

Doctoral Graduate Attributes

1 Broad Knowledge

The graduate has acquired well-informed relevant knowledge in the selected field or discipline. Through an original contribution achieved through independent study, the graduate integrates new with existing knowledge, thereby advancing the frontiers of knowledge. In addition to being well-informed about and well-versed in the literature in a chosen field, the graduate is able to make a contribution to the relevant evolving debates in the field.

2 Specialised Knowledge

The graduate demonstrates expert, specialised, and in-depth current knowledge of a specific area of research, which will be evident in the thesis or equivalent.

3 Insight into Related Fields

The graduate demonstrates awareness of how the specific area of research relates, or is relatable, to other fields of study and practice which will be evident in the doctoral work.

4 Ethical Awareness

The graduate demonstrates awareness of, and compliance with, the principles of ethics in research and, where relevant, professional protocols, which will be evident in the in-depth discussion in the thesis or equivalent.

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5 Original Contribution

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The graduate shows evidence of original and innovative thinking in research and, where applicable, creative practice and/or performance, which makes a special and novel contribution to the field of study.

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6 Appropriate Methodologies

The graduate demonstrates knowledge of, and the ability to create and introduce, where appropriate, and to evaluate, select and apply relevant research designs, approaches, methodologies, instruments, and procedures, appropriate for the doctoral work undertaken.

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7 Reflection and Autonomy

The graduate demonstrates ability to conceptualise and reflect critically, work independently, and arrive at defensible conclusions and solutions, based on appropriately-substantiated and defensible premises and analysis.

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8 Communication and Digital Literacy Skills

The graduate demonstrates an advanced level of communicative competence through capacity for rigorous academic writing, including relevant digital literacy skills, and ability to relate individual research with reference to, and critical analysis of, related research by scholars in the relevant knowledge domain(s). The graduate is able to communicate, defend and disseminate their research findings effectively to expert and non-expert audiences.

The graduate demonstrates ability to conduct research-related critical and analytical thinking, which shows an intellectual competence for problem-solving in diverse contexts, both familiar and unfamiliar.

In 2018, South Africa's Council for Higher Education (CHE) released a Qualification Standard for Doctoral Degrees. The Standard prescribes a set of nine graduate attributes - five knowledge attributes and four skills attributes - that doctoral graduates must master to meet the degree requirements. The graduate attributes will be assessed within the context of the purpose of the qualification. The purpose and level of the qualification will have been achieved when all the attributes are evident. It is thus important for all doctoral candidates to ensure that they keep these attributes in mind and consider how they will develop these throughout their doctoral journey.