

# DOCTORAL NEEDS ANALYSIS FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT

Stellenbosch University, Postgraduate Office

FIRSTLY

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# THANK YOU

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FOR COMPLETING THE  
SURVEY

Thank you for participating in the Postgraduate Office survey on doctoral students needs during July 2021.

This communication aims to provide you with feedback, and information about several existing workshops and webinars hosted by our Postgraduate Office and other support services at Stellenbosch University (SU), and to announce new offerings that have been put in place in response to the survey findings.

After reviewing the survey responses carefully, we identified broad areas that indicated specific needs. We have compiled feedback in this communication accordingly.

Note that this document has been set up as an interactive guide so you can click on linked headings and text for further information.

**Dorothy Stevens**  
Director Postgraduate Office

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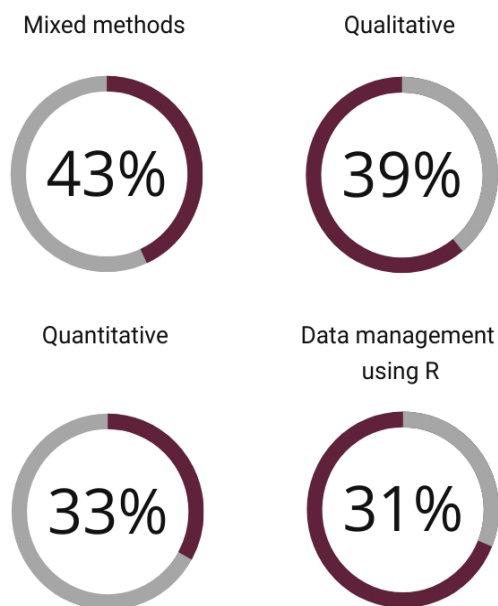
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# 1 | OVERVIEW OF SURVEY RESULTS

The graphics below illustrate the survey respondents' needs for specific training.

## Top four results

### Training required for research design and methods skills

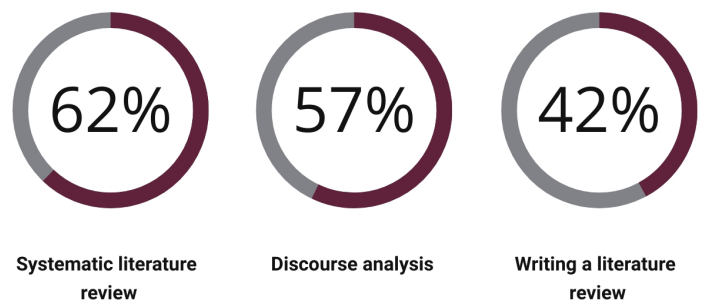


### Training required for communication skills



### Training required for knowledge of specific area of research

Students were asked which courses they believed would help them acquire broad, well-informed, and current knowledge.



65%

The meaning of making an original contribution to scholarship.

53%

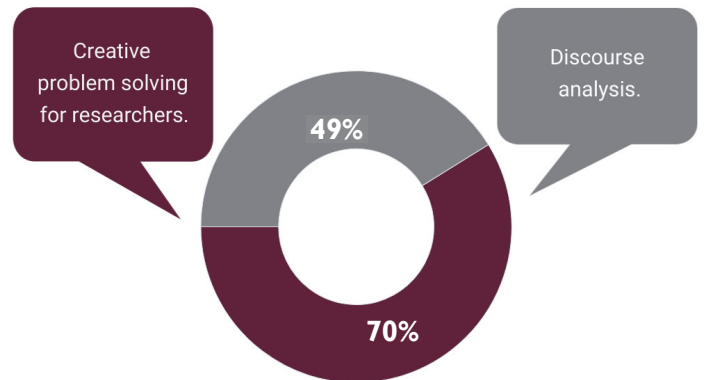
Conducting original research in a unique multicultural and multilingual settings.

## Original research and contribution

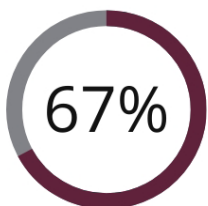
Participants were asked which courses they believed would improve their understanding of what it means to make an 'original contribution' to a field of study. Sixty-five percent of respondents indicated a course on the meaning of making an original contribution to scholarship would be useful. Fifty three percent of respondents indicated a course on conducting original research in unique multicultural and multilingual settings would be useful. Eighteen percent of students did not feel any course would be useful.

## Critical and analytical thinking

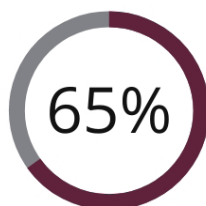
Seventy percent of all the respondents indicated a need for training in creative problem solving for researchers and almost half for training in discourse analysis.



Rules of authorship



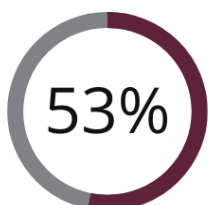
Copyright issues



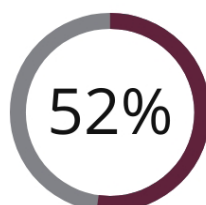
## Ethical awareness

Students were asked which courses they believed would improve their ethical awareness. Around two thirds of respondents indicated that a course on rules of authorship of academic publications and a course on copyright issues in dissertation writing would be useful.

Research integrity and ethics



Academic writing integrity



# COMMUNICATION

## *Presentations, Public Speaking and Science Communication*

Twenty-nine percent of survey respondents indicated that they had trouble communicating their research. Some respondents requested courses that would show where and how to publish research as well as courses that will improve their presentation skills. Our Postgraduate Skills Development Programme has a few existing and new workshops and webinars in place to assist students in improving their communication and digital literacy skills.

### Presenting impactfully



Our Programme hosts *PowerPoint for Effective Presentations* workshops annually. In these workshops participants learn clever design tips and tricks to create streamlined, visually appealing slides for impactful academic presentations.

### Speaking confidently



This year our Programme introduced a new workshop called *Delivering talks with Confidence*. This workshop is an introduction to public speaking skills and focuses on improving postgraduates' oral presentations when delivering academic knowledge or research content to different audiences.

### Communicating publicly



Our Programme hosts FameLab science communication training and heats annually. FameLab is an international competition for researchers in the STEMIE fields. Participants learn to communicate their research to the public in just three-minutes! In addition to FameLab training, our Programme is putting together two new science communication resources for all SU postgraduates in 2022!

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# PUBLISHING YOUR RESEARCH

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## Article Writing for Publication

To make information on publishing your research more accessible to a wider range of postgraduates, our Programme hosted a new webinar on *Preparing for Publication* during September 2021, which served as an introduction to the skills needed for turning postgraduate research into an academic journal article. Our Programme also hosts 5-day Article Writing for Publication writing retreats through faculties on a biannual rotational basis.

## Understanding Academic Authorship

Our Programme hosts a couple of *Understanding Academic Authorship* webinars annually. These webinars focus on questionable authorship practices, including “guest” and “ghost” authorships, South African researchers’ perceptions of authorship, and how to apply the principles of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) - with particular reference to co-authorship between postgraduate students and their supervisors.

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## Article writing workshops, courses, and webinars

The Language Centre’s Writing Lab offers a workshop on *Writing Academic Articles*, which registered SU students can attend at a discounted fee. Contact the Writing Lab for further information. PhD candidates can also apply to attend the African Doctoral Academy’s (ADA), *Writing and Publishing an Article during the Doctorate* short course. Enquire with the ADA when the next opportunity will be taking place and about the costs involved.

Furthermore, the Library and Information Services offers training on making important decisions about publishing your research. This webinar assists postgraduates on choosing the right journal, understanding the accreditation system, the benefits of open access, the peer review process, etc.

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# TECHNICAL SKILLS

## *Formatting, Analysis and Data Management*

Survey respondents requested training on various data management software to assist them in the analysis of their research.

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A number of requests were made in the survey for training on data management and software that can aid data management.

The Library and Information Services hosts a range of free training sessions on data management, data visualisation, formatting your dissertation, reference management, statistics and much more through their #SmartResearcher webinars which aim to address important aspects of the research process.

SU has a software hub where students can download a range of quantitative and qualitative data management software - free of charge. You can access software such as ATLAS.ti, SPSS, Statistica, SAS, amongst others.

In addition, students can download the latest Microsoft Suite from My.SUN giving you free access to MS Word, MS Excel, PowerPoint and other helpful Microsoft applications.



Furthermore, our Programme hosts a range of workshops to assist you in data management and dissertation formatting. We also list information on data visualisation and dissertation formatting under Resources on our website. This includes information on using Latex. Formatting especially should not be left to the end of your dissertation. Make sure to access these resources as soon as possible during your studies.



**MS Excel for  
Research Data  
Management**



**MS Word for Thesis  
or Dissertation  
Formatting**



**ATLAS.ti for  
Qualitative Data  
Management**

## School for Data Science and Computational Thinking

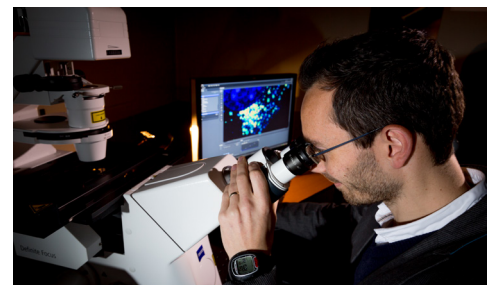
The School for Data Science and Computational Thinking was launched in July 2019 with a vision to be a world-class institution in and for Africa. Through the School's African Data Science Academy, participants can attend a variety of courses such as *Introduction to Statistics using R*, *Introduction to Data Ethics*, *Fundamentals of Deep Learning*, amongst other introductory courses for data science and computational thinking. Interested students can contact them for further information.

## Centre for Statistical Consultation

The Centre for Statistical Consultation (CSC) assists postgraduate students and researchers in the design, implementation, analysis and interpretation of their data. Postgraduates can set up a consultation with the CSC.

## Central Analytical Facilities

CAF offers scientific tests and analytical expertise to science, health and engineering students and researchers, as well as related businesses. Postgraduates in these fields can access CAF's specialized scientific equipment. As a postgraduate you can also hand in your samples to receive advice on your research from CAF staff.



# CONDUCTING YOUR RESEARCH



## Academic writing training

Our Programme contracts the Language Centre's Writing Lab in to present designated academic writing workshops for SU postgraduates annually. These workshops, that form part of our offering, cover introduction to academic writing, literature reviews and academic writing for theses and dissertations. The PGO covers the cost of these designated workshops, which allows SU postgraduates to attend these workshops free of charge.

Note that our Programme's academic writing workshops are separate to the Writing Lab's workshop offering advertised on their website. The latter workshops come at a noticeably discounted cost to SU students and staff, which is helpful if you missed one of ours.

Postgraduates can also attend a short webinar on the literature review through the SU Library.



## Writing and language support

Consult the Language Centre's website for new and continuing online writing and language support. This includes free writing consultations via MS Teams.



## Reading support

Participants in the survey sought training that can improve reading skills. The Reading Lab at the Language Centre assists students to read and study with greater ease and understanding. The Reading Lab offers free consultation sessions to discuss your unique reading needs and to

determine a feasible plan of action, free reading coaching, reading courses in the form of tailor-made workshops, access to EyeBrainGym reading software for speed reading and comprehension development, and general assessments using standardised reading tests.



## Creating your thesis or dissertation

This three-day workshop hosted by our Programme is open to all SU postgraduate students from different faculties. The workshop covers the full research process, from the proposal stage, all the way through to research design and methodology, and thesis writing.

The aim in the workshop is to demystify the research process and to help postgraduates complete a high-quality thesis or dissertation in good time.

Postgraduates who want an overview or recap of research design and methodology will also find this workshop helpful.



## Research project management

This year our Programme implemented a new *Project Management Principles for Postgraduate Researchers* workshop to assist SU postgraduates with the planning of their research projects. Our Programme also has a *Research Project Management* page

available under Resources on our website. Here we house our *plan.it* resource — an online research management calendar guide that covers the important milestones and processes of the SU research journey.

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Participants requested additional training in qualitative as well as quantitative research.

### Training on qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research

Doctoral students looking to improve their quantitative and qualitative skills can register for training at the African Doctoral Academy (ADA) — they offer: *The fundamentals of research design and methods* short course, *The quantitative PhD: from philosophy to study design* course, and *Data analysis and reporting intersecting qualitative with mixed methods research*:

*Design and implementation* and *Introduction to qualitative research design and methodology* short courses. These courses do come at a cost.

You can also make use of a range of research methodology books and e-resources through the Library and Information Services.

# REFERENCING, SOURCE MANAGEMENT AND COPYRIGHT

## **Mendeley – literature and reference management application**

The Library and Information Services offer training in Mendeley, which is very useful reference management software. You can also access referencing style lists on the Library's website, attend training on referencing, and consult with your Faculty Librarian for specific assistance.

The Language Centre's Writing Lab offers free writing consultations to SU students and staff that includes referencing support.

## **Turnitin – similarity detection software**

According to SU's plagiarism policy, Master's and doctoral students must submit their thesis or dissertation to Turnitin (or a similar similarity detector) before submitting it for examination. We recommend that postgraduates use a Turnitin sandbox or playground. A sandbox allows you to submit your refined draft multiple times to improve your academic writing integrity so use it throughout your writing up and not just at the end! We have listed further training material on Turnitin under Resources on our website. If your department does not have a designated sandbox, you can either self-enrol to use our Postgraduate Skills Development Turnitin sandbox housed on SUNLearn or contact the Library to access their sandbox.

## **Copyright information**

Access training on intellectual property and copyright through the Library and Information Services. Our Postgraduate Office has also listed information on intellectual property in our *Postgraduate Studies Guide* (pp. 55-57). Alternatively, you can contact the Copyright Office at Innovus for any copyright enquiries, email: [info@innovus.co.za](mailto:info@innovus.co.za)

# GETTING ETHICS CLEARANCE



As a postgraduate researcher, if you intend to do research with:

- people or their identifiable information,
- animals,
- hazardous biological organisms,

ethics clearance is required *before* you can start your data collection.

To guide you in obtaining ethics clearance and in gaining awareness of ethical research conduct, our Division for Research Development (DRD) has created explainer videos and podcasts that are housed in our SUNLearn online training module. These resources explain important principles regarding research ethics and the ethics clearance process at SU.

Contact the relevant DRD ethics administrator or email the Ethics Application Helpdesk [applyethics@sun.ac.za](mailto:applyethics@sun.ac.za) to amend, follow-up or start your ethics clearance application. It is important that you act swiftly to avoid delays:

## **Human Research (Humanities):**

Ms Clarissa Graham ([cgraham@sun.ac.za](mailto:cgraham@sun.ac.za))

## **Animal Ethics and Biosafety:**

Mr Aden Williams ([aden@sun.ac.za](mailto:aden@sun.ac.za))

## **Health Research Ethics (FMHS):**

Mrs Elvira Rohland ([elr@sun.ac.za](mailto:elr@sun.ac.za))

## **General ethics enquires:**

Mr Aden Williams ([applyethics@sun.ac.za](mailto:applyethics@sun.ac.za))

# Managing your supervisor relationship



Stellenbosch University publishes a Code of Conduct in the Calendar (Policies and Rules, Part I, General). This acts as a reference to guide the relationship between you and your supervisor to ensure that the relationship is conducive to successful studies at SU.

The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between supervisor and postgraduate student is compulsory at Stellenbosch University. The postgraduate Office has put together a template of an MoU. This template MoU can be used as a guide to supplement an existing MoU. Your department may have a specific template they would prefer you to use – check with your supervisor first. Postgraduates are encouraged to re-visit the MoU with their supervisor at the beginning of each academic year to discuss any changes and expectations.

If you have a grievance or wish to pursue any matter relating to academic departments or the university administration, you can address such matters as follows:

### **Academic issues**

Try to resolve your concern with your supervisor first. Failing this, contact the Head of your Department or Dean of your Faculty if your supervisor is the Head of your Department.

### **Administrative issues**

Contact the Postgraduate Office

Email: [postgraduate@sun.ac.za](mailto:postgraduate@sun.ac.za)

Tel: 021 808 4208

# RECEIVING COUNSELLING AND CAREER ADVICE

## **Careers Office:**

The Careers Office hosts a range of workshops to assist students in marketing themselves for the workplace. Additional information on honing your interview skills or updating your CV and cover letter is housed on their website. You can also find other resources to assist you to better equip yourself for the world of work on their website. Note that these resources must be accessed while you are a registered student. Sign up for the MatiesCareers portal to receive alerts on job opportunities!

For those who requested support on career advice in their survey responses, contact the Centre for Student Recruitment and Career Advice, which offers advice and counselling to current students, alumni and prospective students wishing to further their studies.

## **Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services:**

The Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services offers individual, group therapy and work sessions. Confidential and professional services are offered by psychologists and registered counsellors. The Unit offers psychotherapy for a broad spectrum of problems that students experience, e.g., depression, high stress levels, adjustment problems, substance abuse, relationship, or family problems, etc. The Unit has implemented screening sessions for the Stellenbosch campus students to facilitate students who are experiencing psychological challenges.

## **More information**

For further information on how the CSCD can support you, see their website: <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/student-affairs/cscd>

## 6 | ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Enhancing Postgraduate Environments

The EPE website includes a range of free and interactive materials covering various aspects of the postgraduate journey.

### Academic resources page

Our Programme's website houses many more useful research-related resources to assist you in achieving postgraduate success.

### Postgraduate support services

We also list links to other specialised support services available to you as postgraduate at SU.

## 5 GOOD REASONS REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TRAINING AND SUPPORT AT SU!

“...having studied previously at the other big WC university and also having worked there, the administrative support I've received at Stellenbosch is INCREDIBLE. I also really enjoyed the ADA courses I've taken, and am appreciative of the way that every Dept I have contact with seems to really value me, and is remarkably efficient. Only good things to say really! Thank you!”

“Workshops offered by academic colleagues and the Library sessions have all been very helpful together with digital tools which can be accessed to pick up tips for writing etc.”

“The Postgraduate Skills Development courses offered at Stellenbosch University have really helped me to acquire skills and competence in my doctoral studies. Continue providing postgraduate skills development to students.”

“Everything in the PG Skills MS Word for Thesis Formatting workshop was important, I never understood how to use MS Word correctly but I learned so many new applications to edit a document.”

“The interaction during the (Postgraduate Skills Development Programme's ATLAS.ti) workshop was brilliant! I was captured at every moment and the facilitator kept the sessions lively and interesting.”



## CLOSING COMMENTS:

For further information on postgraduate funding, joint degrees, enrolment support and skills development, see our Postgraduate Office website: [www.sun.ac.za/pgo](http://www.sun.ac.za/pgo)

Note that our Postgraduate Office Welcome and Orientation webpage contains links to various additional support and information at the university. See the following link: <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/postgraduate-office/welcoming-orientation>

For information on postdoctoral research fellowships, see the following link: <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/postdocs>