

**GENERAL INFORMATION ON  
DOCTORAL STUDIES  
in the  
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences  
Stellenbosch University**

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## A. INTRODUCTION TO DOCTORAL STUDIES

1. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is governed by the stipulations of the [Higher Education Qualifications Sub Framework](#) (HEQSF), which are still subject to possible interim changes, including the deletion of qualifications.
2. The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS) (Tygerberg campus) Doctoral Office serves as a central contact point for enquiries about the doctoral programme, degrees on offer, and all aspects of the doctoral research process from selection to submission. The website of the Tygerberg Doctoral Office at [www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice](http://www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice) links directly to the formal provisions governing doctorates:
  - 1.1 Those provided under "Postgraduate Qualifications" in Part 1 (General) of the [Stellenbosch University \(SU\) Calendar](#); and
  - 1.2 Those provided in the [Faculty Calendar](#) (Part 12 of the SU Calendar).
3. A prospective candidate can apply for the PhD in one of two ways:
  - 3.1 Standard application: The standard option is to apply online for the programme via the SUNStudent platform at <http://student.sun.ac.za>, for admission after completion of a previous qualification.
  - 3.2 Conversion (also called upgrade) from master's by thesis to PhD: A supervisor may apply for a registered SU student's conversion or conversion from a 100% research master's degree to a PhD, via the Committee for Postgraduate Research (CPR) and for final approval, to the SU Senate. This option is advisable only in cases where the candidate will be able to submit the PhD dissertation for examination within one to two years from registration for the PhD. Should this not seem viable, it would be preferable to complete the master's degree first.
4. The PhD is awarded in recognition of high-quality, original research that makes a significant contribution to the field of study. The dissertation shall reflect original research by candidates on one central and cohesive topic or theme. Candidates shall not have submitted the said research previously to any university for the purpose of obtaining a degree.
5. The focus and quality of the research and reporting remain the most important aspect in all formats.
6. The doctorate is assessed based on:
  - 6.1 A conventional dissertation;
  - 6.2 A publication format dissertation; or
  - 6.3 A hybrid format dissertation.The details of these formats are covered in section K of this document.
7. Irrespective of the doctoral-study format, all candidates should be equipped with the following:
  - 7.1 Sufficient general and applied knowledge;
  - 7.2 Familiarity with scientific literature specific to the field of research;
  - 7.3 The expertise to recognise problem areas, identify research topics, and develop protocols;
  - 7.4 Technical-laboratory, clinical and/or public health skills, as appropriate to the study;
  - 7.5 Sufficient written and oral communication skills; and
  - 7.6 Domain-appropriate professional development.
8. Comprehensive information on the doctoral journey is provided on the website of the Tygerberg Doctoral office at [www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice](http://www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice).
9. In the case of joint degrees between SU and another institution, alongside the individual agreement governing the registration, this document also applies until directly before the examination process.
  - 9.1 A joint degree may not commence before a formal agreement between SU and the other institution has been reached. Permission for such an agreement must be sought from the director of the SU Postgraduate Office.
  - 9.2 Consult the SU Postgraduate Office web page [at this link](#).
  - 9.3 Note that the standard examination processes of the two institutions will have to be structured according to the specifications of the formal agreement.
  - 9.4 Contact the director of the SU Postgraduate Office and the head of the Tygerberg Doctoral Office for an examination coordination meeting well ahead of the nomination of examiners.
10. In the case of senior doctoral degrees refer to the separate guidelines on Senior Doctoral Degrees.

## B. PhD APPLICATION

### Prospective doctoral student enquiries

Prospective doctoral students usually contact the FMHS academic environments, the Tygerberg Doctoral Office, or Client Services with enquiries. Students are encouraged to reach out to a potential supervisor to establish whether a research idea is viable for supervision within the environment. Once a student has an informal indication that there may be a good fit, it is critical that the application be submitted online at <http://student.sun.ac.za>. This step should not be delayed until the proposal stage.

### Stellenbosch University online application

Applications for selection for the doctoral programme may be submitted at any time during the academic year. Selection timelines differ, as some environments evaluate applications only quarterly or twice a year.

As **step one**, prospective doctoral candidates apply online at <http://student.sun.ac.za>, and upload:

- Certified degree certificates and transcripts
- Certified identity document or passport
- Statement of research interest (a brief, referenced draft proposal of 2 to 3 pages)
- Motivation letter and CV
- In some cases, proof of supervisor

Students may apply for a doctorate at any time. Applicants should carefully check the application portal to ensure they have uploaded all required documents. Allow at least six weeks for the application process.

Please be patient, since it is a regulatory requirement that the documents be verified.

Note: Admission is competitive, and selection capped according to supervision capacity.

Application does not guarantee placement in the PhD programme.

### Selection process

- The SU Central Admissions Office verifies the correct documents have been uploaded;
- The SU Postgraduate Office evaluates the comparability of foreign qualifications with SA standards;
- Applications marked as 'reviewed' on SUNStudent are ready for evaluation by the academic environment.

### FMHS Academic Environment & Academic Administration (Tygerberg)

Selection rests with the relevant academic environment and is processed by the Centre for Academic Administration (Tygerberg campus):

The academic environment selects the most suitable applicants for admission to the programme taking into account the merits of the applications received and the supervision capacity available. Each environment:

- Chooses a staff member to monitor new applications (the SUNStudent administrator) and downloads the relevant documents for consideration by the environment;
- Reviews the application documents and allocates supervisors for suitable applicants (Retired staff, postdoctoral candidates, or external supervisors may be appointed, as long as one internal supervisor is appointed as supervisor or co-supervisor);
- The academic environment informs the FMHS Academic Administration ([vbj@sun.ac.za](mailto:vbj@sun.ac.za)) whether each applicant has been selected or not;
- The Centre for Academic Administration (Tygerberg campus) issues a final offer which the applicant must formally accept by uploading the SU contract.

### Entry into the Doctoral Programme

#### Tygerberg Doctoral Office

Once the student has formally accepted placement and uploaded a contract, the student liaises with the Tygerberg Doctoral Office at [tyg-phd@sun.ac.za](mailto:tyg-phd@sun.ac.za). The Tygerberg Doctoral Office clarifies expectations and encourages project management of the research journey from first selection up to submission for examination, providing research and general support.

#### Centre for Academic Administration (Tygerberg campus)

All candidates are first registered for the PhD proposal development phase by the Centre for Academic Administration (Tygerberg campus). This includes international students. (The only exceptions are those whose conversion from master's to PhD has been approved by Senate, and those who must provide proof of PhD registration for purposes of a bursary already allocated to them.)

## C. ROUTES OF ADMISSION

Please note the differences in detail pertaining to each route of admission.

### Standard Admission (Option 1)

- The prospective student applies online to start a PhD after completion of a relevant previous degree;
- The following documents are required: ID, all degree certificates, full academic record, up-to-date CV, and a Statement of research interest (short proposal of 2 to 3 pages, referenced);
- The relevant academic environment's SUNStudent administrator informs the faculty officer, Centre for Academic Administration (Tygerberg campus) that an applicant has been selected, or not;
- Selected applicant to contact the Tygerberg Doctoral Office as soon as possible for guidance on expectations, documents, and allocation of a CPR representative;
- The candidate is registered for a doctoral preparatory year as a special student.
- [Applicable to all PhDs] The formal review of the PhD proposal is ideally completed within six months of registration to assist a student to meet the following expectations for year one: the proposal is developed, submitted for review, and the ethics process is completed. Stellenbosch University requires the completion of these steps within one year from entry into the programme, which allows six months for the review process and submission of the ethics application (by June), a further three months for the ethics process (by mid September), after which the study may commence.
- If these steps are not completed within the first year, the student may have another year registered as a preparatory student, at an increased fee.
- If these steps are still not completed within the second year, and if the requisite motivation is approved by the relevant PPC and CPR, the student may have a third and last year, once again with an increased fee.
- As per the Faculty Board decision of October 2022, only up to three years of preparatory studies will be allowed.
- After protocol approval, the student is then formally registered for the PhD (subject to Senate approval of the project).

### Admission with conditional bursary (Option 2)

- A conditional bursary here refers to a bursary or scholarship that has already been confirmed, but will be honoured only if proof of PhD registration is provided.
- The prospective student applies online to start a PhD after completion of a relevant previous degree;
- The following documents are required: ID, all degree certificates, full academic record, up-to-date CV, and a Statement of research interest (short proposal of 2 to 3 pages, referenced);
- The academic environment's SUNStudent administrator informs the faculty officer, Centre for Academic Administration (Tygerberg campus) that an applicant has been selected, or not;
- Selected applicant to contact the Tygerberg Doctoral Office as soon as possible for guidance on expectations, documents, and allocation of a CPR representative;
- The selected applicant submits to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office proof that a **bursary has already been allocated, which will only be honoured if proof of registration for the PhD is provided.**
- The selected applicant is registered for the PhD as an SU student.
- [Applicable to all PhDs] The proposal review should ideally be completed within six months of registration. The student should meet the following SU expectations during year one: the proposal is developed, submitted for review, and the ethics process is completed. Stellenbosch University requires the completion of these steps within one year from entry into the programme, which allows six months for the review process and submission of the ethics application (by June), a further three months for the ethics process (by mid September), after which the study may commence.
- Note: Should a student who has been registered directly for the PhD, not succeed in completing these milestones during year one, only one further year is available for successful completion of the review and submission of an ethics approval letter bearing the student's name to [tyg-phd@sun.ac.za](mailto:tyg-phd@sun.ac.za), failing which continued registration will not be allowed (as per a CPR decision of January 2024).

## Admission via Conversion (Option 3)

- Existing master's students can, in deserving cases and with due regard to the best interest of the student concerned, convert their registration for the degree of master requiring a thesis into a registration for the doctorate, provided that:
- The prospective PhD student has, after successful completion of a proposal and ethics review, made exceptional progress with the master's research, and the study already exceeds the scope of master's research;
- Not less than one year and no more than three years of master's registration may have elapsed before application for the conversion;
- Following approval of the application for conversion (also called upgrade), the student is expected to be ready to submit a doctoral dissertation for examination, preferably within one to two years of registration for the PhD;
- The supervisor should refer to the SU Calendar, Part 1 and Part 12, for more information;
- The supervisor submits a full conversion application to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office at [tyg-phd@sun.ac.za](mailto:tyg-phd@sun.ac.za) with a zip folder containing the following documents:
- **Form A4** Conversion application (Available from the Tygerberg Doctoral Office [website](#))
- Letter from the **HOD supporting the conversion**
- Letter from the **Supervisor/s supporting the conversion**
- **Form A3 review checklist**
- All reviewer forms OR a summary report by the review panel chair
- The **MSc Ethical Clearance** Certificate
- The final proposal
- A Turnitin report on the final proposal, indicating a similarity score of no more than 15%
- Updated CV of applicant
- Updated CVs of any proposed **external** supervisor(s)
- A Plagiarism Declaration

The supervisor's letter should include:

- Indication of exceptional progress made by student;
- How the proposed study exceeds the scope of a masters' study;
- Account of original insights anticipated - requirement for a doctoral study; and
- How it justifies further investigation.

A faculty officer will inform the candidate once the application for conversion has been approved by Senate. Until such time as approval is officially confirmed, the student remains registered for the master's degree.

**Upon approval by Senate** (and no sooner):

- The student is registered for the PhD.
- **The applicant will apply for amendment to the existing Ethics application upon receiving the PhD acceptance letter from the University.**
- The student proceeds to work toward submission of the dissertation.
- The student must be registered for the doctorate at least one year from the time of conversion. The dissertation may be submitted for examination from the point of conversion onwards.
- Please see Section D below regarding the maximum duration of the PhD.

## D. DURATION OF STUDY

1. Although the average completion time of a PhD in the SU Faculty of Medicine is four years from registration to graduation, the DHET minimum and normal duration of a PhD is two years from first registration, while the university's expectation is that a doctorate be completed within three years from first registration.
2. The maximum duration of a PhD is five years from January of the first year of PhD registration. This period includes absences shorter than one year, such as maternity leave of less than one year; but excludes approved interruptions. Monitoring of progress is a critical responsibility of the supervisor/s and students should be supported from the outset to avoid exceeding the maximum duration. The supervisor may submit an acceptable motivation for the extension of the period to the CPR at least six months prior to the expiry of the maximum five-year registration period. This extension is allowed once, ie the dissertation must be submitted during the following academic year. Thereafter, special permission for one further year of registration may be sought from Senate. Consult the FMHS Calendar in this regard.
3. Prior to registration for the PhD, an applicant accepted for a PhD in the FMHS is registered for one preparatory year, which is excluded from the period of study for the doctorate. This applies to all students. The only exceptions are:
  - 3.1 SU students who have converted from a research master's degree;
  - 3.2 Selected applicants who have already been allocated a bursary for which proof of registration for the preparatory year is not accepted by the sponsor.
4. The aim of the preparatory year is to enable students to complete their proposals and present to a review panel (ideally within six months) whereafter they submit to HREC for ethics approval with a view to being ready for full registration by the end of the preparatory year. In all cases across SU, (whether preparatory or PhD registration), the first year encompasses the following milestones:
  - 4.1 Successfully complete the proposal review process and apply for ethics approval within six months. The Tygerberg Doctoral Office website at [www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice](http://www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice) provides details of the review process.
  - 4.2 Successfully complete the ethics approval process – including any modifications - in no more than a further three months.
  - 4.3 In cases where this is not feasible, candidates may register for a second preparatory year. One further extension will only be granted under special conditions and with full motivation from the relevant postgraduate programme committee. Kindly note that each successive year (to a maximum of three years) carries additional fee implications.
  - 4.4 Following this, the Tygerberg Doctoral Office submits the project to the CPR, after which it will serve at Faculty Board and then at Senate. Upon receipt of Senate approval, the student is registered for the doctorate.
5. Note: The over-arching intention of the PhD proposal development phase is that the proposal review process be completed and an ethics approval letter submitted to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office within one year. This may not, however, be possible in all contexts and a candidate may re-register for the preparatory phase a second time with legitimate reasons, and a third time, if necessary. As soon as ethics approval has been obtained the candidate can move to full registration at the next available registration period. A student is liable to register for an additional year of study (in the consecutive calendar year), whenever submission before the final cut-off date for March graduation has not been achieved. Allow one additional month for application, financial, or international student processes. Stellenbosch University PhD Registration / Re-registration dates:

	New entrants	Returning students (year 2 etc)
First Semester	1 January to 31 March	1 to 31 January
Second Semester	1 June to 31 July	Not applicable

6. Submission for examination is allowed at any time from the second year of registration for the doctorate. A doctorate may be conferred upon an FMHS candidate no earlier than:
  - 5.1 Four years after conferment of a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, or a related qualification deemed adequate by Senate; or
  - 5.2 Two years after conferment of a Master of Science, or a related degree deemed adequate by Senate; or
  - 5.3 Two years after conferment of an appropriate Bachelor of Science Honours degree in Medical Sciences directly subsequent to a Bachelor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Surgery degree.

## **E. ROLE OF HEAD AND ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT**

1. The head, or a designated senior colleague or committee in the academic environment, checks an application for admission to a doctoral programme, leads the selection process, and refers all necessary documents to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office.
2. The head and senior colleagues should familiarise themselves with the provisions and requirements for admission to a doctoral programme to provide role-relevant support to both the supervisor and the PhD candidate in the relevant environment.
3. The head, or a designated senior colleague or committee in the academic environment, should ensure that eligible and suitable supervisors are appointed for all PhD candidates accepted by an academic environment at the point of selection.
4. The relevant postgraduate programme committee should ensure that suitable examiners are appointed timeously for each PhD candidate in a department.

## **F. SUPERVISORS AND SUPERVISION**

The CPR and Faculty Board approve the appointment of supervisors and co-supervisors. Supervisors and co-supervisors of doctoral candidates should hold a doctorate, except under conditions of appropriate seniority and experience, approved by the review panel. It is a requirement that all supervisors attend accredited supervision training. The review panel and the postgraduate programme committee assess the competency of each supervisor according to qualifications, list of publications, participation in teaching, status as expert in the field of study, and proven postgraduate study guidance.

1. Each supervisor is responsible for familiarising themselves with the FMHS Doctoral Guidelines. This also applies to Emeritus Professors / Emeritus Associate Professors, to all Extraordinary Appointments (including Honorary Professors or Research Fellows), to Postdoctoral Fellows, as well as external supervisors.
2. Where the supervisor is external to Stellenbosch University the appointment of an internal co-supervisor is mandatory.
3. Where the supervisor is appointed on a part-time or contract basis at Stellenbosch University, provision should be made for continuous support of the candidate by the appointment of a co-supervisor within the academic environment.
4. Post-Doctoral Fellows may be nominated as internal co-supervisors of doctoral candidates.
5. Please refer to the postgraduate supervision table for further details regarding the appointment of supervisors, available from the Tygerberg Doctoral Office [at this link](#).
6. Supervisors should timeously nominate possible examiners to the head of their academic environment and then to the relevant Postgraduate Programme Committee, for consideration by the CPR.
7. The supervisor, and where applicable the co-supervisor(s), should directly on completion of the oral submit a report that provides insight into the development of the process that culminated in the dissertation, including:
  - The central knowledge contribution;
  - The context in which the study was undertaken;
  - The methodological set-up in terms of which the study was undertaken;
  - The extent to which the candidate had worked independently; and
  - The examination process and oral presentation.

### **Role of the supervisor at graduation ceremonies**

- At the graduation ceremony, the supervisor delivers a popularised summary of not more than 50 words summarising the study and its significance. No biographical or examination details are furnished. The supervisor must submit this text to the Faculty Administrator to be approved by the Dean.
- The information on the dissertation to be included in the graduation ceremony programme should be of an academic nature and furnished in a text of not more than 100 words for the purposes of the Faculty Board. The supervisor should submit the short text for approval at the same meeting at which the Faculty Board considers the examiners' recommendations.
- In the oral presentation of the summary, there should be absolutely no deviation from the wording of the summary as previously approved.
- After presenting the summary, the supervisor should remain standing until the hood has been placed around the candidate.

## **G. CODE OF CONDUCT: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISOR, CO-SUPERVISOR AND PHD CANDIDATE**

### **1. The following guidelines are proposed as a code of conduct to ensure that the relationship between supervisor and PhD candidate is conducive to successful postgraduate studies at SU:**

- 1.1 The candidate (with the necessary input from the supervisor) undertakes to remain up to date on the infrastructure and related rules of the academic environment concerned.
- 1.2 The candidate acquaints themselves with the FMHS- and SU-wide infrastructure and academic offerings, ie the library, short courses, and more.
- 1.3 SU undertakes not to select a candidate for a specific project unless the faculty gives prior written confirmation that the project can be undertaken. Responsibility for required funding and applicable infrastructure will be indicated specifically.
- 1.4 The candidate, with the help of the supervisor, should be acquainted with the guidelines for keeping a record of research as generally acceptable within the discipline concerned.
- 1.5 Candidates confirm that they have the necessary basic computer skills to complete the project satisfactorily; and will undertake any relevant specialist computer training to acquire these skills timeously.
- 1.6 A work programme should be compiled for the candidate, in collaboration with the supervisor, within a reasonable period after the start of the project (usually not exceeding 60 days), regardless of the form of registration. This should indicate target dates for, for example, the submission of a project protocol, the completion of a literary survey, the completion of specific chapters and the submission of progress reports. Times of absence (study leave, university vacations, etc.) should also be indicated.
- 1.7 Appointments between the candidate and the supervisor should take place at regular and predetermined times during the academic year.
- 1.8 Written feedback on the progress of the study should be provided annually by the supervisor to the chair of the relevant Postgraduate Programme Committee (PPC) and the Tygerberg Doctoral Office.
- 1.9 The supervisor should comment on and return all submitted work to the candidate within a reasonable period not exceeding 60 days for a full dissertation.
- 1.10 When the project nears completion, the candidate should make the necessary submissions in accordance with the requirements for graduation within the discipline concerned. (There should be specific reference to section 11. on page 23 to ensure that there is sufficient time for the technical finish and examination of the dissertation with a view to the various graduation ceremonies.)
- 1.11 The candidate undertakes, as agreed with the supervisor, to deliver relevant outputs (such as publications, patents and academic papers). The candidate should be aware of the conventions on authorship relevant to the discipline concerned.
- 1.12 Where applicable, the candidate and supervisor should acquaint themselves with the regulations on intellectual property within the environment concerned.

### **2. In cases where there is also a co-supervisor, the following set of guidelines applies to the relationship between the co-supervisor and the candidate:**

- 2.1 The co-supervisor should be appointed in time to be involved with the protocol development. A co-supervisor may be appointed at a later stage if the existing co-supervisor needs to be replaced because of unforeseen circumstances; or if additional aspects relevant to the project emerge during the course of the PhD.
- 2.2 The co-supervisor should conduct themselves in accordance with the code of conduct as compiled by the faculty and comply with the guidelines relating to the research methodology.
- 2.3 The co-supervisor should be directly involved in the planning and supervision of the research project. The co-supervisor's input is not limited to content and/or methodology – but also to provide feedback regarding the progress of the research project.
- 2.4 The co-supervisor should be able to act as a stand in for the supervisor at any time, where necessary and viable.

3. **Disputes:** In the event that the candidate and supervisor or co-supervisor are unable to resolve disputes or differences of opinion, they should approach the Chairperson of the relevant Postgraduate Programme Committee (PPC). The matter may be escalated to the Chairperson of the CPR should there be no resolution even at that stage.



#### **4. Responsibilities of the supervisor**

- 4.1 Be familiar with university and faculty procedures regarding postgraduate studies.
- 4.2 Be familiar with the most recent ethics rules and regulations.
- 4.3 Be knowledgeable in the field of study and methodology.
- 4.4 Ensure that they have appropriate time to guide the candidate.
- 4.5 Establish a supervisory relationship with the candidate.
- 4.6 Keep the relationship with the candidate honest and open.
- 4.7 Give advice about project choice and planning.
- 4.8 Ensure that facilities necessary for study and research, where relevant, are available.
- 4.9 Discuss intellectual property and publications.
- 4.10 Provide research training or opportunities to access research training.
- 4.11 Meet with the candidate, to monitor progress regularly and to provide structured feedback.
- 4.12 Arrange for study guidance for the candidate during periods when the supervisor is absent.
- 4.13 Ensure that the examiners are nominated timeously at postgraduate programme committee meetings.
- 4.14 Remind the candidate to submit the intention-to-submit form timeously.
- 4.15 Accept responsibility for the originality, scientific merit, and standard of the research.

#### **5. Responsibilities of the candidate**

- 5.1 Ensure that they are familiar with the university regulations regarding postgraduate studies and abide by these regulations.
- 5.2 Commit to the research process as agreed with the supervisor(s) and according to the academic requirements and level of the degree pursued.
- 5.3 Develop initiative and independence.
- 5.4 Be proactive and take responsibility for the development and progress of the research.
- 5.5 Make use of opportunities offered by the research environment.
- 5.6 Do a literature survey and keep abreast of all relevant literature.
- 5.7 Establish a professional relationship with the supervisor.
- 5.8 Keep the relationship with the supervisor/s honest and open.
- 5.9 Inform the supervisor of non-academic problems that may influence progress.
- 5.10 Provide regular progress reports.
- 5.11 Undertake research with dedication and scientific rigor.
- 5.12 Engage in academic discussions and presentations and provide feedback thereon.
- 5.13 Present and report on research results and respond to feedback appropriately.
- 5.14 Consider feedback constructively and clarify any uncertainty with the supervisor.
- 5.15 Keep complete records of research results, which remain the intellectual property of Stellenbosch University according to the SU IP policy:  
[http://www.innovus.co.za/media/documents/Innovus%20IP\\_policy.pdf](http://www.innovus.co.za/media/documents/Innovus%20IP_policy.pdf)
- 5.16 Prepare and write the thesis/dissertation/research assignment themselves.
- 5.17 Prepare and write publications, patents, and reports (if applicable – as agreed upon below).
- 5.18 Be aware of and abide by the university's Plagiarism Policy.
- 5.19 Inform the Tygerberg Doctoral Office and/or the Postgraduate Programme Committee (PPC) at least six months ahead of the intended date of graduation of the intention to submit the thesis/dissertation/research assignment for examination.

## H. SUMMARY OF PhD SUPERVISORS' STANDARD OF PRACTICE

ITEM	TASK
Application and Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least one supervisor should be a permanently appointed member of FMHS.</li> <li>Supervisors and co-supervisors of doctoral candidates should have doctorate qualifications. It is required that all supervisors attend accredited supervision training.</li> <li>The Review Panel will assess each supervisor's competency according to qualifications, list of publications and papers, participation in teaching, status as expert in the field of study, and proven postgraduate study guidance, as applicable.</li> </ul>
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HoD or academic environment to select and organise the Review Panel and Chair.</li> <li>Ensure that applicant's CV, external supervisor(s) CV, Proposal, Synopsis, existing Ethics Approval Certificates or publications and FORM A3 are sent to the Review chair timeously.</li> <li>Form A3 Checklist to be completed and signed by HOD and Supervisor BEFORE the Review.</li> <li>Supervisor ensures that all recommended revisions are completed by the applicant correctly.</li> <li>Submit five review documents to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office after the Review: Supervisor confirmation of edits, form A3, reviewer reports, final proposal, and Turnitin report.</li> </ul>
Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign off on applicant's Ethics application and assists with submission on Infonetica.</li> <li>Ask student to submit the ethics approval letter to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office.</li> </ul>
Annual Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All supervisors are required to submit an annual student progress report to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office by 15 November each year.</li> </ul>
Examination	<p>Nominate examiners timeously:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit names, CVs and Nomination Forms to the relevant Postgraduate Programme Committee (PPC) for its initial approval and recommendation to the CPR.</li> <li>PPC report is sent to <a href="mailto:tyg-phd@sun.ac.za">tyg-phd@sun.ac.za</a> and copied to the Faculty Officer for submission to the Committee for Postgraduate Research (CPR).</li> </ul> <p><b>Submission for examination to <a href="mailto:medphd@sun.ac.za">medphd@sun.ac.za</a> to include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissertation release form signed by all supervisors <b>and the HoD</b></li> <li>Dissertation in PDF format (with declaration incorporated)</li> <li>Turnitin report with a similarity score of less than 15%</li> </ul> <p>On completion of the oral, the supervisor and where applicable the co-supervisor(s), should compile a report that provides insight into the development of the process that culminated in the dissertation. The following aspects can be addressed in the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The context in which the study was undertaken</li> <li>The methodological set-up in terms of which the study was undertaken and according to which the dissertation should ultimately be evaluated</li> <li>The extent to which the candidate had worked independently</li> <li>Problems that the candidate experienced with collecting data</li> <li>Any other aspect that may have a bearing on the final evaluation of the dissertation</li> </ul> <p>Following the oral, submit final dissertation (without signatures), final supervisor report, and separate list of corrections, to Head of the Tygerberg Doctoral Office at <a href="mailto:medphd@sun.ac.za">medphd@sun.ac.za</a>.</p>
SUNScholar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The supervisor must nominate the candidate to upload their final dissertation to SUNScholar.</li> </ul>
Faculty Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The supervisor should submit information of an academic nature and furnished in a text of not more than 100 words - on the dissertation - for recommendation at the same meeting at which the Faculty Board considers the examiners' recommendations. The final result is approved by the SU Senate.</li> </ul>
Graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the graduation ceremony, the supervisor delivers a popularised summary of not more than 50 words indicating what has been done in the study and what its significance is. No biographical or examination details are furnished.</li> <li>The supervisor submits this text to the faculty officer, Centre for Academic Administration (Tygerberg campus) for approval before the relevant Faculty Board meeting.</li> <li>In the oral presentation of the summary, there should be absolutely no deviation from the wording of the summary as previously approved.</li> <li>After presenting the summary, the supervisor should remain standing until the hood has been placed around the candidate.</li> </ul>

## I. REVIEW PROCESS

The Tygerberg Doctoral Office website at [www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice](http://www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice) provides details of the review process.

### PhD Proposal Review:

- Academic environment selects and organises the review panel, consisting of a panel chairperson (the head or any other independent colleague, but not the supervisor), CPR representative, REC representative, and one or more suitable domain expert.
- The head or any other colleague may serve as the panel chair; but as independence is required, the supervisors are not eligible to serve on the review panel.
- The Tygerberg Doctoral Office allocates a CPR representative for each student's review panel.
- The review chair should negotiate a mutually suitable review date directly with the CPR representative and other panel members. The Tygerberg Doctoral Office is not involved.
- The chairperson distributes the necessary documents (student's CV, external supervisor(s) CV/s, proposal, synopsis, and partially completed Form A3) to the entire review panel, preferably by two weeks prior to the review.
- The work is reviewed in writing prior to the presentation. Domain experts submit reviewer reports. The CPR and REC representatives need not complete the reviewer form unless they are suitable domain experts who would like to provide input and are qualified to do so.
- The student presents the proposal to the review panel, who has the opportunity to ask questions, and afterwards, to reach consensus on the completion of the Form A3 review checklist.
- The student makes any required amendments, whether to resubmit or to the satisfaction of the supervisor.

### IMPORTANT

- Note: Should there be any conflict of interest, for example, should an individual have an association as close family or household member, or any other close relationship with the candidate and/or with supervisor/co-supervisor, the member concerned should be excluded from the Review Process.
- Directly after the review process, the supervisor or review panel chairperson submits to the Head of the Tygerberg Doctoral Office the supervisor letter confirming that all requirements of the review panel have been met; the completed A3 check list, all reviewer reports, the final, approved protocol, and a Turnitin report on the final protocol.
- As soon as possible following the review, a formal application for ethics approval must be submitted.
- The final review documents and ethics approval are included in the agenda of the next meeting of the CPR, to be recommended for Senate acceptance to PhD studies.

On successful completion of the proposal review process, the supervisor provides the following five PDF documents to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office ([tyg-phd@sun.ac.za](mailto:tyg-phd@sun.ac.za)):

- Confirmation from supervisor that all review panel requirements have been met
- Form A3 review checklist (latest version; completed in full)
- All reviewer reports OR a summary report by the chairperson
- Final proposal for ethics submission
- Turnitin report on final proposal, indicating a similarity score of no more than 15%

**If all documents are in order, and the candidate has progressed as expected, the Tygerberg Doctoral Office will, within three workdays, supply a letter to facilitate the ethics application.**

All candidates should aim to submit the doctoral dissertation for examination within a further 2 years.

## Review Process

### Preparing for the Review

- Form A3 Checklist to be completed by HOD and Supervisor BEFORE the Review.
- Decide who will Chair the meeting. This can be the HoD or any other independent colleague, but not the CPR representative or supervisor. The supervisor may suggest a review chair; the decision rests with the HoD.
- Select and organise the Review Panel.
- Student's CV, External supervisor(s) CV/s (to ensure sufficient domain expertise among supervisors), proposal, synopsis, and partially completed Form A3 are sent to the Review Chair ahead of time.
- If there are existing ethics approval certificates, these should also be submitted to the reviewers; though it should be noted these do not necessarily cover the doctoral study as a whole.
- Domain expert/s each complete one reviewer form (only).

### Day of the review:

Student and supervisor are introduced to the review panel and convenor explains the procedure

Student presents for about 20 mins  
Review Panel clarifies aspects, and recommends changes

Student, supported by supervisor, responds

Student and supervisor are excused as review panel makes a decision

Panel presents result of Review

### After the Review

- Student makes recommended changes before submitting final version to the chair;
- Chair or supervisor (as applicable) verifies that the recommended revisions are made correctly;
- Chair ensures that the reports from members are incorporated in the final report;
- Chair completes the Form A3 review checklist;
- Supervisor submits five documents to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office at [tyg-phd@sun.ac.za](mailto:tyg-phd@sun.ac.za):
  1. Confirmation from supervisor that all panel requirements have been met
  2. Final Form A3
  3. All reviewer reports OR a summary report from the panel chair
  4. Final approved protocol/proposal
  5. Turnitin report on final proposal indicating a similarity score under 15%
- Thereafter, the candidate opens a project on the Infonetica system for ethics approval, by no later than three workdays prior to the closing date for the relevant REC meeting.
- Each REC publishes its own process and meeting dates for a particular academic year on its website, available [at this link](#).

The Tygerberg Doctoral Office website at [www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice](http://www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice) also provides details of the review process.

## J. ETHICS PROCESS

All researchers must apply for ethical approval of a study before they may commence with research. A particular responsibility for oversight rests with the institution in the case of researchers in training, such as PhD candidates. Every PhD candidate must apply for ethics approval, to the most suitable Research Ethics Committee (REC) within Stellenbosch University. Most PhD projects can be assessed by one, particular REC, but some projects will straddle the domain of more than one REC.

Stellenbosch University has five RECs that fall under the [SU Senate Research Ethics Committee](#):

1. [Animal Care and Use \(REC: ACU\)](#)
2. [Biosafety and Environmental Ethics \(REC: BEE\)](#)
3. [Health Research Ethics Committee 1 \(HREC1\)](#)
4. [Health Research Ethics Committee 2 \(HREC2\)](#)
5. [Social, Behavioural and Education Research \(REC: SBE\)](#)

A majority of doctoral research projects in the FMHS are considered by the respective RECs for Animal Care and Use, or Biosafety and Environmental Ethics, or one of the two Health Research Ethics Committees. Each committee has its own rules and procedures. Following successful completion of the proposal review process, candidates should allow up to three months for the ethics process of a doctoral study, from application to outcome.

**On receipt of the ethics approval letter bearing the name of the candidate, this should be submitted to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office at [tyg-phd@sun.ac.za](mailto:tyg-phd@sun.ac.za), right away.** Ethics approval for an individual study, OR – in cases where the parent study covers the PhD study - a letter adding a student as investigator to an existing, ethics-approved study, is acceptable. In case of the latter, the original or most recent ethics approval of the larger study should also be submitted. Note that ethics approval for a parent study does not automatically cover the whole of a PhD study.

At this stage, your practical research may begin, while we proceed to submit your project to the [Committee for Postgraduate Research](#) on behalf of your academic environment. From there it is presented to the FMHS Faculty Board and SU Senate, for formal approval of your doctoral study. This is a quarterly process which takes about three months.

According to national guidelines an ethics committee may only grant ethics approval for one year; ethics approval thus needs to be renewed approx. 2 months before the expiry date by submission of a progress report. Annual re-approval should be sought until the project/study is closed by submitting a final report.

Note on Confirmation of Proposal Review:

- Before accepting a doctoral study for ethics review, the Health Research Ethics Committees (only) require a letter to confirm that the relevant faculty proposal review process was followed correctly, and the review completed successfully.
- The Tygerberg Doctoral Office will provide confirmation that the faculty's [proposal review](#) procedures were followed in the case of all FMHS students. Turnaround is fast but do submit your five review documents to [tyg-phd@sun.ac.za](mailto:tyg-phd@sun.ac.za) in good order, and in a single email, by three workdays prior to your ethics deadline. There is no need to request the letter - it will be issued automatically on receipt of your five review documents (and not before).
- Doctoral candidates from other faculties may obtain a formal letter from a suitable independent party in their own faculty - such as the HoD, but not the supervisor, in order to facilitate an ethics application to the HREC.

**Wrapping up: On completion of the doctoral study, the main internal supervisor should ensure that a final report is submitted to the relevant SU REC.** Should a title change occur at any stage, including the stage of examination, also inform the relevant REC of this change in the required final report.

**HREC Ethics note:**

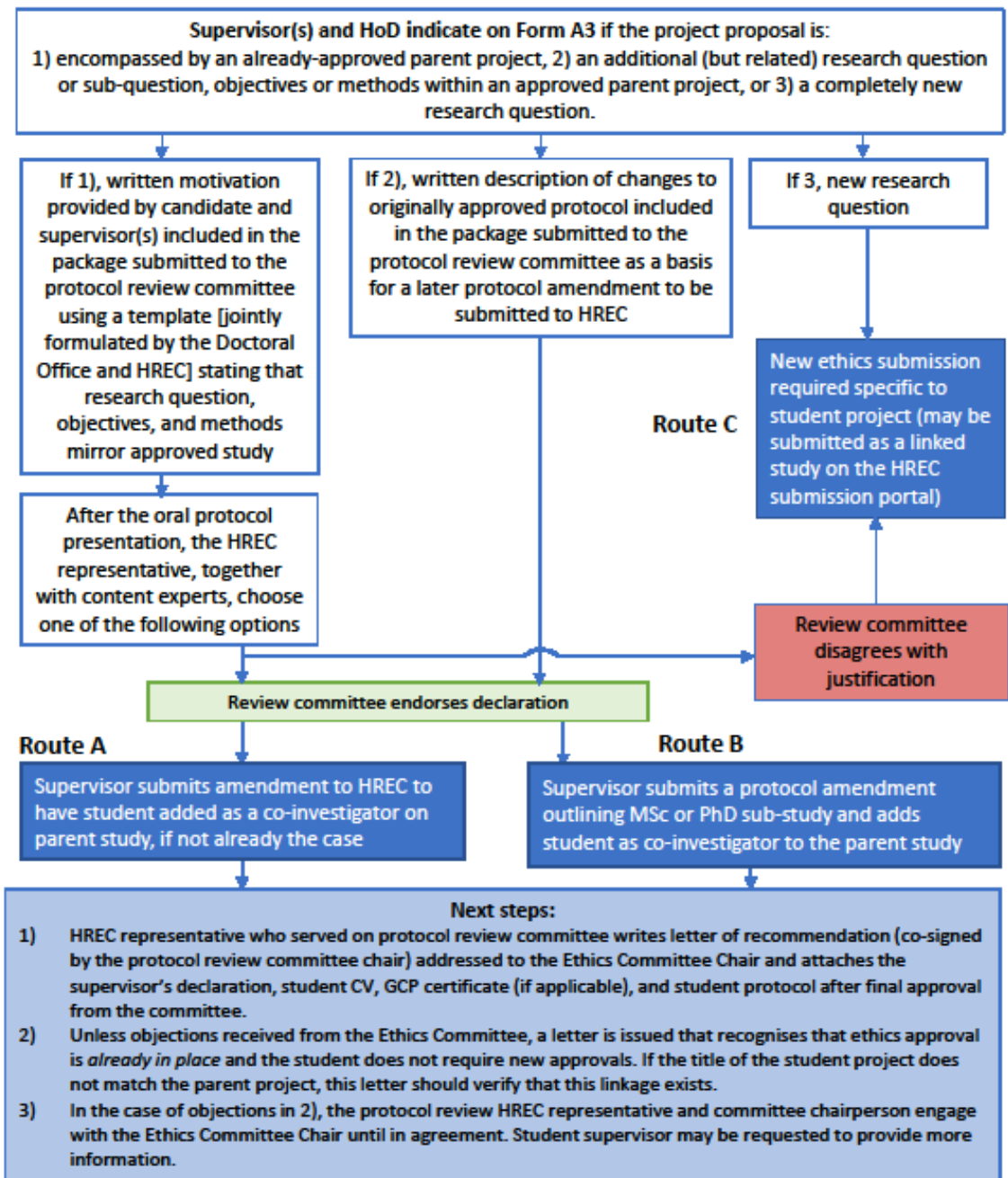
The graphic on this page indicates the considerations that determine whether a candidate should apply for separate HREC approval, as opposed to being added as a co- or sub-investigator on an existing project.

**Does my MSc or PhD student need a separate HREC approval?**

*Case-by-case consideration is required for each student project according to the logic below*

**Core principles:**

1. SU's ethical obligations to study participants, staff, and students must not be compromised.
2. Redundant review of the same research question and methods needs to be avoided, especially if the parent study has approval.



The information informing this decision is provided on the HREC Addendum to the FMHS proposal review checklist, Form A3.

## K. FORMAT OF THE PhD DISSERTATION

1. Three versions of PhD dissertation submission for the FMHS will be allowed:
  - 1.1 Conventional format dissertation
  - 1.2 Publication format dissertation, and
  - 1.3 Hybrid format dissertation.
2. The focus and quality of the research and of the reporting remain the most important aspects in all formats and these formats are treated equally.
3. The differences between the three formats are as follows:

### 3.1 Conventional dissertation

An introduction chapter, followed by a number of chapters outlining the research, followed by a discussion chapter of the research results of the whole dissertation, highlighting the scientific contributions of the study, followed by a conclusion and future directions.

### 3.2 Publication format dissertation

A publication is an original article, research article or Research. It includes full Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion sections. Research can be primary or secondary research (evidence synthesis). Comprehensive Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses are included in this category.

A dissertation by publication should consist of an introduction chapter, followed by a minimum of 4 first-authored peer-reviewed published/accepted for publication articles (a maximum of 1 of which may be published within 3 years prior to formal registration for the relevant PhD programme, as per the *Faculty Board Meeting on the 20th of Feb 2020: Page 425: 4.6.4 The CPR recommended that the rule be amended to allow for only one publication that dated back no more than three years before registration, to take effect for all new PhD registrations as from 2020*), followed by a discussion chapter of the research results of the whole dissertation, highlighting the scientific contributions of the study, followed by a conclusion and future directions. It is also acceptable to have a separate chapter on methodology, however it should be clarified whether or not this chapter represents a publication on its own (ie a protocol paper). Refer to the Glossary below for definitions.

### 3.3 Hybrid format dissertation

An introduction chapter, followed by a minimum of 2 first-authored peer-reviewed published/accepted for publication articles (one of which may be published within 3 years prior to formal registration for the relevant PhD programme), AND

- ❖ a minimum of 2 first-authored submission-ready/submitted manuscripts (a submission-ready manuscript is a manuscript that is already in the final format required for submission by the chosen journal); OR
- ❖ a minimum of 2 chapters outlining the research; OR
- ❖ a combination (minimum of 2) of first-authored submission-ready/submitted manuscripts and chapters outlining the research;
- ❖ In all of the above cases, the chapters should be followed by a discussion chapter of the research results of the whole dissertation, highlighting the scientific contributions of the study, followed by a conclusion and future directions. It is also acceptable to have a separate chapter on methodology, however it should be clarified whether or not this chapter represents a publication on its own (ie a protocol paper).

The information above is summarised in the table on the following page.

Note: For the purposes of a PhD dissertation, co-first authorship is allowed, clearly indicated on the published article.

Approved Formats of a PhD Dissertation					
<b>Conventional</b>	Introduction	Chapters		Discussion	Conclusion
<b>Publication</b>	Introduction	At least 4 x 1 <sup>st</sup> authored peer-reviewed published/accepted for publication articles		Discussion	Conclusion
<b>Hybrid 1</b>	Introduction	At least 2 x 1 <sup>st</sup> authored peer-reviewed published/accepted for publication articles	At least 2 x first-authored submission-ready/submitted manuscripts	Discussion	Conclusion
<b>Hybrid 2</b>	Introduction	At least 2 x 1 <sup>st</sup> authored peer-reviewed published/accepted for publication articles	At least 2 x chapters	Discussion	Conclusion
<b>Hybrid 3</b>	Introduction	At least 2 x 1 <sup>st</sup> authored peer-reviewed published/accepted for publication articles	Combination (minimum 2) of first- authored submission-ready/submitted manuscripts and chapters	Discussion	Conclusion

- If only one manuscript has been published or accepted for publication at the time of submission for examination, the conventional format dissertation should be followed, and the manuscript reformatted into a chapter. The published manuscript may be included in the appendices but not in the mainbody of the dissertation.
- For both *published/accepted articles* and *submission-ready/submitted manuscripts under review*, information on the journal's URL, impact factor and any other information that will help examiners evaluate the quality of your work *must* be included.
- Articles with co-first authorship are allowed for submission towards the minimum number of first author articles (namely four), with the proviso that the final published article must clearly indicate on the title page that the two first authors have contributed equally to the publication. As the term "co-first authorship" means that both authors contributed equally to the relevant publication, the declaration at the beginning of the dissertation should state clearly what each author contributed to the article. The contribution of each first author should therefore be equal, and clearly outlined in the declaration, and authors who share the first authorship must clearly demonstrate why co-first authorship was necessary.

#### 4. Layout and technical aspects

All doctoral dissertations should be edited to a high standard of polished presentation, before they are submitted for examination. The website of the Tygerberg Doctoral Office [at this link](#) provides information on the requirements for layout and technical aspects of a doctoral dissertation.



## 5. GLOSSARY

<b>Introduction</b>	This is the chapter that introduces the topic and the problem, covers relevant literature to justify the topic, and highlights research gaps.
<b>First-authored</b>	A first-authored manuscript is a manuscript where the PhD candidate is the first named author in a list of authors and, as such, the lead author on the manuscript.
<b>Peer-review</b>	This refers to a process whereby a manuscript submitted to a journal is vetted for quality and importance by reviewers, who are scholars or researchers in the subject area in question, according to the editorial standards of that journal, before it is accepted for publication. This is intended to be a rigorous process that ensures that a manuscript that is published in a journal is a sound piece of research/scholarship.
<b>Published</b>	This is a manuscript that is available in print or on-line. This includes an <i>advance online publication</i> (a manuscript that is available before it becomes available in a specific issue of the print or online journal). An <i>advance online publication</i> may or may not have been edited at the time that it goes online and may or may not have a DOI (digital object identifier) assigned yet.
<b>What is not counted as a research article towards the 4 required publications:</b>	The protocol of a study, whether a published protocol of a trial or a protocol of a systematic review, is a building block. Thus, where a candidate who has published the protocol of the systematic review and then subsequently gone ahead and done this systematic review and published the results thereof, the full review publication is the publication that counts towards one of the publications. The protocol is supporting documentation. An example is that a published Cochrane review replaces a protocol in the Cochrane Library. An editorial letter, published literature review, or opinion piece, is also supporting information.
<b>Published protocol paper</b>	A published protocol paper (or manuscript) refers to a published protocol of the study in question in a peer-reviewed journal. This may also include a published paper of a protocol for a systematic review. (However, a published protocol of a systematic review and a published paper of that same systematic review will not be counted as 2 separate articles but as one).
<b>Accepted for publication</b>	This is a manuscript that is accepted by a journal to be published and which typically includes author-incorporated changes suggested during submission, peer review, and editor-author communications. It is <u>not</u> the version that includes the publisher's contributions, such as copy-editing and formatting.
<b>Submission-ready</b>	This refers to a manuscript that is in a <i>ready state</i> to submit to a journal. A <i>ready state</i> means that further edits/changes/improvements are not envisioned. This does <u>not</u> refer to a manuscript that is unfinished or in preparation.
<b>Submitted manuscript</b>	This refers to a manuscript that has been submitted to a journal and is either awaiting editorial or reviewer assignment or is under peer-review.
<b>Discussion</b>	The purpose of the discussion chapter is to interpret the meaning of the results within the context of what is known about the topic. New insights based on the findings should be explained. The discussion will consist of argumentation as different perspectives and explanations are considered. This chapter could include limitations and recommendations for future research.
<b>Conclusion and future directions</b>	The conclusion and future directions chapter ties together, integrates, and synthesizes various issues raised in the discussion, while at the same time reflects on the aims and objectives. The conclusion should provide answers to the research question(s), identify theoretical and/or clinical and/or policy implications of the work, highlight the limitations and strengths, and recommend areas for future research.

## L. EXAMINATION

### 1. Submission

A dissertation may be submitted for examination at any time from January to November, as long as the examiners were earlier recommended by the CPR in time for approval by the Faculty Board and Senate.

**The candidate submits the supervisor-approved dissertation in PDF format, the Turnitin report, and the dissertation release form signed by all supervisors and the head of the academic environment, in a single email to [medphd@sun.ac.za](mailto:medphd@sun.ac.za), copying the supervisor and HoD.**

- The prime submission period for December graduation is from 2 January to 15 July. The final SU cut-off date for possible December graduation is 31 July.
- The prime submission period for March/April graduation is from 1 August to 30 September. The final SU cut-off date for possible March/April graduation is 14 October.

Following the oral exam, the supervisor submits to the Head of the Tygerberg Doctoral Office the supervisor report, the final corrected thesis (without signatures or sensitive personal information), and a list of corrections made; and nominates the dissertation for upload to SUNScholar.

Note: Should the submission dates for March/April graduation be missed, a candidate will be liable for registration **fees** for the following academic year.

### 2. Examiners

- a. There shall be **at least three examiners** - unattached to the study - appointed to examine each dissertation. The panel of examiners shall consist of at least two external examiners and may include one internal examiner. An examiner is considered external if they do not have a permanent, temporary, or extraordinary appointment at Stellenbosch University. In all cases, a minimum of two years must have passed since a person's retirement, accelerated retirement, or leaving of SU's service, before said person may be appointed as external examiner. Past PhD candidates must have left the University for a period of more than 2 years before they may be appointed as examiners.
- b. All of the examiners should hold a doctorate, or if not, a case for this should be properly and fully substantiated, with reference to their sufficient standard of capability in their chosen fields of study.
- c. The supervisor at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences shall submit the names of the examiners, CVs and Nomination Forms to the relevant Postgraduate Programme Committee (PPC). The report and documents are submitted to the CPR and Faculty Board for recommendation. No dissertation may be distributed for examination unless the examiners have been nominated six months earlier.
- d. The Reports, CVs and Nomination Forms are submitted to the Head of the Tygerberg Doctoral Office, who will submit official letters of nomination to each examiner on behalf of the faculty after Senate approval.
- e. The Faculty Administrator shall communicate this recommendation to the Executive Committee of Senate and to Senate by means of a Communications Report.
- f. All communications with examiners are with the Tygerberg Doctoral Office.
- g. No doctoral candidate is permitted – under any circumstances – to be informed of the identities of the examiners or to communicate with the examiners about the dissertation – until the oral examination.
- h. Supervisors share examiners' reports with candidates in anonymised fashion, ie comments and requests only.
- i. Each of the examiners (both external and internal) shall submit a written, signed report on the dissertation and Standard Report Form.

### 3. Examination process

- a. A supervisor may grant permission for a dissertation to be submitted for examination at any time from the start of the second year of PhD registration, though submission in December is not recommended.
- b. Submission dates:
  - The cut-off dates for graduation indicated in the Stellenbosch University almanac are the very last dates on which a dissertation can be accepted with the aim of inclusion in the relevant graduation series **if** all aspects of the examination process proceed punctually and smoothly.
  - **The prime submission period for December graduation is from January to June.** The final SU cut-off date for possible December graduation is 31 July.
  - **The prime submission period for March/April graduation is in August and September.** The final SU cut-off date for possible March/April graduation is 14 October.

- c. The candidate should prepare a Turnitin report on the very final version of the dissertation as approved for submission by the supervisors.
- d. All supervisors should sign the completed dissertation release form once agreement has been reached that the dissertation is ready to submit for examination.
- e. The candidate (copying the supervisor), or the supervisor, should submit to [medphd@sun.ac.za](mailto:medphd@sun.ac.za) a single email with the following three documents attached in PDF format:
  - The dissertation release form signed by all parties;
  - The final dissertation in PDF format (incorporating the plagiarism declaration); and
  - The Turnitin report indicating a recommended similarity score of no more than 15%.
- f. The written and signed reports of the examiners are received directly by the Tygerberg Doctoral Office and not by the supervisor. On receipt, the reports are sent to the supervisors with clear directions. The supervisor may draft a report at this stage.
- g. Once all examiner reports have been received and all corrections approved, a virtual oral presentation is scheduled. The HoD and an administrator from the relevant environment assists the supervisor to arrange the oral examination. Preferably, a senior, unattached, non-examining chairperson may be appointed. This non-examining chairperson does not have to be reported in the Communications Report.
- h. All examiners should be given the opportunity to attend the oral. A maximum of one examiner can be excluded only based on a strong motivation. The oral may not proceed unless at least 2 of the 3 examiners are present.
- i. Supervisors are not members of the abovementioned examiner panel with decision-making powers, and do not submit examiners' reports, but do have observer status at the oral examination.
- j. The entire oral session is generally between 40 to 60 minutes, inclusive of:
  - Introductions
  - Presentation by the candidate
  - Discussion and clarification by examiners
  - Candidate and supervisors leave
  - Examiners and chair discuss the dissertation and presentation
  - Candidate and supervisors return for final result
- k. As soon as the oral examination has been held, the supervisor must submit to the head of the Tygerberg Doctoral Office, in PDF format, the final corrected dissertation (without signatures), a list of all corrections made, and a final supervisor report. The report should provide insight into the development of the process that culminated in the dissertation and address the following:
  - Confirmation of the names of all supervisors, and the UT numbers of internal supervisors;
  - The date and attendance details of the oral examination;
  - The central knowledge contribution;
  - A brief summary of the context in which the study was undertaken; the methodology; and results;
  - The extent to which the candidate worked independently; and
  - A brief summary of the assessment by the examiners.
  - Do mention any other aspect that has a direct bearing on the final evaluation of the dissertation; and
  - Attach to the report all communication with examiners who could not be present at the oral, which should explain the reasons for their absence, and express their endorsement of the result.
  - The HoD ought to have the final approval and sign off the Final Supervisor Report.
- l. The examination process is completed after the oral examination, completion of the corrections required by the examination panel, and successful submission of the supervisor report to [medphd@sun.ac.za](mailto:medphd@sun.ac.za).
- m. Dissertations in the FMHS may only be re-examined once. The chair of the CPR may, upon request from the HoD, increase this by one additional occasion – with motivation. The Chair of the CPR makes the final decision.
- n. On the successful completion of the examination process, the faculty requires that all final supervisor reports are presented to the CPR for acceptance and subsequently to the Faculty Board for recommendation of results. The final approval of results will rest with the University Senate.
- o. If the conferment of the doctorate is recommended unanimously by the examination panel, the Faculty Board's recommendation is included in the Recommendation Report to the Executive Committee of Senate (EC(S)) and final approval of results will rest with Senate.
- p. If the conferment of the Doctorate is not recommended unanimously by the examination panel, the Faculty Board's recommendation should be included in the Recommendation Report to the EC(S) and Senate.

#### 4. Cases of dispute

The following alternatives to a unanimous conferment of a Doctorate exist:

- a. On completion of the examination process, there is no unanimous recommendation that the Doctorate be conferred upon the candidate. Improvements, as recommended by the examiners, must be made and the amended dissertation must be re-examined by the examiners. The written reports submitted to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office will determine whether the examination panel decides that the candidate may present for an oral examination.
- b. If unanimity on the result of the examination process can still not be reached, a minimum of two external assessors must be appointed.
  - i. If the examiners examined different fields of specialty within the research field, one of the external assessors must be a specialist in the research field of the examiner(s) who did not recommend a pass.
  - ii. The external assessors are approved during a process when names of external assessors are submitted via the relevant Postgraduate Committee to the Committee for Postgraduate Research (CPR) and the Faculty Board. The Faculty Board makes the final recommendation regarding the appointment of the external assessors and convey this, by means of the Communications Report, to the EC(S) and Senate.
  - iii. The external assessors must work through the extensive report by the Chairperson of the CPR, which includes the candidate's points of view, the anonymous reports of the examiners and the Doctoral dissertation and consider the criticism of the examiners factually.
  - iv. The reports of the external assessors, which indicate how the dispute must be handled, are made available to the Chairperson of the CPR.
  - v. If the external assessors cannot reach unanimity on the conferment of the Doctorate, it may be required that the Doctoral candidate adapt the dissertation for unanimity to be reached.
  - vi. If the external assessors still cannot reach unanimity after this process, the Chairperson of the CPR must confer with the external assessors to resolve the differences.
  - vii. The reports of the external assessors (unanimity or not) are submitted to the CPR for consideration. The relevant faculty committee makes a recommendation to the Faculty Board. The Faculty Board's recommendation is included in the Recommendation Report to the EC(S) and Senate.
  - viii. After the final decision on the conferment of the relevant Doctorate has been made, Chairperson of the CPR informs the examiners and assessors of Senate's decision.
- c. If after the first examination process, the examination panel recommend unanimously that the Doctorate may not be conferred upon the candidate:
  - i. The unanimous recommendation of the examiners is that the Doctorate may not be conferred upon the candidate and that the dissertation may not be resubmitted for examination.
  - ii. The decision is final, and no dispute process will be followed. The non-conferment of the Doctorate is included in the Recommendation Report of the Faculty Board to the EC(S) and Senate.

## M. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Although a doctoral dissertation may be submitted for examination at any time following the appointment of examiners, a student may not graduate with a doctorate before the 4<sup>th</sup> semester of registration for the PhD.
2. Supervisors should guide candidates to aim for submission ahead of the deadlines in advance of graduation dates. Though final cut-off dates are indicated for submission, at no stage can inclusion in a particular graduation ceremony be guaranteed, regardless of early submission. No faculty-wide final deadline for supervisor reports can be provided, as the examination process must run its full and proper course.
3. The examination process must be completed before the submission of a result for graduation purposes can be contemplated. This includes the receipt of all examiner reports; interim steps: dealing with examiner requirements, revisions, and possible re-examination(s); thereafter, the successful completion of the oral; and the submission, to the Tygerberg Doctoral Office, of the final supervisor report; a separate bullet list of corrections made, and the final dissertation. Once all these documents have been received, the Tygerberg Doctoral Office will prepare the supporting documents for formal recommendation of the result.
4. Every candidate is finally required to furnish SUNScholar with one copy of the dissertation in PDF format electronically, with sensitive personal information such as signatures and telephone numbers removed from the preliminary pages. This must be done via the thesis/dissertation nomination system. It is critically important to place an embargo on sections of the dissertation that may still be patented or published. Please note this upload is a requirement for Senate approval as per the Stellenbosch University calendar. During this submission process, the supervisor shall be given the option of holding the dissertation back from being released on the open website for a period of no longer than six months to provide an opportunity for publication. Full particulars regarding the PDF format, as well as the process to be followed, are provided on the website at <http://library.sun.ac.za/>.
5. Once all these requirements have been met satisfactorily, results are recommended to Senate. On Senate approval, a letter of completion will be issued to the candidate by the registrar's division.
6. Note: SU offers optional facilities for the duplication and binding of dissertations. Obtain particulars from SUN Media, Basement, Clinical Building, Tygerberg campus, tel 021 938 9547.
7. A graduation ceremony is the nationally regulated event at which formal certification occurs. Prior to this, the degree has not been earned. Kindly comply with the institutional requirements and timelines for graduation.
8. Should a letter of completion be required at an earlier stage, this can be requested from the Faculty Administrator, Centre for Academic Administration (Tygerberg campus), but only after the result has served at the Committee for Postgraduate Research (CPR), which meets quarterly. The Tygerberg Doctoral Office, which falls within the FMHS Division for Research and Internationalisation Support (DRIS) and not the Registrar's Responsibility Centre, is not permitted to assist with such a letter.
9. Graduations are arranged centrally, by the Registrar's Responsibility Centre. No advance insight is available to staff outside the responsible office. The most recent available information is provided [at this link](#).

## N. OUTPUTS

1. The major deliverable for new doctoral students is a doctoral research proposal approved first by the supervisor/s, then by a properly constituted review panel, and then by the most suitable SU research ethics committee.
2. The primary research output of a PhD programme in the FMHS is a doctoral dissertation - of any approved format - reporting on primary research. Formatting and editing (and their costs) are the responsibility of the candidate. Candidates are welcome to approach the [SU Language Centre](#) for editing services.
3. At no stage may a doctoral student submit plagiarised work, or work generated by another individual or by means of artificial intelligence, as their own original work.
4. Data collected or generated for the purpose of doctoral research at SU, belongs to SU, and may be uploaded to SUNScholarData for possible use in future research. Careful attention should be paid to the timing and possible embargo of such uploads to avoid any detrimental impact on the publication or patenting of research outputs. More information may be obtained from the [SU Library](#).
5. All candidates are expected to publish in [indexed journals](#) from their dissertations. Stellenbosch University must be indicated as the affiliation of the author/s. [This link](#) contains information on applications for the following two options for publication support:
  - a. The SU library has agreements with numerous publishers for discounts on or waivers of the usual publication fees.
  - b. The Senate research committee of the FMHS, Subcommittee C, has a limited fund for supporting open access publications.
6. It is the responsibility of each main, internal (SU) supervisor to ensure all research outputs emanating from doctoral studies are included in the academic environment's reporting of publications to the Department of Higher Education for formal recognition and subsidy purposes before the deadline mentioned in the annual SU call to report outputs. Should you have queries in this regard, please contact Ms Dalene Pieterse on tel 021 808 3557 or email address [mver@sun.ac.za](mailto:mver@sun.ac.za).
7. Where intellectual outcomes of the doctoral research can be commercialised through the formation of spin-out companies, licensing, patenting, or trademark registration, candidates or their supervisors may contact [Innovus](#), a division of Stellenbosch University that is responsible for technology transfer, entrepreneurial support and development, and innovation.

## O. CONTACT DETAILS FOR FAQs

SUNStudent application issues	SU Client Services	<a href="mailto:info@sun.ac.za">info@sun.ac.za</a>
International pre-registration / visa letters	Tygerberg International	<a href="mailto:stimm@sun.ac.za">stimm@sun.ac.za</a> ; <a href="mailto:TIOinfo@sun.ac.za">TIOinfo@sun.ac.za</a> <a href="mailto:CC tyg-phd@sun.ac.za">CC tyg-phd@sun.ac.za</a>
Student fees or accounts	Ms Lesanne Matthee	<a href="mailto:lm@sun.ac.za">lm@sun.ac.za</a>
Personal details on SU system, including own contact details; proof of registration	<a href="#">Click here to access My.SUN</a>	
Postgraduate residence options	<a href="#">SU private accommodation page</a>	Click on Tygerberg Accredited Accommodation
Details on SU system; residences	SU Client Services	Email <a href="mailto:info@sun.ac.za">info@sun.ac.za</a> Tel 021 808 9111
Password reset	<a href="#">Click here to manage your password</a>	
Download research software	<a href="#">Click here to visit the software hub</a>	
Other technical assistance	Option 1: <a href="#">Log a call with service desk</a>	Option 2: email <a href="mailto:help@sun.ac.za">help@sun.ac.za</a>
Proof of registration / academic record	Centre for Academic Administration	<a href="mailto:fmhsregistration@sun.ac.za">fmhsregistration@sun.ac.za</a> / <a href="mailto:records@sun.ac.za">records@sun.ac.za</a>
<b>All PhD-related queries</b>	<b>Tygerberg Doctoral Office</b> <a href="http://www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice">www.sun.ac.za/fmhsdoctoraloffice</a>	<b><a href="mailto:tyg-phd@sun.ac.za">tyg-phd@sun.ac.za</a></b>
Tygerberg Postgraduate Student Council	<a href="https://blogs.sun.ac.za/tpsc/">https://blogs.sun.ac.za/tpsc/</a>	<a href="mailto:tpscchair@sun.ac.za">tpscchair@sun.ac.za</a>
CHPE PhD community of practice	Ms Edwardine Marais	<a href="mailto:Marais5678@sun.ac.za">Marais5678@sun.ac.za</a>
Postgraduate Office courses	<a href="#">Postgraduate Office Skills Development page</a>	<a href="mailto:alisonb@sun.ac.za">alisonb@sun.ac.za</a>
Research funding	FMHS <a href="#">Research Capacity and Development</a> office	
Campus mental health support	Tel 021 927 7020	
Campus security (emergency)	Tel 021 938 9507	
Campus emergency response	Tel 010 205 3032	
SU Disability Unit	<a href="#">Disability Unit</a>	<a href="mailto:disability@sun.ac.za">disability@sun.ac.za</a> Tel 021 808 4707
FMHS equality champions	<a href="#">Click here to Meet our Equality Champions</a>	
Language centre (editing and translation)	Mr Cobus Snyman	<a href="mailto:fpsnyman@sun.ac.za">fpsnyman@sun.ac.za</a>
PhD exam submissions <u>only</u>	Head: Tygerberg Doctoral Office	<a href="mailto:medphd@sun.ac.za">medphd@sun.ac.za</a>
Publication support	<a href="#">Subcommittee C fund for supporting open access publications</a>	
Reporting research outputs	Ms Daléne Pieterse	<a href="mailto:mver@sun.ac.za">mver@sun.ac.za</a>
Licensing, patenting, spin-off companies, trademark registration	<a href="#">Innovus</a>	<a href="mailto:info@innovus.co.za">info@innovus.co.za</a>
Letter of completion requests	Letter of completion requests	<a href="mailto:fmhsregistration@sun.ac.za">fmhsregistration@sun.ac.za</a>
Consolidoc or Postdoc applications	Ms Sindiswa Mzizi	<a href="mailto:postdocinfo@sun.ac.za">postdocinfo@sun.ac.za</a>