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Education
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Guidelines for Postgraduate Studies 2025



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LIST OF ADDENDA

The official and most recent versions of the addenda referred to in this document can be obtained from your supervisor/promoter.

Addendum A	Guidelines for Master's or Doctoral Research Proposals
Addendum B	Memorandum of Understanding: Postgraduate Student and Supervisor/Promoter

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome

It is a privilege for the Faculty of Education to welcome you as a postgraduate student. We trust that this guideline document will inform you about essential aspects of your master's or doctoral study that will help you to complete it successfully.

This guideline supplements the SU Yearbooks [General Calendar, Part 1](#) and [Faculty of Education Calendar, Part 6](#).

Research

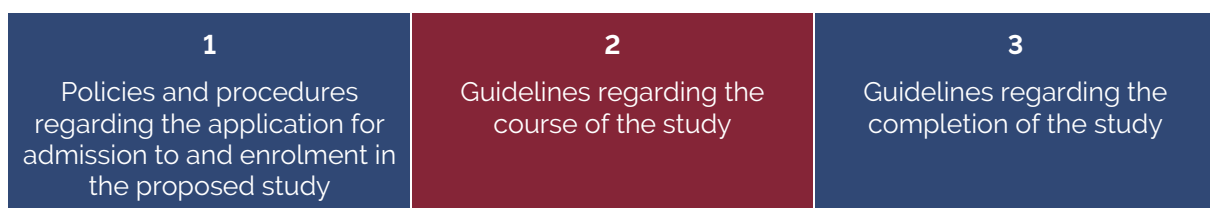
Stellenbosch University (SU) values postgraduate education highly. It is at postgraduate level that it becomes possible for students to do independent research.

The University is committed to promoting postgraduate education, since it is clear that the University can make a particular contribution in this field. The necessary mechanisms have been put in place and the necessary actions have been undertaken to contribute to knowledge building. The [Postgraduate Office](#) (PGO) is responsible for the management of [postgraduate funding](#) at the institution and all financial aid to students is centrally administered by this office.

In the institutional [Teaching and Learning Policy](#), the University declares its intentions to pay special attention to the provision of the necessary facilities and resources, as well as the development of courses to ensure that postgraduate educational programmes meet the highest international standards. In the University's [Research Policy](#), the expectation is voiced that academic staff will prioritize research and will constantly take the essential interaction between research and teaching into consideration. The policy document also mentions that under- and postgraduate courses will be planned in such a way that an interest in research will be kindled. The University also undertakes to, as far as possible, make available or procure bursaries for students who qualify for postgraduate education.

The aim of this guideline document is to provide a general, consolidated document about postgraduate programmes at master's and doctoral level, including policies, procedures and conventions that are relevant to postgraduate students. While this document takes the diversity of study fields in the Faculty of Education into account, an attempt is made throughout to ensure the highest academic standards in the University's postgraduate programmes.

The broad structure of the guideline document focuses on three facets of postgraduate programmes:



When a student enrolls for a specific degree programme at the University, an agreement is established in which the University, among others, assures the student that it does indeed have the necessary access to expert staff and facilities to be able to supervise and complete the study at the required level. Concomitantly, the student undertakes to meet his/her share of the academic commitments. In the case of master's and doctoral study, the interaction between lecturer and student is less bound to the regular routine of contact sessions and testing than in the case of undergraduate and honours studies. The danger is, therefore, also greater that the agreement between the University and the student could pose particular challenges to both parties. Through the policy, procedure, and guidelines contained in this document, the

Faculty of Education and eventually the University wish to ensure that the execution of the agreement runs as smoothly as possible.

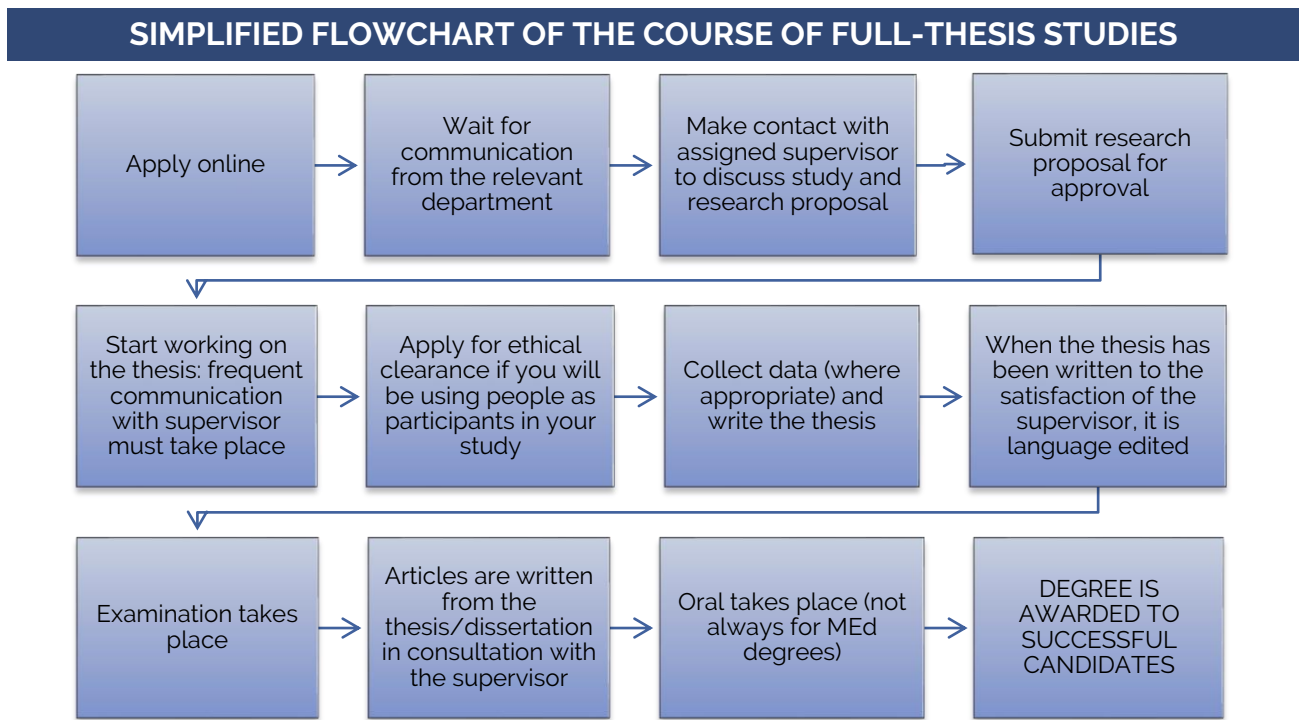
A great responsibility rests upon the faculty and departments to ensure that the expectations and spirit of the general policy emerge in policies and procedures that are implemented at faculty and departmental level to do justice to the specific needs of the relevant fields of study. Every faculty is therefore expected to create a clear process for the management of advanced degrees within the framework of policy documents and departments and postgraduate supervisors and promoters are expected to act according to this process.

The guidelines, procedures and documents contained in this guide are based on the general conditions contained in the [General Calendar, Part 1](#) and the [Faculty of Education Calendar, Part 6](#). There are also conditions that are specifically applicable to postgraduate study, of which the following may be considered the most relevant:

[General Calendar, Part 1: Postgraduate qualifications](#); sections 1 – 9.

[Policy on Plagiarism in Support of Academic Integrity](#)

[Faculty of Education Calendar, Part 6: Where to find information](#); sections 1.2 and 1.4.



Students are expected to regularly meet and discuss their studies with their allocated supervisors throughout this process.

2. POLICY AND PROCEDURES REGARDING ADMISSION

2.1 Admission procedures

Admission to postgraduate study can only occur when you have applied online to be considered for postgraduate study.

The application can be done online at [Prospective Postgraduate Student](#).

Each faculty determines its own admission requirements, with consideration given to the general admission requirements of the University. Departments can, in turn, determine their own admission requirements within this framework.

A distinction must be made between administrative (also financial) and academic procedures, which are in most cases entwined and receive attention simultaneously. Procedures are sometimes drawn out because not all the required documentation has been submitted with the application. Therefore, ensure that you upload all the required documentation with your application to ensure a speedy response. Also familiarise yourself with the closing dates for applications, because if you submit late, your application may only be considered for the next year.

The relevant departmental chair/prospective supervisor/promoter, as well as the relevant faculty secretary will ensure that the necessary contact takes place, and will also ask you to contact other parties, if this has not yet been done.

The University strives to facilitate and hasten the administrative management of admission and enrolment and has made the necessary arrangements for this to take place.

All relevant documents concerning admission and enrolment are available in English and Afrikaans.



Note: A student must thoroughly familiarise him-/herself with the conditions for registration as a master or doctoral student as set out in the [General Calendar, Part 1](#) and the [Faculty of Education Calendar, Part 6](#).

2.2 Selection and admission requirements

Selection takes place in accordance with the requirements as set out in the [General Calendar, Part 1](#) and [Faculty of Education Calendar, Part 6](#). The number of students may, however, be limited should departments not have capacity for supervision.

- a) Should you wish to continue with postgraduate education based on previous studies at an international university, you must contact the [International Office](#) in good time to have your qualifications evaluated.
- b) In the case of moving from one field of study to another, for example from a BA honours to an MEd, you must consider the fact that master's studies (thesis approach) suppose a deepening or widening with regard to previous studies. Additional study may be expected of applicants before the study can commence. Alternatively, modules at honours level may be required during the study. In the case of doctoral study, as far as possible, the aim is to award doctoral degrees in the subject/field in which previous postgraduate degrees have been earned.
- c) Recommendations for the admission of master's and doctoral students are made by departments if the supervisor and department are convinced:

- ✓ Of the student's ability to undertake and successfully complete the planned study, with reference to the nature and quality of his/her previous studies, his/her attitude towards research and his/her available time (especially in the case of part-time studies by working persons). Some departments have specific prescriptions regarding the procedure to be followed and the criteria students must satisfy before a recommendation is made.
- ✓ Of the availability of the necessary supervision capacity and expertise, equipment, laboratory, and library facilities for the proposed study.
- ✓ Of the viability or feasibility of the proposed study.

2.3 Procedure for the consideration of applications for admission

The following two procedures are described below:

Procedure A:
Admission to master's and doctoral study (<i>100% thesis and dissertation</i>).
Procedure B:
Admission to <i>structured</i> master's study programmes (coursework and mini-thesis).

PROCEDURE A: Admission to master's and doctoral study (100% thesis and dissertation)

A.1 Provisional acceptance: Allocating the student to a specific department

An applicant may have already communicated with a supervisor/promoter or made contact with a lecturer, especially if the prospective student has previously studied at Stellenbosch University. An official, [online application](#) for admission must nevertheless be submitted.

If the chair of the department within which the proposed field of study falls judges that the student may be a suitable candidate and that the proposed research can indeed be done under the direction of the relevant department, a *provisional* supervisor/promoter is allocated to the applicant. The departmental chair can call the applicant in for a conversation to determine with greater certainty what the student's field of study would be.

The departmental chair refers the request for admission to the provisional supervisor/promoter, who will make contact with the prospective student to arrange an opportunity for a conversation with him/her. *If an applicant does not comply with the basic selection requirements, the person will be informed of it at this stage.*

A.2 Research proposal

In the case of full-thesis postgraduate study, the student enters into conversation with the supervisor/promoter about the proposed research. Contact between these two persons is continued until there is clarity about the topic, the purpose, and the methodology of the proposed research, as well as the research procedure to be followed. Thereafter, the student prepares a complete research proposal in writing for presentation to the supervisor/promoter, who will view it and present it to a departmental committee for discussion. In the case of a master's study, this process can normally take up to a year.

In the case of PhD studies, there is a stricter timeframe. Because it is possible for the student to register without a title, the title, and by implication the research proposal, must be approved by the Faculty Board within a year. Practically, this means that a student can, for example, *register without a title* in 2025, which implies that the research proposal must be approved before the first Faculty Board

meeting of 2026. It is, therefore, in your best interest to register early in the year so that you have enough time to develop the proposal and have it approved.

The format and contents of a research proposal are discussed in section 3 of this guide.

PROCEDURE B: Admission to structured master's study programmes (coursework and mini thesis)

B.1 Application for admission

The Faculty of Education determines its own admission requirements (see [Faculty of Education Calendar, Part 6](#)), with consideration given to the general admission requirements of the University (see [General Calendar, Part 1](#)). An official, [online application](#) for admission must be submitted.

B.2 Consideration of application

The application is considered by the convenor of the relevant programme, in cooperation with the admissions committee of the specific department. This committee reserves the right to, should it be necessary, call in the prospective student for an interview to discuss the application for admission with him/her. The faculty secretary informs the applicant of whether or not the application has been accepted.

B.3 Selection criteria

Selection takes place in accordance with the requirements as set out in the [General Calendar, Part 1](#) and [Faculty of Education Calendar, Part 6](#).

2.4 Availability of facilities and services

The nature of your study will determine what facilities and services you will require. The University provides both online and physical access to the SU Library and other services offered to registered SU students. Access to hardware and software needs to be negotiated with supervisors and departmental chairs as applicable. It is, naturally, necessary to find out whether your study can be done within the Faculty of Education at all. Should you, for example, wish to conduct clinical studies with children, you have to be very certain that the facilities are available.

- a) In the case of laboratory and computer facilities, written confirmation will be provided to you regarding which facilities can be made available on what basis. Costs for which the student is personally responsible (consumable goods, as well as equipment, travel, and accommodation costs) need to be budgeted for and specified in the research proposal.
- b) In the case of library facilities for specialised studies, it may be necessary to contact the [Library and Information Services](#). District cooperation agreements exist among libraries so that it is possible to cater for needs in areas for which strong collections are not locally available. *Ms Hanlie Strydom, Faculty Librarian*, can also be contacted in this regard at 021-808 4424 or hanlies@sun.ac.za.

2.5 Financial matters for postgraduate studies

- a) Students can contact the office for [Postgraduate Student Funding](#) at 021-808 4208, or by emailing postgradfunding@sun.ac.za.
- b) Should you already possess a student number, electronic application may be made at [Postgraduate Student Funding](#).

- c) The financial provision of the student remains his/her own responsibility. The University will attempt, as far as possible, to make available or procure bursaries for students who undertake postgraduate study.
- d) Where institutions (statutory boards, bodies that finance studies or private institutions) make bursaries available to students and prefer to do so through the University's administrative channels, the arrangement is usually that the University only pays out the remainder, after the study and accommodation costs to the University have been paid off, to the student. Please ensure that institutions or government bodies that provide you with a bursary that is administered through the University's systems are aware of this arrangement. You must also inform your supervisor should such institutions require frequent progress reports. In such cases, you must provide your supervisor/promoter with the name and contact information of the relevant functionary.

2.6 Admission of international students

The decision about the admission of international students rests with the various departments. The [International and Postgraduate Office](#) assists students to complete their applications, and they make recommendations to help academics understand how such qualifications are aligned with South African qualifications.

- a) The closing date for all applications is 30 September for programmes that start in the first semester (February).
- b) Please note that certain selection programmes have earlier closing dates.

International and Postgraduate Office

Krotoa Building
c/o Victoria and Ryneveld Streets, Stellenbosch
Tel: +27 21 808 2565
Email: interoff@sun.ac.za

2.7 Continued registration of postgraduate programmes

Students must register as students every year for the full duration of their study until the relevant degree is awarded to them. Should such students, before being awarded the relevant degree, fail to register as students before the prescribed date in any year, their registration will lapse, and in the case of master's and doctoral students, so will the topic of their thesis/dissertation. Should such students wish to be readmitted to the relevant degree programme, they will have to apply for admission in writing, and they will have to register for the programme anew and will have to pay all required fees of the relevant programme once again.

Alternatively, should the years of non-registration not make it financially detrimental for the student (compared to registering for the programme anew) and should permission be granted to be allowed to re-register, the study fees for the year(s) for which the student did not register must be paid up and then registration for the programme continues as normal. In such a case, the student in question is, however, not retroactively registered for the year(s) of non-registration for which programme fees are not paid up. The year(s) of non-registration for which programme fees are paid up are, however, added upon reregistration as though the student had been registered. The annual registration may be completed administratively twice for master's students and at most three times for doctoral students. Further registration will only occur once the relevant department chair/supervisor/promoter gives permission that these students may continue their study.

A degree cannot be awarded at the March/April graduation to a student who was not registered for the previous year. Such a student can receive a declaration that he/she complies with all the requirements

and that the degree will be awarded in December of the following year, on condition that the student registers and pays study fees in time for the year in which the degree is awarded.

If there are valid reasons why you cannot register, you may request to be allowed to interrupt your study. This is what we discuss next.

2.8 Interruption of study: guidelines

Acceptable reasons for interruption of study

The following acceptable reasons serve as guidelines when a request must be considered to interrupt the study for a master's or doctoral degree:

- a) Work circumstances;
- b) Medical reasons;
- c) Financial reasons; and
- d) Very special, well-motivated personal circumstances.

All requests must be motivated with relevant supporting documents. Such documents include, among others: letters of appointment, work assignments, medical certificates, financial statements, affidavits, etc.

Procedure for applications to interrupt study

The following extract from the [General Calendar, Part 1](#) applies:


13.2 Procedure to apply for an interruption of studies

- 13.2.3. Applications for interruption of studies for **postgraduate programmes** must be recommended by your supervisor or programme leader and the chairperson of the department concerned and must be submitted by the departmental chairperson to the relevant governance structures of the faculty, including the faculty board.
 - 13.2.3.1 The relevant faculty board must consider the application based on its internal procedures and communicate the outcome in the next Communications Report of the faculty board to Senate.
 - 13.2.3.2 The faculty administrator or their delegate should enter the recommendation regarding an approved application for interruption under Academic Topics/Student Notes on your golden record in SUNStudent. This entry must include the year of and reasons for the interruption.
 - 13.2.3.3 The relevant faculty administrator or their delegate will communicate the outcome of your interruption application in writing by email, after the relevant faculty board has considered your application and after the request was approved by the Executive Committee (Senate).
- 13.2.4 An interruption of studies may be granted for a full academic year (i.e. starting in January and ending in December) and not for parts of an academic year. Leave of absence for shorter periods (i.e. less than a full academic year) must be handled according to the rules for "Absence from academic activities" earlier on in this Yearbook part.
- 13.2.5 An interruption of studies may be granted once at the most for a period of one full academic year (i.e. starting in January and ending in December) for the following programmes:
 - 13.2.5.1 Undergraduate bachelor's degrees, diplomas or certificates
 - 13.2.5.2 Honours degrees and postgraduate diplomas
 - 13.2.5.3 Master's degrees
- 13.2.6 An interruption of studies for the degree of Doctor may be granted either twice at the most, namely for a period of one academic year (i.e. starting in January and ending in December) in each instance, or once only, namely for a period of two academic years.

2.9 Sensitive theses and dissertations

This matter is addressed at length in the [General Calendar, Part 1](#).

2.10 Flowcharts of application procedures for structured master's study, master's full thesis and PhD study

Application procedure for master's (full thesis) and PhD study	
<p>Both current SU students and external applicants must complete an official online application.</p> <p>The candidate is advised to discuss a possible research focus with the relevant departmental chair or potential supervisor beforehand; however, this is not a requirement.</p>	<p>The departmental chairperson considers the application according to the departmental expertise and/or capacity to supervise the research focus area.</p>
<p>After receipt of the application, and if candidate has not yet been in contact with a potential supervisor, the departmental chairperson assigns a provisional supervisor who will make contact with student.</p>	<p>The candidate prepares a complete research proposal according to the faculty's master's and doctoral research proposal guidelines for presentation to the provisional supervisor.</p>
<p>The provisional supervisor submits the proposal to the departmental M&D Proposal Committee for review.</p>	<p>If approved:</p> <p>M applications are recommended by the departmental chairperson. While the chairperson may informally communicate the outcome of the application to the student, official notification of the outcome is communicated to the student by the faculty secretary via the online application portal.</p> <p>D applications are recommended by departmental chair to the Standing Committee Research and Postgraduate Studies (SCRPS), Faculty Committee, and Faculty Board for approval by Senate, and the outcome of the application is communicated to the student by faculty secretary via the online application portal.</p> <p>If not approved:</p> <p>If the research proposal is not accepted, the applicant receives a further opportunity to submit an improved proposal.</p>
<p>The candidate arranges an opportunity for conversation with their supervisor to enter into an agreement with the department.</p>	<p>The candidate and supervisor draw up a memorandum of understanding which is submitted to the departmental secretary and faculty postgraduate office.</p>
<p> The research topic is registered after approval by the Senate and may not be changed without permission from the Faculty Board and Senate.</p>	

Application procedure for structured master's study

Both current SU students and external applicants must complete an official [online application](#).



The convener of the relevant programme, together with the programme selection committee, considers the application.

Selection takes place as set out in the [Faculty of Education Calendar, Part 6](#).

Selection interviews and/or academic writing activities may apply.

The number of students admitted to a programme may be limited according to programme or departmental capacity.



Admission after selection:

Successful applicants may be notified by the relevant programme coordinator; however, official notification of the outcome of an application is communicated by the faculty secretary via the online application portal.

3. THE COURSE OF YOUR DEGREE

3.1 A code of conduct for student and supervisor/promoter

The [General Calendar, Part 1](#) clearly spells out what the responsibilities of the supervisor/promoter and the student are. In the Faculty of Education, we have summarised this code of conduct in the form of a memorandum of agreement. Each student and supervisor/promoter *must* sign this document. It is not a contract, but it will help you to know what is expected of you and your supervisor/promoter. See **Addendum A** for this document.

3.2 Where does my research begin?

When you have been admitted and start to talk about the study to your supervisor/promoter, the first step is to write a research proposal. This process has two purposes:

- a) To give you an overview of the field of study and the problems experienced in the field so that you can ask research questions that are relevant and find methods to answer the questions.
- b) To convince a committee that you are capable of undertaking such a study, a research proposal must contain at least the following:
 - a research topic;
 - a description of the research problem and the proposed delimitation of the field of study, with an overview of core and recent national and international literature;
 - a description of the nature of the research;
 - the objective(s) of the research project;
 - the motivation for the research project;
 - a brief overview of the relevant scholarly literature on the subject;
 - the proposed research procedure and methodology;
 - a research programme schedule;
 - a description of the possible value of the study to the relevant field of study; and
 - a preliminary bibliography/reference list.

The length of a research proposal for a full-thesis master's study is usually between 4000 and 6000 words. For a doctoral study, it can be between 6000 and 8000 words. You need to discuss the scope of your proposal with your supervisor/promoter.

Please note the following when submitting your research proposal for review:

- a) Include page one of the *Guidelines for Master's or Doctoral Research Proposals (Addendum A)* as the first page of your research proposal.
- b) Consider the quality of the document you are submitting for review – your proposal should be neatly formatted and free of spelling and language errors.
- c) Be sure to have followed up with your supervisor/promoter about the deadlines for submission; delays in having your proposal reviewed and approved may result in issues related to re-registration in terms of SU regulations.

You can expect to receive the research proposal back several times from your supervisor/promoter for revision. Formulating such a proposal within the given word count restriction is an art, and it requires revision and a clear focus.

If your supervisor/promoter is satisfied with the proposal, it is submitted to a departmental review committee for feedback. The committee may require that you present your proposal and discuss it with a review panel so that problematic aspects of the proposed field of study or topic can be discussed with you. In the case of master's proposals, departmental review committees make a recommendation to the Faculty Board on whether a study can proceed and on the appointment of suitable supervisors. In the case of doctoral proposals, the department plays a formative role in proposal development. Doctoral candidates are invited to defend their study proposals at the Faculty Standing Committee on Research and Postgraduate Studies (SCRPS), whereafter the student's application for admission to an advanced degree study is accepted or rejected.

You will be informed by your supervisor(s) when the proposal has been approved and accepted by the Faculty Board. At this stage, you need to arrange an opportunity for a conversation with the supervisor(s) in order to enter into an agreement with the department in respect of the completion of the study.

Should an applicant's research proposal not be accepted, the person can receive a further opportunity to submit an improved proposal. The supervisor/promoter/departmental chair will communicate the reasons for the rejection of the proposal to the candidate. The date on which the second proposal is submitted and approved will determine whether the person will still be able to register as a student in the relevant year. Should the second proposal also be rejected, the person will only be able to submit a new proposal after a certain amount of time prescribed by the department. Sometimes, it may be required that a student must first comply with specific conditions, such as directed literature study, completing a postgraduate module, or obtaining a language qualification.

If a candidate's proposal is not successfully defended (to the relevant department at master's level, and to SCRPS at doctoral level) within the first year of registration, the student will not be allowed to reregister.


It is the responsibility of the postgraduate student to arrange regular meetings (in-person or online) with his/her supervisor(s). Responsibilities of both the student and the supervisor/promoter to each other and in respect of the study must be discussed as set out in the memorandum of agreement of the Faculty of Education (*Addendum B*).

It is important to discuss the necessity of ethical clearance and gatekeeper/institutional permission with your supervisor/promoter. This process should start as early as possible because the University's Research Ethics Committee needs to consider many applications and only meets on [specified dates](#). Please see section 3.5 below for more information.

For a master's or doctoral study, you have two format options: by monograph thesis or by publication.

The faculty regulations below are in addition to the guidelines in the [General Calendar, Part 1](#) on dissertation formats (*Postgraduate Qualifications* 6.9 Dissertation requirements).

	Full thesis (monograph)	By publication
Master's study	Typically contains separate chapters that form a coherent whole.	The manuscript must have a minimum of two distinct chapters in the form of peer-reviewed <i>publishable</i> and/or published conference proceedings, journal articles and/or book chapters.
	The length is approximately 40 000 – 60 000 words.	The final manuscript consists of two wrap-around chapters – the first is an orientation to the study, and the last an integrated response to the research purposes/questions/ hypotheses.
Doctoral study	Full thesis (monograph)	By publication
	Typically contains separate chapters that form a coherent whole.	The manuscript should contain at least three <i>publishable</i> articles/book chapters or peer-reviewed conference proceedings with bookend chapters to contextualize the study and provide

		detailed information about methodology and theoretical framework(s).
	The length is approximately 70 000 – 90 000 words.	Included chapters (except for the wrap-around chapters) are suitable for publication, have been submitted for publication, or have already been published as published conference proceedings, journal articles, and/or book chapters.
		The authorship, nature, and scope of contribution to each article needs to be clearly indicated in accordance with the regulations of the General Calendar, Part 1 : a) The student must be the first author for two of the three chapters; b) The student's intellectual contribution must be clearly stated; c) The wrap-around chapters must be single authored.
 Note: Only articles or other research outputs that originated after you registered for the PhD study may be incorporated, or if your master's study is converted to a doctoral study, only articles that originated after you registered for that particular master's degree.		

3.3 What happens if I want to change my study?

Your research topic is registered after the Senate of the University has also approved it and, thereafter, it may not be adjusted without permission from the Faculty Board and/or Senate.

If, for any reason, you are no longer able to or no longer wish to continue with the study provided in your research proposal, it is possible to adjust the proposal or even start a new study. Adjustments or new proposals are managed like all new proposals and must go through the relevant committees. If the title of a doctoral study needs to be adjusted, it is presented to the Faculty Board through the promoter with motivation via the relevant postgraduate committee and the faculty secretary. The Faculty Board must recommend it before the Executive Committee (Senate) and Senate approve it.

The adjustment of a master's project's title and/or topic is concluded by the relevant department.

3.4 Conversion of enrolment from master's degree to a doctorate

In rare cases it is possible to convert a master's to a doctoral study. Please study the [General Calendar, Part 1](#) for a more detailed description of the circumstances where such a conversion request may apply.

In deserving cases, and with consideration of the best interests of the student, the conversion of an enrolment for the full-thesis master's degree to an enrolment for a PhD degree may be considered and recommended by a Faculty Board, provided that:

- 3.4.1 the student has shown exceptional progress with his/her research (registration for the doctoral study after at least one year's enrolment for the master's study) and is applying for the conversion no later than during the third year of enrolment for the master's study;
- 3.4.2 during the course of the master's study, new and original insights have come to the fore that justify further investigation at doctoral level;
- 3.4.3 the study is such that it exceeds the scope of a master's study and justifies further investigation at doctoral level;
- 3.4.4 the results of the master's study have preferably already been accepted for publication in a journal of the highest standard, although this is not a prerequisite;
- 3.4.5 consideration of conversion from master's to PhD study will occur on the initiative of the supervisor who submits a request to the departmental chair, who will then, if he/she supports the request, submit the request to the dean;

- 3.4.6 the student must be enrolled for the master's and PhD degrees for a combined period of at least three years in the case of master's after honours or a four-year baccalaureate degree, and at least four years in the case of master's after baccalaureate (while there may still be students who are busy with such phasing-out two-year master's degrees), of which at least one year must be for the PhD degree, before the latter degree may be awarded;
- 3.4.7 in cases where a written examination is required for the relevant master's study, such examinations must be taken and passed before the PhD degree can be awarded;
- 3.4.8 the conversion may only take place at the beginning of a new academic year, in other words, from February onwards; and study fees are not retroactively adjusted upon conversion.

The approval process takes place as follows:

After conferring with the supervisor, the student composes a short report in which (i) the progress that has been made with the master's study is reported, and (ii) a proposal for the planned PhD study is made, consisting of, among others, a detailed protocol that contains complete information about the hypothesis/hypotheses, literature review, materials and technique of the study, viability, and ethical implications of the study.

1. The supervisor submits a request to the departmental chair.
2. Should the departmental chair support the request, he/she submits a request to the chair of the relevant committee.

The following documentation must accompany the request:

1. Request from supervisor for upgrading and the necessary motivation, addressed to the chair of the relevant committee.
2. Request by the student, with the necessary motivation.
3. If it is a study in article format, the article(s) must also be included.
4. Names and contact details of two possible internal and two or more external persons who can evaluate the study. The relevant faculty committee will appoint two persons to evaluate the study.

The process will be managed further by the Postgraduate Office.

The chair of the Standing Committee for Research and Postgraduate Studies makes a recommendation for consideration to the Faculty Board.



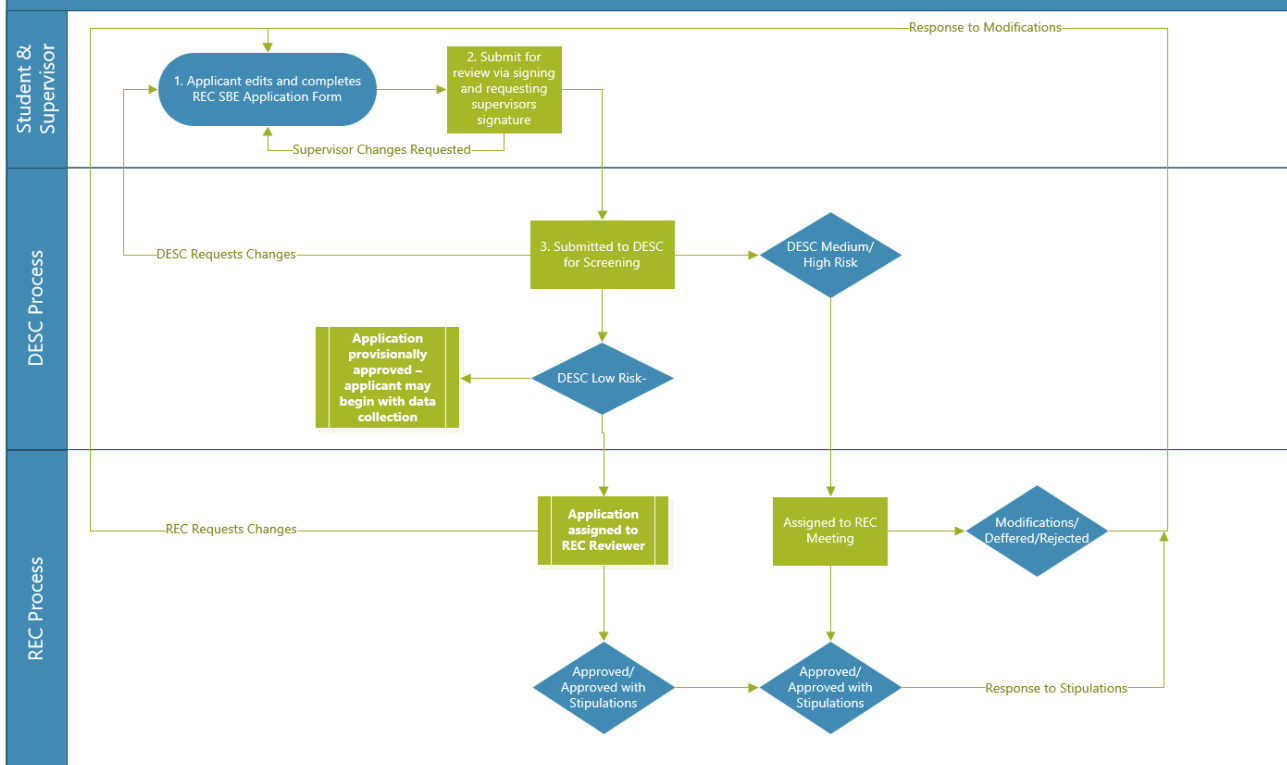
Note: Where the supervisor is the departmental chair, he/she submits the request directly to the chair of the relevant committee.

3.5 Ethical clearance

All students who do any form of empirical research that involves people, and/or their personal information must, aside from the approval of their research proposal by the research committees of the Faculty of Education, also get ethical clearance from the University's Research Ethics Committee (REC) regarding the empirical portion of their research. Ethical clearance must be obtained for all research that students do under the University's name. This also applies to research undertaken internationally or at other institutions.

The procedures and forms to obtain ethical clearance are available on the University's website. Visit [Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research](#) for access to the online application procedure for ethical clearance with regard to the humanities. The dates on which the committee meets are also indicated on the landing page, so that you can plan when to upload the application. These dates mainly apply to submission of research involving minors, or where the study is assessed as medium or high risk. Students should consult with their department's Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) regarding their internal dates for submission and review.

Social, Behavioural and Education Research
Department Ethics Screening Committee (DESC)/Research Ethics Screening Committee (REC) Process



All applications for ethical clearance must be accompanied by at least the following documents:

- a) an approved research proposal;
- b) permission from the principal of a school or institution where you want to conduct the research;
- c) in the case of schools, permission from the provincial authorities;
- d) the instruments that you will use to do the research (questionnaires, interview schedules, etc.);
- e) an informed consent form that you will use when you distribute your questionnaires or conduct interviews or work with children.
- f) Completed privacy impact assessment (visit the Division for Information Policy's webpage at [Governance of Personal Information](#)).

If you work with underage children, you will have to give an informed *assent* form to the children (please see the web address above for more details) and an informed consent form to the parents/guardians of the children. It is extremely important that, if you want to use a whole class for your research, every single parent/guardian gives consent for their child to take part. Please see the section 3.2.2 (pages 27 – 37) of the [National Health Research Ethics Council guidelines](#) (NDoH 2024) for the legal requirements around research involving children.

If you will only analyse documents that are freely available (on the internet, for example), you do not have to apply for ethical clearance. However, as soon as you want to use documents that you can only access because you are a staff member or somebody's confidant, you must also apply for ethical clearance and the relevant participants in your study must provide their informed consent that you can use the documents.

When you submit the application for ethical clearance electronically, it is made available for your supervisor/promoter to (electronically) sign off on the form. Should a supervisor/promoter still have questions, you will be informed of any problems to solve. When the supervisor/promoter is then satisfied, the application will serve before a departmental ethical screening committee (DESC). The DESC assesses the degree of risk of the proposed research. In cases of research with no or low risk (see the information

in the online application), the DESC provides ethical clearance and comments on any conditions under which the research must take place. It is then sent to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for their information, and you and your supervisor will receive a formal letter of approval via email.

In the case of research with medium and high risk, or research involving minors, the application is referred to the University's Research Ethics Committee (REC) and they examine it thoroughly before giving approval and providing the necessary letter. You and your supervisor/promoter will be informed of this via email. Please take note that your Stellenbosch University email address will be used for this purpose, so regularly check this email for notifications.

In all cases, the approval of the REC must be kept safely, because you must attach it as an addendum to the final thesis.

For enquiries regarding the REC application process, you can contact the REC officer, *Mr Aden Williams*, on aden@sun.ac.za or 021-808 9185. For technical guidance, please contact *Ms Jennifer de Beer* on jad@sun.ac.za.

3.6 Plagiarism

Definition

Plagiarism is the adoption and use of the ideas, material, or other intellectual property of other persons as though it is your own work. Plagiarism is also called letter theft.

Intellectual property contained herein includes, among others:

Literary works, which include articles, books, theses, dissertations, newspapers, magazines, notes, course material, fellow students' assignments, email messages, data, computer code, internet sources, spoken text, which includes speeches, cassette recordings, lectures, interviews, etc.

Artistic works, which include sculptural and graphical art, photos, etc.

Multimedia products, which include websites, video productions, films, CDs, design projects, etc.

Musical works, which include compositions, lyrics, DVDs, music or soundbites on the internet, etc.

Categories

In terms of SU's management of offences with regard to plagiarism, offences are divided into three broad categories:

Category 1: Minor offences that may be considered as ignorance, carelessness, or inaccuracy in dealings with and acknowledgement of sources, but that are nonetheless plagiarism.

Category 2: Less blatant cases, where sources/work/materials are dealt with injudiciously, that are, naturally, still plagiarism. Category 1 and 2 offences are normally managed by the department in the case of students. Repeated category 2 offences may, in the case of students, be referred to the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC), and will, in the case of staff, be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Code for Staff (refer to less serious offences).

Category 3: Blatant cases, in other words where the work/material of another person is adopted and used in a deliberate and conscious manner. In the case of students, these cases are normally referred to the CDC, and in the case of staff, they are dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Code for Staff (refer to serious offences).

SU approach

SU's policy approach is based on developing or sensitising students to plagiarism, with consideration of the SU Teaching and Learning Policy. (See [General Calendar, Part 1.](#))

Every postgraduate student can make use of similarity detection software such as [Turnitin](#) to ensure that no text that is not properly cited has slipped through (*please use the [sandbox](#) function for this purpose*). When the thesis document is finalised for submission, it must be put through Turnitin (*please use the [sandbox](#) function for this purpose*), and the report must be made available to the supervisor/promoter. Since there are usually a large number of quotations in a dissertation, the software program will, therefore, find a high percentage of similarities with existing *articles and books*. However, the issue of using a similarity index as a proxy for plagiarism (in whatever form) is a somewhat problematic issue (see [The Misuses Of Turnitin And Other Text-Matching Software](#)).

3.7 Use of Artificial Intelligence

Because AI (like ChatGPT) is here to stay, The Division for Learning and Teaching Enhancement has provided extensive information and resources regarding the [use of generative AI systems in higher education](#). Please also see the [Draft interim SU guidelines on allowable AI use](#) for information on referencing, citation, and declaring AI use.

3.8 Academic grievances

Definitions
An academic grievance is any matter related to alleged unreasonable treatment in the presentation of programmes (among others, vagueness about student expectations), the learning environment and educational media, the evaluation of modules, supervision for theses, or any form of discrimination or dishonesty in academic context. A grievance about the use of students' research is any grievance in connection with the publication or co-publication of students' research or theses, or the use of students' research by the University, supervisors or lecturers.
Administrative grievances are grievances in connection with eventualities such as the choice of modules, programmes, thesis supervision, registration, student fees, etc.
Group grievances are grievances that affect more than one member of a module or programme. Members of the Postgraduate Education Student Committee (PESC) represent all BEd honours, master's and PhD students registered with the Faculty of Education.

3.9 Management of grievances

Students must make use of the following channels and procedures to air their grievances. Please note that the relevant route form **must** be completed and frequently updated. The request will be referred back if this procedure has not been followed.

Academic grievances

Discuss it with the relevant lecturer/supervisor, or (if the member prefers it this way or the problem is still not solved) complete a form for academic grievances and submit it to the relevant lecturer/supervisor. The aggrieved student may also request a class representative to represent him/her in the matter. The aggrieved student must follow the following procedure, either personally or through his/her class representative:

- a) Discuss the grievance form with the lecturer/supervisor to reach an agreement about the required steps to manage the grievance and solve the problem. A copy of the grievance form is

subsequently handed in to the departmental chair, or the Vice-Dean (Research) if the departmental chair is involved in the grievance. If the problem is not solved,

- b) consult the departmental chair, and if the problem is still not solved,
- c) consult the Dean or Vice-Dean (Research). If the problem is still not solved, the student can, as last resort,
- d) consult the Vice-Rector (Research & Innovation) in the case of grievances related to thesis work, research, or publication, or
- e) the Vice-Rector (Teaching & Learning) in the case of grievances related to course modules.

In the case of group grievances, the procedure in terms of academic grievances should be followed:

- a) The Vice-Dean (Research) or Vice-Rector (Research & Innovation) (for grievances related to thesis work, research, or publication), or Vice-Dean (Teaching) or Vice-Rector (Teaching & Learning) (for grievances related to course modules), can investigate the grievance in any appropriate manner, for example by appointing a committee or assigning a suitable person to investigate specific academic grievances. Such a committee or person must manage the grievance independently and confidentially.
- b) Grievances must be managed as speedily as possible and the person who submitted the grievance must receive feedback.



Note: Aggrieved students may, under exceptional circumstances, skip a step in the abovementioned order of events and move on to the next step, provided that this decision is explained. This explanation must appear in the section "Description of complaint/problem" on the form for academic grievance procedures.

FORMS FOR ACADEMIC GRIEVANCES

Grievance forms may be obtained:

- from the Postgraduate Education Student Committee;
- on the website of the Faculty of Education;
- from the office of the departmental chairs;
- from the office of the faculty manager.

Administrative grievances

Approach the faculty secretary of the Faculty of Education (with regard to module choice, registration and programmes) or the University's Student Fees Division (with regard to student fees), and if the problem is not solved, contact the Registrar.

4. COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS OR DISSERTATION BEFORE AND AFTER THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

4.1 Guidelines (and not requirements) with regard to the scope of theses and dissertations

Doctoral dissertation	70 000 – 90 000 words	About 150 – 230 pages
100% master's thesis (180 credits)	40 000 – 60 000 words	About 100 – 110 pages
Master's mini thesis (credit load depends on specific programme - see Yearbook for details)	20 000 – 30 000 words	About 90 pages

4.2 Deadlines for and form of submission for examination

To complete the examination in time for a specific graduation, it is important to keep to the prescribed submission dates. These are revised every year; please consult with your supervisor in this regard.

Theses and dissertations can only be submitted for examination by your supervisor once they feel satisfied that your thesis/dissertation is ready for examination. They will submit your thesis/dissertation to the Postgraduate Office on your behalf along with a submission form which has been co-signed by the relevant departmental chairperson.

It is important to plan carefully if you want to be in time for a specific graduation. If you want to graduate in December, the date for submission is normally *mid-August*. You can work back from this point to determine how much still needs to be done. The following steps for the finalisation of the document must be taken into consideration:

Timeline for December graduation <i>(based on a willing supervisor/promoter and unproblematic thesis or dissertation)</i>	
Middle May:	First full concept document to the supervisor
First week of June:	Receive feedback from supervisor, revise (2-3 weeks)
Final week of June:	Back to supervisor for final oversight and permission to have language edited
Beginning of July:	Document to language editor (usually two weeks for 150 – 250 pages)
Last week of July:	Look at language editor's suggestions; ensure that all problems are addressed
First week of August:	Finalise the document and submit it to your supervisor
15 August 2025	Final day for the Postgraduate Office to send 100% master's theses and PhD dissertations to examiners for graduation in December 2025.
29 August 2025	Final day for the Postgraduate Office to send master's mini theses to examiners for graduation in December 2025.

A similar programme applies if you aim to graduate in March:

Timeline for March graduation <i>(based on a willing supervisor/promoter and unproblematic thesis or dissertation)</i>	
Middle June:	First full concept document to the supervisor
First week of July:	Receive feedback from supervisor, revise (2-3 weeks)

Final week of July:	Back to supervisor for final oversight and permission to have language edited
Beginning of August:	Document to language editor (usually two weeks for 150 – 250 pages)
Last week of August:	Look at language editor's suggestions; ensure that all problems are addressed
First week of September:	Finalise the document and submit it to your supervisor
3 October 2025	Final day for the Postgraduate Office to send 100% master's theses and PhD dissertations to examiners for graduation in March 2026.
17 October 2025	Final day for the Postgraduate Office to send master's mini theses to examiners for graduation in March 2026.

You must discuss these timelines with your supervisor(s) to check their availability to attend your thesis work.

4.3 Document layout for theses and dissertations

The [General Calendar, Part 1](#) contains lengthy information and strict requirements on the format of the dissertation/thesis in terms of the first few pages (for example, the declaration that the work is your own, summaries in English and Afrikaans, etc.). If articles are included in your thesis/dissertation, please refer to **6.9 Dissertation requirements** in the [General Calendar, Part 1](#) to ensure that you adhere to the declaration requirements regarding the nature and scope of your and any co-author(s)' contribution to the publications.

Important guidelines for the submission of theses/dissertations are also available on the library website at [Thesis/dissertation submission](#).

The Faculty of Education has had thesis/dissertation templates drawn up according to institutional guidelines. The templates can be downloaded from the Postgraduate Support Initiative team on MS Teams.

Document layout for theses and dissertations	
Title page	
Declaration (<i>Do not add your signature to the bottom of the declaration.</i>)	
Abstract in the language of the thesis/dissertation (max. 500 words) Additional abstract (optional): In second language (max. 500 words)	
Acknowledgements (sponsors, family, etc.)	
Table of contents	
List of figures	
List of tables	
Content (e.g. Chapter 1, Chapter 2, etc.)	
List of references (See Referencing techniques)	
Addenda (e.g. Addendum A, Addendum B, etc.)	

Appearance	
Font type	Cambria or Calibri

Font size	10, 11 or 12 font size
Font colour	Black
Line spacing	Double, Single or 1.5
Margins	Blank border of not less than 2 cm in width around the whole of the typewritten portion.
Paper size	A4

4.4 Duplication and binding of theses and dissertations

Facilities for the printing and (ring) binding of theses/dissertations are available on campus (in the [Neelsie](#)). You can also get information from [African Sun Media](#).

It is no longer an institutional requirement to have theses/dissertations bound in hard copy format, as all completed theses/dissertations are uploaded in electronic format onto the [SUNScholar](#) repository. Hard copy duplication and binding are done at the student's own cost.

4.5 Policy on electronic submission of theses/dissertations

Stellenbosch University's policy regarding electronic submission of theses and dissertations:
The electronic submission of theses and dissertations is compulsory.
Submit the final copy (after examination and corrections) by Thursday, 27 November 2025 for the December 2025 graduation ceremonies.
No printed copies are required (except for candidates' personal use or if a supervisor requests it).
Limited access (give motivation to faculty secretary for presentation to Senate).
Intellectual information (including copyright) – copyright belongs to Stellenbosch University.
Plagiarism (Turnitin-Viper-Plag Tracker).

Each master's thesis and doctoral dissertation is required to be submitted electronically using [SUNStudent Academia](#), once it has been examined and before graduation. Theses and dissertations should be created according to the general rules as set out in the [General Calendar, Part 1](#).

A candidate whose thesis/dissertation passes examination, prepares the document for furnishing in PDF format:

- a) making all the revisions considered necessary and as specified during the examination process to the satisfaction of the supervisor(s) and/or examiners (as is specified as an outcome of the examination process); and
- b) ensuring that the document has the correct layout, formatting and other compulsory requirements as set out in 4.3 above.
- c) save the document by using the following file naming convention:
 - *surname_studentnumber_2021.docx* (e.g. *dutoit_12345678_2021.docx*)

Only then can the supervisor(s) certify the text as final. A text that meets the requirements and is certified as such is known as the "*master copy for submission*". The thesis/dissertation is uploaded by the supervisor/promoter or administrative staff to [SUNStudent Academia](#).

4.6 Process for electronic submission

The process, in brief, is as follows on the [Library and Information Service website](#):

- a) The final thesis or dissertation must be submitted in PDF format.
- b) Log onto [SUNStudent Academia](#).
- c) Click on **Examinations**, then click **Thesis Management**.
- d) The supervisor/promoter or administrative staff *nominates* the candidate.
- e) Please make use of **Remarks** to indicate the *month and year of graduation*.
- f) The thesis/dissertation is *uploaded* by the supervisor/promoter or administrative staff.
- g) The supervisor/promoter or administrative staff *approves* the submission.
- h) The thesis/dissertation will be publicly accessible on [SUNScholar](#) following graduation.

Queries: Paulette Talliard Tel.: 021 808 9046 /9139 or email scholar@sun.ac.za.

4.7 Oral examination: PhD candidates (and master's candidates in specific cases)

At Stellenbosch University an oral examination takes place after the examination of the doctoral dissertation. It is sometimes called an oral defence or a *viva* (from the Latin *viva voce*, which means 'in a live voice'). The examination is meant to showcase the candidate's mastery of his or her subject. Any doctoral candidate who completed an oral successfully becomes part of a small but highly specialised and sought-after group of people who participated in a centuries-old process. In South Africa, the oral also aims to consolidate the examiners' assessment of the thesis so as to ensure that there is consensus about the outcome of the examination process.

Please note that an oral is generally *not* required for a master's degree, except in contentious cases, for example when there are significant discrepancies in the marks allocated by the examiners. In such cases, the similar requirements and procedures are followed as for the PhD.

An oral examination is required for a PhD degree, except in exceptional cases where sufficient motivation is given. In the case of advanced PhD degrees where it is required to publish scientific work(s), and the research makes a significant and high-level contribution to the enrichment of the knowledge in the relevant field of study, an oral examination is not required. The Senate must approve this waiver.

The oral examination is administered by the examiners and deals with:

1. the dissertation; and
2. the dissertation-related field that was agreed beforehand.

The oral examination is administered by at least two of the three examiners. Should an external examiner not be able to participate, his or her comments and questions must be sent to the non-examining chair of the examination committee prior to the oral exam so that they can be posed during the oral.



Note: Candidates are expected **not** to contact examiners about any aspect of the thesis/dissertation after final submission and before the announcement of the result. Students and/or supervisors who make themselves guilty of such misconduct may be prosecuted through disciplinary means.

4.8 Ownership of research



Note: Any research results, as well as any other information collected during a student's study at the Faculty of Education of the University of Stellenbosch, remains the property of the University. Should the results or a portion of the thesis or dissertation be published in an accredited education journal, it must be done in cooperation with the relevant supervisor(s) and the name of the relevant department and faculty must be mentioned.

- a) The University strongly encourages students who are busy with research to make contributions in the form of papers or poster presentations at conferences in the relevant field.
- b) The University encourages lecturers who work closely with their research students to, as co-authors with their students, excerpt articles for journals of international quality from their theses or dissertations and publish such under the address of the University.
- c) Wherever at all applicable and possible, the University encourages departments to strive to have one or more publications from a master's thesis published in an accredited journal.
- d) The University requests supervisors to encourage their PhD candidates, where possible and applicable and with consideration given to the University's requirements in this regard, to submit one or more articles about their research results for publication in accredited journals before entering them for examination, or thereafter.
- e) Leave to publish research results from theses/dissertations must be obtained from the relevant dean/vice-dean or his/her delegate, on recommendation of the departmental chair and the supervisor/promoter.
- f) Students must be reminded to explicitly report their attachment to the University of Stellenbosch in these publications, otherwise the University forfeits any subsidy from these publications.

4.9 Publication of master's research essays and theses

The ruling policy regarding the ownership of intellectual property (e.g. copyright) created during the normal course and scope of studies at the university is also applicable to master's degree students.

If a candidate completes an assignment to obtain a master's degree that carries a weight of 25% or more of the final mark, or if s/he completes a thesis, and if the assignment or thesis is not otherwise published within three years of the student obtaining the degree, the University has the right to publish the assignment or thesis (or a portion thereof) without consultation with the candidate. In the case of a classified assignment or thesis, the beginning of the abovementioned three-year period is calculated from the date of declassification.

Leave to publish

Leave to publish must be obtained from the relevant dean or his/her delegate, based on the recommendation of the departmental chair and the supervisor. The above rules apply within the context of the University's policy to encourage its master's candidates to publish and/or otherwise announce their research results before or after submission of their assignments or theses. Departmental chairs must request authors and co-authors to publish journal articles under the address of the relevant Faculty and University as far as possible.

Published assignment or thesis

When a master's assignment or thesis, as approved by the University, is published, the following two (2) items must appear on the title page:

Item 1

Either the "research assignment" formula or the "thesis" formula indicated below, depending on the case, presented in a suitably completed form:

English formula:

"Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of ... (e.g. Philosophy) in the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University".

(Please note: the term "partial" is only used in this formula if it is not a 100% thesis, or when it is a 100% thesis, and an oral examination is also required for the completion of the study).

Afrikaans formula:

"Tesis ingelewer ter gedeeltelike voldoening aan die vereistes vir die graad van Magister in ... (bv. die Lettere en Wysbegeerte) in die Fakulteit Opvoedkunde aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch."

(Let wel: die term 'gedeeltelike' word slegs gebruik indien dit nie 'n 100% tesis is nie, of indien dit 'n 100% tesis is maar 'n mondelinge eksamen benodig word om die program te voltooi).

Item 2

The year and date of submission.

Mention in foreword.

Should a thesis be significantly changed according to the judgement of the relevant department when it is published, the aforementioned formula on the title page must be replaced by a suitable mention in the foreword.

4.10 Publication of dissertations

All enrolled doctoral candidates are subject to the University's rules for the publication of dissertations or portions thereof.

The ruling policy regarding the ownership of intellectual property (e.g. copyright) created during the normal course and scope of their study at the university is also applicable to doctoral students.

Candidates are encouraged to publish or otherwise announce their research results before or after submission of their dissertations. Leave to publish must be obtained from the relevant dean or his/her delegate, based on the recommendation of the departmental chair and the supervisor. Departmental chairs must request authors and co-authors to publish journal articles under the address of the relevant Faculty and University as far as possible.

The University reserves the right to publish a dissertation (or part thereof) completed in obtaining a relevant degree, without compensation to the candidate, should it not be otherwise published within three years of obtaining the degree. In the case of a classified dissertation, the beginning of the three-year period is calculated from the date of declassification.

When the dissertation is published, as approved by the University, the title page must contain the following formula:

"Dissertation approved for the degree of Doctor of ... (e.g. Philosophy) at Stellenbosch University.
Promoter: ..."

"Proefskrif goedgekeur vir die graad Doktor in ... (bv. die Wysbegeerte) aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Promotor: ..."

Furthermore, the year and date of submission must be indicated on the title page. Should a dissertation be significantly altered according to the judgement of the relevant supervisor when it is published, the aforementioned formula on the title page must be replaced by a suitable mention in the foreword.

5. RESOURCES FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Completing a master's or PhD study is a lonely road and students may feel that they do not want to contact their supervisors for minor issues. In the Faculty of Education, workshops and seminars are organised to support postgraduate students. It is a good idea to attend a few of these, because you encounter other students who share your journey. If you can establish support networks, your journey will not feel as lonely.

The faculty workshops and postgraduate sessions are recorded and are available on the Postgraduate Support Initiative team on MS Teams.

You can also consult a number of other sources, as listed below.

5.1 Web pages and blogs

The University has useful websites for postgraduate students:

[Postgraduate Welcoming and Orientation](#)

[Research Related Resources](#)

The following web pages have been suggested by students and staff in our faculty:

- [Enhancing Postgraduate Environments](#)
- [The Thesis Whisperer](#)
- [Doctoral Writing - WordPress](#)
- [PatThomson.net](#)
- [Cecile Badenhorst - WordPress](#)
- [Doctoral Research by Distance - WordPress](#)
- [Doctoral Research by Distance - Facebook](#)

5.2 YouTube videos

You are welcome to have a look at the YouTube videos of [Shannon Mason](#), [Cecile Badenhorst](#) and [Nick Hopwood](#).

5.3 X, formerly known as Twitter

A search for [#PhDchat](#) may provide helpful tips and resources.

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Guidelines for Master's or Doctoral Research Proposals

CHECK LIST

Please include this information when submitting your proposal.

DID YOU...	✓
Follow the guidelines of the faculty for master's or doctoral studies?	
Discuss the submitted proposal with your supervisor(s)?	
In the case of doctoral studies, have you received formative input from the relevant departmental committee? (please include this feedback in your submission to SCRPS)	
Keep the proposal (<i>including references</i>) within the prescribed length of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4000 – 6000 words for master's proposals • 6000 - 8000 words for doctoral proposals 	
Check the proposal thoroughly for any language/technical errors?	

Candidate Title, Initials, Surname

--

Department

--

Provisional supervisor

Provisional co-supervisor

--	--

Programme

Kindly highlight the relevant programme.

MEd (Educational Psychology)	MEd (Educational Support)
MPhil (Higher Education Studies)	MPhil (Lifelong Learning)
MEd (Research)	MPhil (Research)
PhD	

Registration Status (PhD only)

Kindly highlight the appropriate response.

Registration <i>without</i> a title	Proposal submission to register <i>with</i> a title
-------------------------------------	---

Signatures

Supervisor		Date	
Co-supervisor		Date	
Chair: Department / M&D Committee		Date	

1. REVIEW OF YOUR PROPOSAL

1.1 Please note that the critical readers of your proposal will use the following criteria in order to determine the academic merit of your proposal:

- a) The **background as outlined in the proposal** provides sufficient information to understand the context of the research problem.
- b) The **provisional literature review** demonstrates that the candidate can manage and present information in a scientific way and that s/he has a basic understanding of the nature of existing research related to the research problem. That is:
 - information from different relevant sources (nationally and internationally) is presented in an integrated way.
 - it contains important findings and views of at least two or three core (national and international) authors.
 - provides evidence that the most recent literature on the topic has been consulted.
 - scientific language is used to formulate an argument and relevant, appropriate evidence from the literature is provided to substantiate the argument.
- c) The **research problem** is defined in a way that allows for a viable research project. That is:
 - the scope of the research is appropriate for a master's or doctoral level of study.
 - the candidate will have access to relevant data.
- d) The **research question** is focused and significant in the context of the discipline.
- e) The **methodology** fits the research problem in a way that will enable the candidate to generate data that may realistically contribute to answering the research question(s).
- f) The methodology is described in a way that the reader can assess whether the candidate understands the **research process**. That is:
 - description of the nature and selection of the **target group or documents** (data sources) contains sufficient information to convince the reader that the specific group of people or documents will provide trustworthy and relevant information.
 - the **paradigm, research design and method of data collection** is clear, as well as an indication of the **measuring instrument(s)** that will be used.
 - all decisions related to the research paradigm, design, sampling and data collection method(s) are motivated with reference to relevant research literature.
 - the intended method of data **analysis** is mentioned (it is understood that a full description is usually not possible at this stage of the process).
 - Consideration of **criteria for ensuring the quality of the study** (for example, validity and reliability; or credibility and trustworthiness as applicable to the study), even though it is understood that a full detailed account of how the criteria used will be implemented during the study may not be possible.
- g) After reading everything that was set out under point f, the reader knows **how the candidate** intends to conduct the research.
- h) The **timeframe** for the study is realistic.
- i) The **reference list** indicates sufficient provisional exploration of relevant and recent literature nationally and internationally.
- j) **Ethical clearance** (if required) and **institutional permission** (if required) can reasonably be expected to be granted. (Please note that this is not required at the proposal stage, but it might be necessary to consider the viability of the research from this perspective.)

1.2 The outcome of the review will generally take the form of one of the following:

- a) Accept
- b) Accept with revisions to the satisfaction of the supervisor(s).
- c) Resubmit to SCRPS (for doctoral studies) or the relevant departmental M&D committee (for master's studies) for electronic circulation and consideration by reviewers only.
- d) Resubmit to SCRPS (doctoral studies) or the relevant departmental M&D committee (master's studies) for consideration by the whole committee at the next meeting.
- e) Refer back to the department (in the case of doctoral studies).

1.3 Feedback

SCRPS (in the case of doctoral studies) or the relevant departmental M&D committee (in the case of master's and doctoral studies) may also choose to provide detailed formative feedback based on proposal presentations and discussions aimed at assisting students in developing defensible research projects. This feedback will be shared with supervisors via the chair of the relevant committee.

2. USE THE HEADINGS BELOW TO GUIDE YOU IN PREPARING YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Important:

Keep to the limit of:

- 4000 – 6000 words for master's proposals
 - 6000 - 8000 words for doctoral proposals
- Word counts above include references*

Type in Arial size 12 font; 1.5 spacing.

a. **Proposed title of the study**

Maximum 16 words

b. **Motivation for the proposed research**

For example: Why is this study necessary? What is the background or context that has led to the need for this study? In what possible ways will the study make an original and conceptual contribution (particularly in the case of a PhD)? Include references to literature to illustrate points made.

c. **Statement of the problem**

For example: briefly state the central research problem and provide the hypothesis/es, research aim(s)/objectives, research question, sub-questions, etc. if and where applicable. This section should clearly focus your research.

d. **Preliminary literature review and theoretical perspectives**

For example: Who are the key authors on the topic, and how is their work influencing the gap(s) that have been identified and the lines of argument followed? Provide evidence of both foundational and recent cutting-edge scholarly work consulted. What is the theoretical point(s) of departure that will be used as a lens to interpret the findings of the study? How does the selected lens link to the research questions and methodology? If the research design warrants that no specific theoretical position is taken (for example, in the case of grounded theory type studies, or when abductive forms of reasoning will be employed), is the reasoning behind these choices explicitly explained?

e. **Research methodology**

For example: How will the study be done? What will be your research approach, methodology, method(s), and what types of data will you use? Provide sufficient information here for the proposals committee to judge whether your methodology fits your research question. How will data be generated and analysed? Target population and sampling?

f. **Provisional chaptering and proposed time schedule**

g. **Ethical considerations**

For example: What ethical issue (s) does the study involve and how will this be handled? Do you need gatekeeper permission? Consult your department for the necessary documentation. You may also want to consider your own positionality within the study, if necessary.

h. **Ensuring the quality of the study**

For example: Quality measures concerning issues validity, reliability, credibility, trustworthiness etc. as applicable.

i. **Any additional information** to make the proposal clearer.

j. **Reference list or bibliography**

The list of references at the end of your proposal should include all the books, journal articles, email messages, web pages, and other information sources that you have consulted and that have been cited in the text.

Please see the draft interim [SU guidelines on allowable AI use](#). Should you have made use of AI systems in the writing of your proposal, kindly include the [necessary citation](#) or indicate as such by completing a declaration using the following format:

I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s) and link] to [specific use of generative artificial intelligence]. The prompts used include [list of prompts]. The output from these prompts was used to [explain use].

3. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN PREPARING FOR YOUR PROPOSAL PRESENTATION

A PowerPoint presentation is recommended to facilitate clear and organized communication. Candidates should ensure that each slide is logical and not overloaded with information. The presentation should be concise, with supervisors providing guidance in structuring the slides, though the content and presentation are ultimately the responsibility of the candidate. This presentation reflects the candidate's scholarly effort and research journey.

We recommend the following layout for the presentation, comprising of six slides:

- Slide 1: Title, Name
- Slide 2: Introduction, Background, Problem Statement, Research Questions, Aim, and Objectives of the study.
- Slide 3: Literature review and theoretical/conceptual framework. This slide should address key constructs in the literature, existing gaps, and the intended contribution of the study to the body of knowledge.
- Slide 4: Methodological considerations, including the research paradigm, design, and methods.
- Slide 5: Ethical considerations and trustworthiness (for qualitative studies) or validity and reliability (for quantitative studies).
- Slide 6: Overview of logistical and practical considerations for conducting the study.

If you are doing an in-person presentation, make sure of the venue and time ahead of time and arrive at least 10 minutes beforehand. Wait outside the venue until invited in by the chair of the committee.

If you are doing an online presentation, please do a trial run of your presentation (preferably with your supervisor/s) to make sure you know how the MS Teams platform works and how to do a PowerPoint presentation therein. Also ensure that you have a stable internet connection and adequate bandwidth during the time of your presentation.

In the case of doctoral students presenting at SCRPS, please ensure that your presentation is sent to **Ms Carren Thom** (carren@sun.ac.za) *at least 24 hours prior to the meeting* so it may be uploaded prior to the meeting in order to save time during the meeting.

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Between Postgraduate thesis student and Supervisor(s)

The aim of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) is to give the postgraduate student and supervisor an opportunity to develop a sound and productive working relationship. The MoU should be the result of a discussion in the early stages of the relationship, during which both student and supervisor can clarify expectations and preferences, surface any misunderstandings or misaligned expectations, and cover some topics that will be important at different phases of the working relationship.

A completed and signed student – supervisor MoU is a required document (approved by Senate 8 March 2019) for all postgraduate students where there is a supervisor appointed.

This MoU must be completed and submitted to the Head of the Department within one month after the date of registration to be kept on file; an annual **'progress and planned activity'** report must be completed each subsequent year before the student renews his/her registration.

STUDENT INFORMATION	
NAME OF STUDENT	
STUDENT NUMBER	
EMAIL ADDRESS	
DEGREE PROGRAMME	

SUPERVISOR INFORMATION	
NAME OF SUPERVISOR	
TELEPHONE NUMBER	
EMAIL ADDRESS	

CO-SUPERVISOR INFORMATION <i>(if applicable)</i>	
NAME OF SUPERVISOR	
UNIVERSITY	
DEPARTMENT	
TELEPHONE NUMBER	
EMAIL ADDRESS	

The signatures below serve to confirm that all parties agree to the role and responsibilities as set out in this Memorandum of Understanding:

	NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
STUDENT			
SUPERVISOR			
CO-SUPERVISOR			

Code of Conduct

Stellenbosch University publishes a **Code of Conduct** in the Calendar (Policies and Rules, Part 1, General). The following is extracted from this source and is meant as a reference to guide the relationship between you and your supervisor to help to ensure that the relationship is conducive to successful studies at the University. It consists of a set of undertakings or commitments and responsibilities.

Undertakings by the student, University, and supervisor

- The candidate undertakes to stay informed of the infrastructure and the accompanying rules of the department concerned (with the requisite inputs from the supervisor).
- The University undertakes not to select a candidate for a specific project without confirming beforehand in writing with the faculty concerned that the project may be undertaken. Specifics regarding the responsibility for the required funds and relevant infrastructure shall be indicated.
- The candidate shall acquaint himself/herself with the guidelines for recording research, as is generally accepted within the discipline concerned, with the aid of the supervisor.
- The candidate shall confirm that he/she possesses, or will acquire, the computer skills to complete the project in a satisfactory manner.
- Pre-thesis work, as required by the faculty and supervisor, shall be completed in an agreed period of time.
- A work schedule for each candidate has to be drawn up within a reasonable time (as a rule within 60 days) in consultation with the supervisor. The schedule shall include target dates for, among others, the submission of a research proposal, the completion of a literature survey, the completion of specific chapters and the submission of progress reports. Times of absence (study leave, university holidays, etc.) shall also be included.
- During the academic year, regular meetings on fixed dates shall be scheduled between the candidate and the supervisor.
- The supervisor and student shall report on progress and future planning twice per year in writing to the departmental chair, with a copy to the postgraduate coordinator. (The report form will be sent to supervisors via their students.)
- All submitted work shall be returned to the candidate by the supervisor within a reasonable time, but not exceeding 60 days for a complete thesis/dissertation.
- The candidate is responsible for the technical and language editing of the thesis prior to submitting.
- When a project is near completion, the candidate shall make the necessary submissions in accordance with the requirements for graduation within the discipline concerned. (Refer specifically to the University Almanac as set out in this Part of the University Calendar, to ensure that theses/dissertations are finalised and examined in time for the various graduation ceremonies in December and March.)
- The candidate undertakes to produce suitable outputs (such as publications, patents, reports), as agreed upon with the supervisor. The candidate shall acquaint him/herself with the faculty policy regarding authorship in the discipline regarding authorship.
- If there is co-authorship of article/s, the candidate will be acknowledged in all publications arising out of the study. Ordinarily, if the published work is based on the candidate's research or thesis, the candidate will be the first author. Authorship and author status depends on level of contribution to the article.
- Where applicable, the candidate and the supervisor shall acquaint themselves with the requirements regarding intellectual property in the environment concerned.

Responsibilities of the supervisor	Responsibilities of the candidate
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To familiarise himself/herself with procedures and regulations. 2. To establish a research environment in which the student can feel empowered to tackle the research project. 3. To establish a relationship with the student. 4. To give advice about project choice and planning. 5. To discuss intellectual property and publications. 6. To ensure that facilities, where relevant, are available. 7. To provide research training, including training for ethical research procedures. 8. To consult with the student, to monitor progress continually and to provide structured feedback. 9. To be aware of the student's situation and needs. 10. To arrange for study guidance during periods of absence. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To familiarise himself/herself with the University regulations regarding postgraduate studies and to abide by these regulations. 2. To undertake research with dedication. 3. To develop initiative and independence. 4. To keep complete records of research results. 5. To establish a relationship with the supervisor. 6. To gain feedback by means of reports and seminars and to act on it. 7. To do a literature survey and to keep abreast of new literature. 8. To develop appropriate research methodological approaches and concomitant research ethical procedures. 9. To report on research in an ethically responsible and sensitive way. 10. To benefit from the research environment. 11. To inform the appropriate authorities of academic and non-academic problems. 12. To prepare and write the thesis or the dissertation. 13. To prepare and write publications, patents, and reports.

Managing the project

How do we want to work together? What are our expectations and assumptions about our roles? Use the questions below to clarify expectations, even if you do not want to answer as specifically as in the examples below.

1) Meetings and communication

How often do we want scheduled meetings to take place?

2) Timelines and progress reports

Expectations regarding a project plan or timeline

3) Submission of work to supervisor, feedback and revision

Expectations regarding written submission of chapters and drafts

4) Expected Outputs

What are the expected outputs the student needs to deliver through the course of his or her candidature and thereafter?

5) Expectations around intellectual property

What are the expectations regarding intellectual property?

6) Expectations regarding Skills and Knowledge

What knowledge or skills does the student have the responsibility to acquire before or during the study period?

7) Expectations regarding funding

Who will cover the costs related to studies and research? Indicate any scholarships and bursaries with timeframes, and how this might affect studies and research. Indicate any obligations or responsibilities in terms of scholarships and bursaries.

8) Expectations regarding work in the Department/Faculty/University

- a. Academic work
- b. Career plans

9) Ground rules and regulations

List any specific rules or regulations that the student should be aware of.

10) Mechanisms for dealing with disputes

Please see the Postgraduate Student Guide.

11) Managing co-supervision

Discuss the role of the co-supervisor and expectations about communicating with the co-supervisor. Include the co-supervisor in this part of the MoU.

Faculty of Education / MoU 2020