume of data and also more than adding techniques to address the questions that were formulated at the start of the MSc. There has to be clear evidence of a conceptual expansion (intellectual leap) from the MSc;
3. The work done for the Master's study exceeds the conventional MSc study in terms of scope and cannot reasonably be separated into a MSc component and a Doctoral component;
4. The outputs (which can be incremental) may include:
 - excellent progress as evident from the six-month evaluations and/or an annual report
 - conference participation (either oral or poster presentations)
 - peer-reviewed publications in journals of high quality (including those in review/in press)
5. some other acceptable form of peer evaluation;
6. The process for an upgrade will be as follow:
 - a. The supervisor prepare a proposal which will include the background and motivation for the upgrade and submit to the relevant departmental chair.
 - b. The chair consider and direct the request to the Dean with:
 - A nomination of a committee of three or four unattached members whose subject expertise equips them to judge the request.
 - One of the members shall not be a member of staff of Stellenbosch University.
 - The committee must not include the supervisor and/or co-supervisor.
 - Where the supervisor is the departmental chair, the request is made directly to the Dean.
 - c. The Dean will then make a principle decision if the upgrade may continue or not and appoint the committee who will evaluate the upgrade, in conjunction with the Faculty Committee.
 - d. In consultation with the supervisor, the student shall (i) compile a report of the progress made with the Master's study and (ii) be required to submit a written Doctorate research proposal that justifies the expansion of the philosophical/conceptual component of the study.
 - e. When the upgrade committee is approved, the candidate will be required (as with new PhD studies) to give a defense of the proposal. The committee shall consider the student's presentation, progress report and the submitted PhD proposal and make a recommendation for consideration by the Faculty Board, via the Faculty Committee;
7. Before the Doctorate be awarded to the student concerned, he must have been registered for the degrees of Master and Doctor jointly for a total of not less than three years, in the case of Master's after Honours, and in the Faculty of Science, not less than four years in the case of Master's after Bachelor's, including not less than one year for the Doctorate;
8. In cases where written examinations are required for the Master's study in question, all such examinations shall have been taken and passed by the student before the Doctorate be awarded to him; and the student's tuition fees shall not be retrospectively adjusted after the conversion.