**Higher Education Qualifications
Sub-Framework**

Qualification Standard

for

Doctoral degrees

The process of drafting this standard is described in the Introduction.

November 2018

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is an independent statutory body established by the Higher Education Act, no. 101 of 1997 (amended). The CHE is the Quality Council for Higher Education, advises the Minister of Higher Education and Training on all higher education issues and is responsible for quality assurance and promotion through the Higher Education Quality Committee.

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HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK

STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT: POLICY AND PROCESS

Introduction

National policy and legislative context

In terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, 67 of 2008, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) is the Quality Council (QC) for Higher Education. The CHE is responsible for quality assurance of higher education qualifications.

Part of the implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) is the development of qualification standards. The HEQSF, in turn assigns to the CHE the responsibility for developing standards for all higher education qualifications. Fundamental aspects of standards development – the legislative background, the aim of qualification standards, the principles and characteristics that influence standards development, what can and cannot be expected of qualification standards, and the prescriptive scope of standards vis-à-vis institutional autonomy and disciplinary responsibility – these aspects are set out in the CHE *Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education* (2013).

Standards development is aligned with the *nested approach* incorporated in the HEQSF. In this approach, the outer layer providing the context for qualification standards are the NQF level descriptors developed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in agreement with the relevant QC. One of the functions of the QC (in the case of higher education, the CHE) is to ensure that the NQF level descriptors 'remain current and appropriate'. The development of qualification standards for higher education therefore needs to take the NQF level descriptors, as the outer layer in the *nested approach*, into account. An ancillary function is to ensure that they 'remain current and appropriate' in respect of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions. This means that they need to be responsive to the distinctive features of each field of study.

A secondary layer for the context in which qualification standards are developed is the HEQSF. This framework specifies the types of qualification that may be awarded and, in some cases, the allowable variants of the qualification type. An example of variants is the provision for two variants of the Doctoral degree: the Doctoral degree (without modifier) and the Doctoral degree (with the modifier 'Professional'). The HEQSF also specifies the purpose and characteristics of each qualification type. However, as indicated in the *Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education* (CHE, 2013), neither NQF level descriptors nor the HEQSF is intended fully to address, or indeed capable of addressing, the relationship between generic qualification-type purpose and the specific characteristics of that qualification type. One of the tasks of standards development is to reconcile the broad, generic description of a qualification type according to

the HEQSF and the particular characteristics of qualifications awarded in diverse fields of study and disciplines, as defined by various descriptors and qualifiers.

<u>Framework for standards development</u>

The development of qualification standards is guided by the principles, protocols and methodology outlined in the *Framework*, approved by the Council in March 2013. As stated in the *Framework*, higher education standards aim 'to play a meaningful role not only in establishing benchmarks for ***assuring*** quality, but also in ***developing*** quality in the sector, while recognising the fundamental importance for higher education institutions to promote their own internal processes of quality assurance.'

The focus of a standards statement is the relationship between the purpose of the qualification, the attributes of a graduate that manifest the purpose, and the contexts and conditions for assessment of those attributes. It is a **threshold** statement, establishing minimum criteria for the award of the relevant qualification. On the grounds that a standard also plays a developmental role, the statement may include, as appropriate, elaboration of terms specific to the statement, guidelines for achievement of the graduate attributes, and recommendations for above-threshold practice.

A qualification standard is a statement that indicates how the purpose of the qualification, and the level on the NQF at which it is awarded, are represented in the learning domains, assessment contexts, and graduate attributes that are typical for the award of the qualification. Qualification standards are not the same, in either scope or effect, as other modalities used for the establishment of standards in higher education, for example, resource allocation standards, teaching and learning standards, or standards used for the grading of individual students. Matters such as actual curriculum design, tuition standards and standards for resource allocation for a programme are the responsibility of the institution awarding the qualification. Nor does the standard prescribe the duration of study for the qualification. It establishes the NQF level on which it is awarded, and confirms the minimum number of credits as set by the HEQSF. The standard relates to all programmes leading to the qualification, irrespective of the mode of delivery, the curriculum structure, and whether or not a prior qualification at a lower or the same level on the NQF is a prerequisite.

The standard aims to be accessible and beneficial to all relevant parties: the institutions awarding the qualifications, the CHE as quality assurer of the qualifications, the students and graduates of those qualifications, and their prospective employers.

The process of development

The drafting of this standards statement is the work of a group of academic experts with experience in the supervision and assessment of Doctoral studies. They were invited after consultation with the institutions offering Doctoral programmes, following which a Reference Group was convened by the CHE. Members of the Group participate in their individual capacity, not as representatives of any institutions or organisations.

The Group met on a number of occasions during the period 2017-2018, and the standard statement has been through a number of iterations and revisions. In April 2018 a draft version was disseminated to the higher education institutions and the National Research Foundation (NRF) for narrow consultation. A revised draft version was later disseminated for public comment in October 2018. Comments and recommendations received were taken into account by the Reference Group. The standard, therefore, is cognisant of generic academic interests, as well as the diversity of institutional contexts and disciplinary diversity in which Doctoral studies are conducted. This standard statement was formally approved by the Higher Education Quality Committee ((HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education on 8 November 2018.

The HEQSF currently provides for two variants of the Doctoral degree. The characteristics of the two variants, as established by the HEQSF, are set out below. In this Standard statement, the variants are referred to as the Doctoral degree (General)[1] and the Doctoral degree (Professional).

Doctoral degree (General)

CHARACTERISTICS

The doctorate provides training for an academic career.[2] It requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis. However, candidates may also present peer-reviewed academic articles and papers, and, in certain fields, creative work such as artefacts, compositions, public performances and public exhibitions in partial fulfilment of the research requirements. Coursework may be required as preparation or value addition to the research, but does not contribute to the credit value of the qualification. The defining characteristic of this qualification is that the candidate is required to demonstrate high level research capability and to make a significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline or field. The work must be of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication. The degree may be earned through pure discipline-based or multidisciplinary research or applied research. This degree requires a minimum of two years' full-time study, usually after completing a Master's Degree. A graduate should be able to supervise and evaluate the research of others in the area of specialisation concerned.

An additional type of doctorate, the Higher Doctorate, may be awarded on the basis of a distinguished record of research in the form of published works, creative works and/or other scholarly contributions that are judged by leading international experts to make an exceptional and independent contribution to one or more disciplines or fields of study.[3]

(*Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework*, CHE, 2013)

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[1] In the HEQSF this variant, unlike the Professional variant, is not accompanied by a modifier. The modifier 'General' is used here simply for convenience, to distinguish it from the Professional variant. No connotations beyond the specifications in the HEQSF are implied by the use of the term, nor does it imply any limitation on specialisation, as reflected in designators and qualifiers.

[2] Since the promulgation of the HEQSF, the labour market for doctoral graduates has expanded beyond that of an academic career. Refer to Annexure B.

[3] All Doctoral qualifications are awarded at NQF level 10, and must therefore meet this Standard, whether awarded on the basis of a single thesis, or a publication-based thesis, or a thesis accompanied by coursework or/and work-integrated learning, or of a combination of publications, creative work or other scholarly contributions. Where a submission comprises more than one form or unit of work, there should appropriate evidence of coherence.

Doctoral degree (Professional)

<u>CHARACTERISTICS</u>

The professional doctorate provides education and training for a career in the professions and/or industry and is designed around the development of high level performance and innovation in a professional context. Candidates are required to undertake a combination of coursework and advanced research leading to the submission, assessment and acceptance of a research component comprising an original thesis or another form of research that is commensurate with the nature of the discipline or field and the specific area of enquiry. The research component should comprise at least 60% of the degree. Professional doctorates may also include appropriate forms of work-integrated learning. The defining characteristic of this qualification is that in addition to the demonstration of high level research capability it requires the ability to integrate theory with practice through the application of theoretical knowledge to highly complex problems in a wide range of professional contexts.

(Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework, CHE, 2013)

STANDARD FOR A DOCTORAL DEGREE

1. PREAMBLE AND RATIONALE

The doctorate is globally recognised as the apex qualification. It is in principle therefore also the most internationally transferable qualification. South Africa's doctorates are commonly regarded as equivalent to those produced anywhere. This standard is designed to help ensure that the higher education institutions in South Africa not only maintain the standing of their doctoral programmes and graduates, but seek, through innovation and enhancement, to develop their procedures and quality assurance.

The 1990s saw a marked global increase of interest in the doctorate from universities themselves, science councils and government. This increase has a number of causes, but significant amongst them is the idea of the knowledge economy and the importance it places on a steady supply of high level new knowledge for innovation and sustained growth. Almost all countries consequently prioritised an increase in doctoral growth, including those in Africa, though at a slower rate. South Africa's BRICS partners Brazil, China and India are just three countries which have dramatically enhanced their doctoral numbers. South Africa too has seen a fairly marked growth in doctoral numbers: between 1996 and 2012/13, graduates increased by an average of 6.4% per annum, higher than growth at any other degree level (Cloete et. al., 2015, pg. 181).

This growth rate began to rise in 2008 when the new subsidy formula for doctoral study, introduced in 2005, began to have an effect. This policy subsidised doctoral graduates at a far higher rate than other graduates, providing a sharp incentive for doctoral degree increases. The priority of doctoral study also received a boost from the projections by two authoritative sources: The Department of Science and Technology's (DST) 'Ten Year Innovation Plan 2008 – 2018' had declared that South Africa needed to increase its rate 'by a factor of 5 over the next 10 – 20 years' (DST, 2008, pg. 29); and the National Planning Commission's (NPC) National Development Plan (2012) estimated that South Africa needed 100 PhDs per 1 million of the population by 2030, from a then-current low of 28 per million. The NDP recognised the importance of the PhD for the development of innovation in the country, for transformation of the graduate cohort, and for the mission of universities in a high skills economy. Despite some doctoral growth, South Africa is not on track to meet these projections. Nevertheless, compared to South Africa's global peers, this growth rate falls far short of the number of doctorates deemed necessary for transformation and high skills growth.

Global growth has brought about an increasing diversity of the student cohort in both background and preparedness, as well as increased student mobility, which has led to attempts at the trans-national level to set doctoral benchmarks. The set of 'Dublin' descriptors for the

Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area is one such example (JQI, 2014); the proposed Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework is another (Japtha & Samuels, 2017). Both are mechanisms for setting generic benchmarks. Indeed, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is seen as taking a lead in these initiatives in the southern African region. In considering the drafting of this doctoral standard, due consideration was given to these and other international models, including the European (EUA, 2005), British (QAA, 2015) and Australian (TEQSA, 2015) models and a variety of qualification frameworks of other countries. Globally there has been, in recent decades, considerable attention given national qualification frameworks; over 140 countries, including many in Africa, have been involved in their development and implementation (CEDEFOP, 2013). Qualification standards expand on the detail normally contained in qualification frameworks by aligning level descriptors with the purpose of a qualification, the attributes required of a graduate, and the contexts and conditions in which those attributes are assessed.

In South Africa, there is evidence that increased growth and diversity leads to a greater burden on the supervisory corps; they supervise more students and they increasingly supervise outside their areas of expertise (Cloete et. al., 2015, pg. 185). This is a phenomenon found not only in South Africa. Elsewhere, increased diversity has led to new pedagogic models and approaches, such as more taught components; integrated programmes, with workshops and training programmes; professional and practice-based approaches; and summer and winter schools. In South Africa, although there is certainly some experimentation with innovations and models for delivery, the evidence suggests that these initiatives comply with the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework's (HEQSF) stipulation of either a (general) doctorate, or a professional doctorate, both of which must demonstrate the same level of research-related intellectual achievement at the exit level (Council on Higher Education, 2013). Despite increased pressure, the evidence suggests that the one-on-one supervisory model remains the dominant one (Cloete et. al., 2015, pg. 190). Possibilities in this regard are constrained, too, by the fact that 60% of doctoral candidates at South African institutions study *part time* for the doctoral degree (op. cit., pg. 187). This has a direct impact on the throughput rate.

Currently, responsibility for quality for all aspects of the doctoral studies process resides with the institution, overseen by the HEQC. Quality is an issue frequently raised but rarely addressed directly. The public sees reports of fake degrees, and institutions see an increasing number of theses returned for revision and further examination, which some interpret as a consequence of dropping standards, poor supervision, or both. The nodes in the doctoral cycle at which quality can be judged include at least the following (adapted from Cloete et. al., 2015):

- the quality of the *candidate* at entry level (commonly dealt with by means of screening and selection processes, and also pre-registration preparedness programmes);
- the quality of the *doctoral programme* (including standards for acceptance of the proposal and progress monitoring);
- the quality of the *supervisor* (qualifications and experience), and the supervisory process;
- the quality of the doctoral *graduate* at exit level (including but not confined to employability);

- the quality of the *thesis* (quality of examiners and their reports);
- the quality of any *outputs* for the PhD (journal articles and citation rates).

The issue of quality arises with new urgency in contexts of high graduate growth as increased numbers require increased resources, both financial and human, to do justice to the increased educational load. South Africa is a country that has not increased resources at the same rate as some high performing countries. This creates a set of contradictory demands; for increasing numbers, without substantially increasing resources, and transforming the cohort to be more demographically representative, while, at the same time, maintaining or improving quality. It is in this context that ASSAf's (2010, pg. 6) recommendation 6 is significant:

> 'Apply strong quality assurance measures to the doctorate to prevent, on the one hand, irresponsible massification of the degree in the light of the substantial funding incentives for graduating PhDs; and, on the other hand, to deepen the quality of this final qualification across universities'.

The formulation of the doctoral standard is one such measure, which aims to set benchmarks for acceptable quality across the national higher education system, including both public and private institutions, on a par with global standards.

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2. <u>PURPOSE</u>

The purpose of studies towards the Doctoral degree is to develop the highest level of holistic and systematic understanding of scholarship in, and stewardship of, a field of study through an original contribution that advances the frontiers of knowledge. [4] In relevant cases the contribution may, in so doing, advance the frontiers of professional practice or/and creative activity.

The studies display mastery and development of appropriate research methods and skills[5], and pursuit of knowledge, that characterise the disciplinary, professional or inter-disciplinary discourse. This level of study aims for demonstration of the ability to engage independently in an extended course of research, showing thematic and conceptual coherence.

Such mastery and ability need to be embedded within an appropriate scholarly disposition, and the threshold attributes set out in this Standard ought to be demonstrated within this context. The graduate should represent the field of knowledge with critical and ethical integrity, assume a role as its custodian and steward, evince a scholarly curiosity, and be able, where relevant, to collaborate with peers from diverse academic backgrounds without compromising independent critical thinking. S/he has the ability to adapt to changing and varying contexts, and to serve as an agent of intellectual advancement. This is associated with an ability to engage with, and lead thinking, with local, national, regional and international research and/or professional communities and, where relevant, to seek benefit arising out of the research for any community or social group that was the subject of, or participated in, the research. In manifesting this scholarly disposition, the graduate exhibits intellectual autonomy, originality, authority, accountability, scholarly integrity, and ethical respect for, and application of, the relevant academic and/or professional codes of research and practice.

The Doctoral degree requires an original contribution to knowledge, which may – and, in the case of a Professional degree, should – contribute to the advancement of professional practice, and that can be disseminated to relevant parties in order to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the relevant field of study, discipline, profession, or creative domain.

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[4] 'Frontiers of knowledge' may have disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary characteristics.
[5] 'Appropriate research methods and skills' may include new, or modification of existing, methods and skills.

3. <u>NQF LEVEL AND CREDITS</u>

The exit level of the Doctoral qualification is **NQF Level 10**. The minimum number of credits allocated to the qualification is 360 credits, all credits being at NQF Level 10.

In the case of a Doctoral degree awarded entirely by research, all 360 credits are allocated to the thesis.[6] Coursework may be required as preparation or value addition to the research, but does not contribute to the credit value of the qualification.

In the case of a Doctoral degree (Professional), a combination of coursework and research may be offered. The research component should comprise at least 60 per cent of the degree. A Professional Doctorate may also include appropriate forms of work-integrated learning, which would normally be credit-bearing and integral with the topic of research.[7]

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[6] All credits are allocated integrally. There is no sub-allocation to various aspects of the research work, such as the research proposal or the literature review.

[7] All credits, including any credits allocated to coursework or/and work-integrated learning are awarded at NQF level 10 – refer to 'Contexts and Conditions for Supervision and Assessment of a Doctoral Qualification' below.

4. GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

The qualification may be awarded when the qualification standard has been met or exceeded. The purpose and level of the qualification will have been achieved when the following attributes are evident. The attributes are assessed within the context of the Purpose of the qualification.

Knowledge

Broad, well-informed, and current knowledge of field[8] or discipline

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[9] in a chosen field, the graduate is able to make a contribution to the relevant evolving debates in the field.

Expert, specialised, and in-depth current knowledge of specific area of research

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.[10]

Insight into the interconnectedness of one's topic of research with other cognate 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.

Ethical awareness in research and professional conduct

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.

An original contribution to the field of study

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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[8] 'Field' includes inter-, multi- or trans-disciplinary topics.

[9] Where relevant, 'literature' may include artefacts, visual or aural records, patents, musical scores, or records of creative performance.

[10] The graduate is expected, thus, to go beyond merely synthesizing relevant knowledge in the field or discipline.

<u>Skills</u>

Evaluation, selection and application of appropriate research approaches, methodologies, and processes in the pursuit of a research objective

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.

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.

Communication skills, including relevant information and digital literacy skills

The graduate demonstrates an advanced level of communicative competence, through capacity for extended, sustained and rigorous academic writing, including relevant digital literacy skills appropriate for doctoral research, and ability to relate individual research with reference to, and critical analysis of, associated research produced by scholars in the relevant intellectual and knowledge domain(s).

The graduate is able, as appropriate to the field of research, to communicate research findings effectively to expert and non-expert audiences alike, to defend them in the context of intellectual contestation, and to disseminate them in appropriate forms.

Critical and analytical thinking for problem-solving

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.

5. CONTEXTS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUPERVISION AND ASSESSMENT OF A DOCTORAL QUALIFICATION

The context and conditions of assessment of a Doctoral programme recognise developments internationally of broadening the scope of Doctoral studies from the traditional Doctorate that catered for the purely academic route to the more diverse forms that cater for professionals, leaders, managers and practitioners. There is also recognition of the national diversity of institutions, professions, and skills requirements which provide for a diverse range of characteristics of Doctorates. The traditional thesis-based form is complemented by forms grounded in professional practice, peer-reviewed publication, and creative works and performance.

Assessment is a critical element of the establishment of Doctoral degree standards. Based on defined outcomes of the Doctoral degree, it is important to evaluate achievements of the candidate and the relevance of the research being carried out. This will entail reviewing thoroughly the material submitted by the candidate. It is important that the candidate presents a coherent, rigorous and novel set of results as the output of a Doctoral degree.

Written research work is assessed by an examination panel that includes unaffiliated and independent examiners (international and/or national) of appropriate research and Doctoral examination standing. In the case of research work that is based on creative performance or artefact, this would include independent assessment by the same examiners of a representative selection of the performance or artefact combination on which the written research work is based. The same principle applies to any work on which Doctoral research is based that is not reducible to writing.

Submission of written research work is ideally accompanied by oral assessment, at which the candidate defends the work. In cases where oral assessment forms part of summative examination, an oral examination panel would typically include unaffiliated and independent examiners (international and/or national) of appropriate research standing. In all cases the awarding institution needs to demonstrate the procedures it has adopted to ensure that assessment provides for a thorough, rigorous and appropriate review and evaluation of the research output, in certifying the ownership and integrity of the work.

The following aspects must be clearly defined in the protocols for assessment of a Doctoral programme. Assessment, in this context, is construed broadly, to include all phases of study, from selection of candidates to the award of the qualification. Protocols must include overarching institutional policies together with any supplementary provisions applied at sub-institutional (faculty or department) levels. All references to 'policies' (below) should be construed to include information about criteria, standing orders, rules, regulations and procedures for the application of policy.

5.1 Institutional conditions

- Conditions of recruitment, selection and enrolment of students in the Doctoral programme, including, where applicable, procedures for the recognition of prior learning that provides evidence of current research competence[11].
- Policies for adequate supervision (the supervisor or supervisory team comprising experienced supervisor(s) with appropriate Doctoral qualification(s)[12], supervision and research record(s)). This must include coherence between the research expertise of the supervisor(s) and the research topic supervised.
- Policies for the appointment of supervisors, and the adequacy of supervision workloads.
- Policies for the roles and responsibilities of students and supervisors, including criteria for student/supervisor interaction.
- Provision for a developmental role for new/emerging supervisors, in the form of co-supervision under guidance from experienced supervisors.
- Adequate infrastructure for hosting a Doctoral programme in the relevant field(s) of study (library resources, and laboratories and specialised equipment, if applicable).
- Adequate provision for unusual circumstances, including, but not limited to: apparent conflicts of interest, student leave, extension as a consequence of indisposition, suspension of studies, exceeding the maximum period of enrolment, termination of enrolment.
- Policy and procedures for the research process: provisional admission; assessment and acceptance of the research proposal; approval of research design and methodology; ethical clearance.
- Policies governing the form(s) that are the subject(s) of final assessment appropriate for diverse types of research output: thesis, portfolio of research work, artefact(s), creative work or performance, clinical practice or other output. Policies should include criteria to ensure internal coherence and equivalence between different forms or combinations thereof.

5.2 Progress and review

- Institutional mechanism to monitor progression in studies: formal progression procedures that will normally be used to check the level of knowledge and skills or informally through discussions with the candidate's supervisor. This includes written submission and oral presentation.
- Policies governing the monitoring of students' progress and how records of monitoring are kept and applied to inform students of progress and to assist them accordingly.

5.3 Submission

- Policies on the minimum, typical and maximum duration of the Doctoral programme.

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[11] CHE policy prohibits the award of a qualification based wholly on RPL. The requirement that assessment must be 'appropriate to the particular modules' implies that RPL can be applied only in the case of coursework modules, if that applies, but not to research output. In a case of a Professional Degree where coursework is included, the HEQSF limits the credit allocation to 40 per cent of the total credits, meaning that, for a Doctoral qualification, RPL for coursework credit recognition is limited to 40 per cent of the credits.

[12] Exceptions must be based on clear and justifiable criteria.

- Policies on the submission process: the intention to submit, the research proposal, the regulations on submission procedures, and the thesis submission.
- Policies on the form and substance of the submission, and the evaluation of originality, coherence and contribution to knowledge in the context of diverse types of research production.
- Policies on any additional requirements over and above the submission of research work, such as peer-reviewed publication, if applicable.
- Policies on ensuring that the student's work is original, with adequate procedures for identifying, assessing and penalising proven instances of plagiarism.
- Policies for ensuring that any significant material assistance by others towards the completion of the thesis is declared.
- Satisfactory evidence that the implementation of submission policies is monitored and documented.

5.4 Final assessment

- Policy for the selection of examiners that guarantees expertise in relation to the topic of study, independence, integrity, fairness, reliability and rigour of the examination process, the number of examiners (internal and external), and criteria for selection.
- Policy for the coordination and approval of examiners' reports; criteria and responsibility for deciding to award the degree; quality assurance and consistency of standards applied across the institution.
- Where oral examination is part of the final assessment process, procedures for such oral evaluation/examination.
- Policy, and evidence of inter-institutional agreement, for the award of joint, dual and co-badged degrees.
- Evidence that there are appropriate measures for ensuring the security, validity and reliability of Doctoral certification.
- Provision and procedures for appeals against examination decisions.

5.5 Coursework

Policies for ensuring that all **credit-bearing** coursework (if applicable) is assessed at NQF Level 10, is relevant to the field or discipline of research undertaken by the student, and is externally examined.

5.6 Work-integrated learning

Policies for ensuring that **credit-bearing** work-integrated learning (if applicable) is appropriate, in terms of scope and complexity, for a Doctoral programme and relevance to the research topic, is assessed at NQF level 10, and that the awarding institution has suitable arrangements for the approval, monitoring and assessment of WIL. The policies should include provision for the external examination of credit-bearing WIL.

6. PROGRESSION

A Doctoral degree (including the Higher Doctorate) is the highest qualification type awarded within the qualification Framework.

(Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework)

NQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

The qualification is awarded at **level 10** on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and therefore meets the following level descriptors:

a. Scope of knowledge, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate expertise and critical knowledge in an area at the forefront of a field, discipline or practice; and the ability to conceptualise new research initiatives and create new knowledge or practice.
b. Knowledge literacy, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to contribute to scholarly debates around theories of knowledge and processes of knowledge production in an area of study or practice.
c. Method and procedure, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to develop new methods, techniques, processes, systems or technologies in original, creative and innovative ways appropriate to specialised and complex contexts.
d. Problem solving, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to apply specialist knowledge and theory in critically reflexive, creative and novel ways to address complex practical and theoretical problems.
e. Ethics and professional practice, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to identify, address and manage emerging ethical issues, and to advance processes of ethical decision-making, including monitoring and evaluation of the consequences of these decisions where appropriate.
f. Accessing, processing and managing information, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to make independent judgements about managing incomplete or inconsistent information or data in an iterative process of analysis and synthesis, for the development of significant original insights into new, complex and abstract ideas, information or issues.
g. Producing and communicating information, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to produce substantial, independent, in-depth and publishable work which meets international standards, is considered to be new or innovative by peers, and makes a significant contribution to the discipline, field, or practice; and the ability to develop a communication strategy to disseminate and defend research, strategic and policy initiatives and their implementation to specialist and non-specialist audiences using the full resources of an academic and professional or occupational discourse.
h. Context and systems, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of theoretical underpinnings in the management of complex systems to achieve systemic change; and the ability to independently design, sustain and manage change within a system or systems.
i. Management of learning, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to demonstrate intellectual independence, research leadership and management of research and research development in a discipline, field or practice.
j. Accountability, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to operate independently and take full responsibility for his or her work, and, where appropriate, lead, oversee and be held ultimately accountable for the overall governance of processes and systems.

ANNEXURE B

Members of the Doctoral Degrees Reference Group.

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