

	Month _____										
Deadlines											
Research Steps											
Skills Needed											
Support											

YEAR ONE

	Month _____										
Deadlines											
Research Steps											
Skills Needed											
Support											

YEAR TWO

# plan it

My research map from start to finish



## RESEARCH SUPPORT TO UTILISE

When plotting your activities on your planner, it is important to investigate what is available to you and then to incorporate the supports relevant to you into your project plan, like:

**The Postgraduate Research Degree Toolkit** An interactive resource with guides and tips from the beginning stages of considering a research degree, all the way through to writing up (Available on our Postgraduate Skills Development website). Use this toolkit in conjunction with this planner.

Our Postgraduate Skills Development Programme hosts a number of workshops free to SU postgraduates! Sign up via our website: [www.sun.ac.za/pgo/pgskills](http://www.sun.ac.za/pgo/pgskills).

For students who cannot be on campus, see the online courses available on the SUNLearn e-learning platform ([learn.sun.ac.za](http://learn.sun.ac.za)). Search and self-enrol for the Post Skills Dev-2019 Postgraduate Skills Development module.

**Postgraduate Times Newsletter** Sign up for our monthly Skills Development newsletter for news about events and opportunities for postgraduates (via [www.sun.ac.za/pgo/pgskills](http://www.sun.ac.za/pgo/pgskills))

**Library and Information Training** Your faculty librarian is one of the most important resources at your disposal. Search for your librarian here: <http://library.sun.ac.za>.

Essential free training to support your research. Visit: <http://library.sun.ac.za> for training dates, or contact your faculty librarian for individual training.

A high-level research environment, exclusively for Master's, doctoral students and researchers is in the main Library (Stellenbosch)

**Library Research Commons**

**Research Methodology Support** Our Skills Development Programme offers a generic 3-day Creating your thesis or dissertation workshop that covers research methodology. Faculties offer specialised courses on methodology - find out from your supervisor or departmental research administrator what your faculty offers. In addition, SU has a number of accredited short courses.

## INTRODUCTION

This planner is brought to you by the Postgraduate Skills Development team in the Postgraduate Office (PGO). It has been designed to help you create a customized project plan for your research degree.

A project plan will turn a seemingly daunting task into a series of attainable steps. Since one can easily drift aimlessly, planning will give you the drive and momentum to complete your research degree on time.

While it is inevitable that you encounter some surprises along the way, planning reduces the chances of things going wrong and minimises the damage when they do.

A project plan, used in conjunction with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), provides a useful structure for discussions between you and your supervisor.

Whether you work in a highly structured research team or mostly on your own, you remain responsible for finishing your thesis/dissertation on time. The goal is to become an independent scholar, able to design and manage your own research programme. We hope this planner will assist you on your journey in obtaining this goal.

The Postgraduate Skills Development Team



See: [www.shortcourses.sun.ac.za](http://www.shortcourses.sun.ac.za) and the African Doctoral Academy: [www.sun.ac.za/ada](http://www.sun.ac.za/ada)

**Writing Workshops and Consultations** Various workshops and consultations throughout the year to improve your scientific writing skills. Free writing consultations to SU students to discuss their written work. Skype sessions can be arranged for students who are off-campus. See: <http://www0.sun.ac.za/languagecentre>.

**Editing Support** Editors check layout, language and references. Professional editing is expensive, so rather wait until your final draft has been approved by your supervisor. Follow your department's guidelines on editing. Book your editor long in advance and leave at least two weeks before submission for the editor to do a good job. See [www.sun.ac.za/pgo/pgskills](http://www.sun.ac.za/pgo/pgskills) for more on how to find editors.

**Information Technology Online Survey Support** If required, consult: <http://infoteg.sun.ac.za/advsup/surveys.htm>.

**Statistical Support** If required, make an appointment with a qualified statistician at the Centre for Statistical Consultation (CSC): <https://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/csc>, during the planning phase, not only when it is time to do data analysis.

**Central Analytical Facilities** Complex scientific analytical multi-user research equipment <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/faculty/science/CAF>

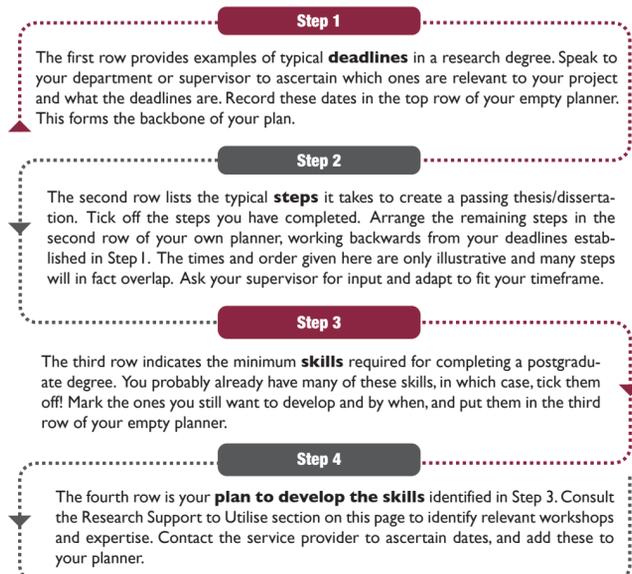
**Enhancing Postgraduate Environments (EPE) website** South African contextualized research-related resources designed to support postgraduates and their supervisors. Visit this valuable open access site to enrich your research journey: [www.postgradenvironments.com](http://www.postgradenvironments.com)

**African Institute for atlas.ti** Rigorous qualitative research analysis support [www.sun.ac.za/english/entities/ada/aia](http://www.sun.ac.za/english/entities/ada/aia)

Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	
Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12
<b>STARTING OUT</b>	<b>MID-TERM GOALS</b>	<b>FINAL COUNTDOWN</b>	<b>YOUR FUTURE</b>								
<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose a research topic</li> <li>Do preliminary research</li> <li>Improve literature search strategy</li> <li>Find and use relevant references/databases</li> <li>Use Mendeley</li> <li>Formulate a research question or hypothesis</li> </ul> <p><b>Understand:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The research process</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact supervisor to discuss expectations and sign an agreement/MoU</li> <li>Ascertain submission requirements for ethical approval (if required) and for thesis/dissertation</li> <li>Decide on a topic</li> <li>Do preliminary research</li> <li>Finalise hypothesis or research question</li> <li>Start detailed secondary research</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact faculty librarian</li> <li>Show draft project plan to supervisor</li> <li>Continue detailed secondary research project</li> <li>Organise secondary research notes</li> <li>Write Chapter 1 (Background info and research problem)</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise your information</li> <li>Create a template for your research</li> <li>Use word processing software (e.g. MSWord)</li> </ul> <p><b>Understand:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The logic of the thesis/dissertation/proposal</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue detailed secondary research</li> <li>Organise secondary research notes</li> <li>Write Chapter 2 (Literature review)</li> <li>Develop research design</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise your information</li> <li>Create a template for your research</li> <li>Use word processing software (e.g. MSWord)</li> </ul> <p><b>Understand:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The logic of the thesis/dissertation/proposal</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop research</li> <li>Write Chapter 3 (Research design)</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop appropriate research method for your research</li> <li>Choose appropriate research instruments</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit to Ethics Committee</li> <li>Hand in proposal</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect data for easy statistical analysis</li> <li>Use relevant research methods/instruments</li> <li>Supervisory relationship</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start data collection</li> <li>Update methods chapter</li> <li>Continue literature review</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect data for easy statistical analysis</li> <li>Capture data using word processing software</li> <li>Analyse data</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalise chapter</li> <li>Write body chapters</li> <li>Write conclusion</li> <li>Finalise introduction</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refine your academic writing</li> <li>Structure a thesis/dissertation</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deal with abstracts</li> <li>Update bibliography</li> <li>Mark your own thesis/dissertation</li> <li>Edit final draft</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edit your own thesis/dissertation</li> <li>Mark your own thesis/dissertation</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit thesis/dissertation for editing</li> <li>Respond to supervisor's comments</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find an editor</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit thesis/dissertation for examination</li> <li>Celebrate your achievement!</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide whether to do a PhD</li> <li>Identify career goals</li> <li>Create a CV</li> <li>Conduct a job interview</li> </ul>	<p><b>During this phase, you should create a project plan with the help of your supervisor. Ascertain key deadlines, research steps, as well as the support and resources you will need. Build your research report as you go along; do not leave writing to the end.</b></p> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Load thesis/dissertation onto SunScholar; have it printed (optional)</li> <li>Apply for PhD/job</li> </ul> <p><b>How to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare your reality by talking to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential supervisors from research in your field</li> <li>Your family/friends and employer: Will they support your PhD?</li> <li>The Postgraduate Office</li> </ul> </li> <li>Find funding for your research</li> </ul>	

## HOW TO USE THIS PLANNER

This planner lists everything that needs to happen for you to complete your research degree. In the sample calendar provided, all the steps, actions and deadlines have been squeezed into one year; but this is not realistic and is merely an example. Follow the steps below to draw up your own customised plan on the planner, spreading the steps out over as many years as you plan on using to complete your degree. Discuss your draft plan with your supervisor. There might be steps unique to your field. If you make the changes suggested by your supervisor and do everything listed in your customised planner, with much hard work and focus, you should be able to complete your research degree on time.



## OTHER USEFUL PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

This hard copy style of planner may not be for you, you need to work out what type of 'tool' will get you through. Other viable options are drawing up a **Gantt chart** to plot your project via a bar chart, or using electronic tools such as free web-based Gantt generators like <http://www.tomsp planner.com>. If you're not keen on a Gantt chart you could plan your project on a **regular calendar**, or on an e-version calendar such as Microsoft Outlook's calendar or Mac's iCalendar.

## YOUR SUPERVISOR

Although there are many services at SU to help you complete your research degree on time, your supervisor remains the main guide and authority on your postgraduate journey.

**Tip 1:** Incorporate the discussion of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** into your first few discussions with your supervisor (if not initiated by your supervisor). The MoU will give structure to your project management – it will form an outline covering when and how you hope to achieve your target and clarify certain expectations in the process. If your department does not have an MoU, see an example of an MoU that can be tailored to your context on [www.sun.ac.za/pgo/pgskills](http://www.sun.ac.za/pgo/pgskills).

**Tip 2:** Use the information provided in this planner to inform your discussions with your supervisor. Your supervisor will welcome you showing the initiative. Although, even in a structured research environment you should manage your own effort and contribution, it is still both wise and respectful to get your supervisor's input. Most of the skills and steps discussed in this planner are generic, for discipline-specific skills and steps, your supervisor will guide and advise you.

The printing of this research planner was originally co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

