



## Higher Degrees Policy

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## RELATED DOCUMENTS

<b>• UJ documents</b>	<b>Other</b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (e.g. Policies, Regulations, Guidelines, Contracts)</li> <li>• <b>Higher Degrees Administration: Structures and Processes</b></li> <li>• <b>UJ Annual Academic Regulations</b></li> <li>• <b>Faculty Regulations</b></li> <li>• <b>Programme Policy</b></li> <li>• <b>Code of Academic and Research Ethics</b></li> <li>• <b>Guidelines Authorship: Research Output</b></li> <li>• <b>Guidelines on Theses or Dissertations in Article or Essay Format</b></li> <li>• <b>Policy: Recognition of Prior Learning</b></li> <li>• <b>Policy: Assessment</b></li> <li>• <b>Policy on Intellectual Property</b></li> <li>• <b>Policy: Academic Certification and Related Matters</b></li> <li>• <b>Policy: Occupational Safety</b></li> </ul>	<p>(e.g. Legislation, DoE and HEQC directives and guidelines)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HEQC Institutional Audit Criteria</b></li> <li>• <b>HEQC Guidelines for Best Practice in Research Management</b></li> <li>• <b>Higher Education Qualifications Framework</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Stakeholders affected by this document (units and divisions who should be familiar with it):</b></p>	<p><b>Faculty Administrators; Central Academic Administration; Academic Departments; UJ Postgraduate School; Higher Degree Students.</b></p>
<p><b>Website address of this document:</b></p>	<p><b>Intranet</b></p>

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## FOREWORD

This document sets out the policy of the University of Johannesburg (“the University”) on higher degrees, listing minimum requirements as approved by the University’s Senate on the recommendation of its Higher Degrees Committee. **Individual faculties may enact additional rules to address requirements specific to them, although subject to approval by Senate.**

Faculties, with the approval of Senate, may have more stringent rules, and exceptions may apply to this policy as a result of the approved rules.

Any deviations from this policy, for instance as made necessary by discipline-specific or Professional Board requirements, need approval by Senate.

For the purposes of this policy, the term *higher degrees* refers to studies, research, or programmes at the master’s and/or doctoral level, equivalent to level 9 and 10 of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub Framework (HEQSF).

Copies of this document are available on the University’s website.

This document must be read in conjunction with the University’s Academic Regulations, specifically those sections of the Regulations dealing with master’s and doctoral degrees.

**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

<b>TERM</b>	<b>DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION</b>
Senate Higher Degrees Committee (SHDC)	The <b>SHDC</b> , which is a subcommittee of Senate, considers in detail recommendations from the faculties on higher degree-related matters and advises Senate accordingly.
Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC)	The Faculty Higher Degrees Committee is a subcommittee of the Board of Faculty that has the delegated responsibility for the management of all aspects relating to higher degrees at faculty level.
Faculty Higher Degrees Assessment Committee (FHDAC)	Ad hoc or permanent subcommittee of the FHDC that considers matters related to the assessment of minor dissertations, dissertations and theses and makes recommendations to the FHDC and Board of Faculty in this regard.
Executive Dean's Office	The Dean's Office (including the HFA, faculty officer/administrator and his/her staff) is responsible for the administrative structure supporting operations and functions associated with higher degree studies.
Head of Faculty Administration (HFA)	The HFA is finally responsible for the administrative and support functions at faculty level.
Recommendation	Implies no final decision-making authority, but is a necessary step for approval (at a higher level). Recommendation requires substantive consideration informed by insight into a full set of documentation.
Approval	Implies full and final decision-making authority (necessary and sufficient), and requires substantive consideration informed by insight into a full set of documentation.
Ratification	Implies full and final decision-making authority (necessary and sufficient). Differs from "approval" in that it is usually exercised on the basis of insight into only a summary of the relevant documentation while retaining the right to consider all relevant documentation (and the duty to do so where necessary). Because it is in practice more cursory than "approval", ratification typically requires <i>at least one</i> earlier recommendation made on the basis of a substantive consideration informed by insight into a full set of documentation.

<b>TERM</b>	<b>DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION</b>
For noting	Except in extraordinary circumstances, no decision-making authority associated with this step, but may refer matters back for further consideration.

## **1 RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY**

- 1.1 This policy governs all processes leading to the award of higher degrees at the University of Johannesburg, ensuring that our higher degrees meet local and international expectations on academic and procedural rigour and integrity.
- 1.2 The policy also seeks to accommodate expectations that flow from constitutional and other contemporary South African imperatives, such as:
  - 1.2.1 The right to fair treatment;
  - 1.2.2 An open and transparent flow of information;
  - 1.2.3 The need to promote equity;
  - 1.2.4 Active development of historically disadvantaged individuals; and
  - 1.2.5 Improvement in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.

## **2 PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy, **together with the rules and procedures as set out in the document on *Higher Degrees Administration: Structures and Processes***, is to provide a framework for the administration, governance and quality management of higher degree studies and programmes at the University. The framework aims to:
  - 2.1.1 Establish rational and transparent decision-making processes around the governance and administration of higher degree student matters;
  - 2.1.2 Provide for the generation and capture of relevant institutional management information relating to higher degree students and programmes;
  - 2.1.3 Ensure the highest levels of quality care with regard to higher degree studies;
  - 2.1.4 Clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of higher degree students and supervisors;
  - 2.1.5 Ensure fairness and transparency in the treatment of higher degree students and in addressing their concerns; and
  - 2.1.6 Ensure adequate capacity development for the support of higher degree students.

## **3 STRUCTURE AND SCOPE OF THE UNIVERSITY'S HIGHER DEGREES**

- 3.1 This policy outlines generic expectations for all the University's master's and doctoral degrees. Professional body requirements and disciplinary-specific requirements may further modify these expectations, subject to complying with the relevant approvals process. However, this policy sets benchmarks that are not to be relaxed, though they may be tightened by faculty-specific regulations.

## 4 MASTER'S DEGREES

- 4.1 The University offers three distinct types of master's programmes:
- 4.1.1 Research master's degrees, for which the successful completion of a research dissertation is the sole or major academic requirement for graduation; the dissertation (with or without an associated oral component) constitutes 100% of the requirements for the degree.
  - 4.1.2 Coursework master's degrees, for which the minor dissertation (with or without an associated oral component) normally constitutes a minimum of 50% of the requirements for the degree (90 out of a total of 180 credit points). A deviation below 50% requires specific and compelling reasons, with 33.3% being the absolute lower bound. Completion of compulsory formal, taught courses or modules constitutes the remaining part of the requirements of the degree.
  - 4.1.3 Professional master's programmes, for which the research component may be developed and offered in the form of an independent study accounting for at least 25% of the requirements of the degree (45 out of a total of 180 credit points), in line with the applicable standards of the relevant professional body.
- 4.2 The scope of a research master's degree (as governed by HEQSF qualification descriptors) is as follows:
- 4.2.1 A research master's degree equips the student with specialised knowledge of the field and field-appropriate methodologies;
  - 4.2.2 It utilises a self-directed research project as the primary pedagogical vehicle for achieving the objectives of the degree;
  - 4.2.3 The student is not generally expected to make an original theoretical or fundamental contribution to the field of knowledge;
  - 4.2.4 The student is required to demonstrate proficiency in research methods and the ability to apply these methods and work independently;
  - 4.2.5 The core output of a research master's degree is a dissertation in the form of a written document in an appropriate format (with or without an associated oral component), reporting on the various aspects of the research project; and which accounts for 100% of the credits for the degree (see 4.1.1);
  - 4.2.6 The dissertation may consist of a collection of articles or essays, as governed by the *UJ Guidelines on Theses or Dissertations in Article or Essay Format*.
  - 4.2.7 In some cases, the output may be expanded, supplemented or supported through patents, designs, artefacts, computer code, or other material or



- intangible items produced in the course of the research, which faculty regulations may specify as an explicit requirement of the degree;
- 4.2.8 Coursework may be set for pedagogical purposes but cannot carry credits counting toward the award of the degree; and
- 4.2.9 In addition to the dissertation, each master's candidate must submit to the supervisor at least one piece of work in a format suitable for submission to a peer reviewed publication, with a view to possible publication. Authorship of such an article is guided by the *UJ Guidelines Authorship: Research Output*.
- 4.3 The scope of a coursework master's degree (as governed by HEQSF qualification descriptors) is as follows:
- 4.3.1 A coursework master's degree equips the student with specialised knowledge of the field and field-appropriate methodologies;
- 4.3.2 It utilises both coursework and a self-directed research project as the pedagogical vehicles for achieving the objectives of the degree;
- 4.3.3 The student is not generally expected to make an original theoretical or fundamental contribution to the field of knowledge;
- 4.3.4 The student is required to demonstrate proficiency in research methods and the ability to apply these methods and work independently;
- 4.3.5 The core output of the research component is a minor dissertation in the form of a written document, in an appropriate format, reporting on the various aspects of the research project; and which normally accounts for 50% of the credits for the degree (see 4.1.2 and the provision for less than 50%); and is correspondingly more limited in scope than a research master's dissertation, while meeting the same standards of academic rigour;
- 4.3.6 In some cases, the output of the research component may be expanded, supplemented or supported through patents, designs, artefacts, computer code, or other material or intangible items produced in the course of the research, which faculty regulations may specify as an explicit requirement of the degree;
- 4.3.7 Coursework normally carries up to 50% of the credits for the degree (see 4.1.2) and may be assessed in a form which meets discipline-specific norms and standards, but is in keeping with the University's relevant assessment and moderation policy/policies; and
- 4.3.8 In addition to the minor dissertation and completion of coursework modules, each master's candidate must have submitted to the supervisor at least one piece of work in a format suitable for submission to a peer reviewed publication, with a view to possible publication. Authorship of such an article is guided by the *Guidelines Authorship: Research Output*. **Faculty exemptions may be permitted subject to the approval of Faculty Boards although subject to approval by Senate.**

4.4 The scope of a professional master's degree (as governed by HEQSF regulations) is as follows:

4.4.1 A professional master's degree equips the student with a high level of theoretical ability and intellectual independence and the ability to relate

## 5. DOCTORAL DEGREES

5.1 The University offers three types of doctoral programmes:

5.1.2 Doctorate by thesis which could be in the traditional format or a collection of essays or articles;

5.1.2 Professional doctoral degrees; and

5.1.3 Higher doctoral degree.

5.2 The scope of a doctoral degree by thesis (as governed by HEQSF qualification descriptors) is as follows:

5.2.1 It utilises a self-directed research project in order to achieve the objective of the qualification, requiring the candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels;

5.2.2 The doctoral thesis makes a significant and original contribution to the body of knowledge in the discipline or field.

5.2.3 The output of a doctoral degree takes the form either of a conventional thesis or a thesis by collection of essays or articles, as governed by the *UJ Guidelines on Theses or Dissertations in Article or Essay Format* through which the student reports on the various aspects of the research project;

5.2.4 In some cases, the output may be expanded, supplemented or supported through patents, designs, artefacts, computer code, or other material or intangible items produced in the course of the research, which faculty regulations specify as an explicit requirement of the degree.

5.2.5 In addition, each doctoral candidate must have submitted to the supervisor at least **two** pieces of work in a format suitable for submission to a peer reviewed publication, with a view to possible publication. Authorship of such articles is guided by *Guidelines Authorship: Research Output*.

5.3 The scope of a professional doctoral degree (as governed by HEQSF qualification descriptors) is as follows:

5.3.1 A professional doctoral degree provides for high-level education and training for a career in the professions or industry;

5.3.2 It utilises a combination of coursework and advanced research in order to achieve the objective of the qualification, with the research component consisting of at least 60% of the qualification;

- 5.3.3 The student is required to demonstrate the ability to integrate theory with practice through the application of theoretical knowledge to highly complex problems in a wide range of professional contexts.
- 5.4 The higher doctoral degree is a special award to individuals who have demonstrated distinguished scholarship in one or more disciplines of study. The following criteria apply:
  - 5.4.1 A candidate must have demonstrated extraordinary scholarship, evident in a distinguished record of research in the form of published works and/or other scholarly contributions.
  - 5.5.2 Such research is judged by leading international experts to have made an independent and exceptional contribution to one or more disciplines of study.

## **6 INTERDISCIPLINARY DEGREES**

- 6.1 An interdisciplinary degree is one whose formal foundation is not found in just one home discipline; instead, it usually spreads across a combination of two or more disciplines. Faculties determine which department should act as the host or home department for the purpose of registration. In general, supervisors from all relevant departments should participate in guiding the study.
- 6.2 In the case of interdisciplinary degrees, the Executive Dean of the home faculty (i.e. the one originally enrolling the student and registering the study), in consultation with the HoDs concerned and/or supervisors, determines whether the applicant's prior study provides a sufficient foundation for the proposed master's or doctoral study, and may require a supplementary study programme as a condition for admission. Assessment of prior knowledge (which may be an essay or an oral assessment) may be set as a formal prerequisite for admission or continuation. The Executive Dean concerned (as well as other executive deans if involved) signs the application for admission and indicates any conditions that are specified. The research proposal is approved by all supervisors concerned, and is then processed according to the normal procedures in the home faculty. Specific conditions laid down for the programme must be stated in the research proposal.

## **7 ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY'S HIGHER DEGREES**

- 7.1 Students applying for admission to a master's degree (HEQSF level 9) are normally required to hold a qualification at the HEQSF level 8; an Honours degree, a four-year 480-credit Bachelor's degree (with a minimum of 96 credits at level 8), or a postgraduate diploma, in the relevant discipline.
- 7.2 Students applying for admission to a doctoral degree (HEQSF level 10) are normally required to hold a qualification at the HEQSF level 9: a master's degree in the relevant discipline. In addition, candidates for admission to master's and doctoral degrees in general need to have obtained their previous degree with an average mark of at least 65%.

- 7.3 If refused admission, the applicant has the right to request written reasons from the HoD, and may appeal those to the Executive Dean in writing. If the Executive Dean upholds the refusal, the applicant may appeal to the relevant Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC), whose decision is final.
- 7.4 The applications of students who do not satisfy the formal entrance requirements for a specific higher degree programme may be considered in terms of the *Policy: Recognition of Prior Learning* to establish the student's suitability for enrolment in the envisaged degree, or any additional requirements that the student may need to fulfil.
- 7.5 Students may furthermore gain access to higher degree studies through means provided for in the *Policy: Admission and Selection*.
- 7.6 A student who fails a research master's or a doctoral degree will need to reapply for the particular degree and register a new topic if he/she wishes to re-attempt the degree. In the case of a student who fails the minor dissertation of a coursework master's degree, he/she will be given only one more opportunity to attempt the minor dissertation on a new topic, provided that the qualification can still be completed within the prescribed maximum period, with the possibility of an allowable extension. A failed master's dissertation (full or minor), investigative part of the research masters or doctoral thesis may not be resubmitted for examination.

## **8 ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 8.1 There is a clear separation of responsibilities between the students, supervisors, faculties, the Office of the DVC Research, Postgraduate Studies and Library & Information Centre, the Research Office, the Postgraduate School, and associated Senate structures.
- 8.2 For all academic and most operational purposes, the point of contact of post-graduate students is their supervisors, their academic department, and faculty. The University's Research Office is involved in supporting the supervisor-student relations where required.
- 8.3 The UJ Postgraduate School, in collaboration with faculties and other related UJ support functions, supports UJ postgraduate students.
- 8.4 The University provides central statistical support through Statkon. Such support is of a technical nature only and is provided through the initial intervention of the supervisor.
- 8.5 The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Postgraduate Studies and Library & Information Centre in conjunction with faculty officers and academics and committee administration is responsible for overseeing and administering the functions of the Senate Higher Degrees Committee (SHDC), as outlined in this policy.

## **9 SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT**

- 9.1 The provision of adequate supervision and support of higher degree research resides with faculties and relevant support divisions. Specific structures and processes are described in the document *Higher Degrees Administration: Structures and Processes*.

## **10 ASSESSMENT**

Assessment of Higher Degrees is done in accordance with the *Policy: Assessment*. Specific structures and processes relevant to the assessment of Higher Degrees are described in the document *Higher Degrees Administration: Structures and Processes*.

## **11 ETHICS**

- 11.1 The accountability for research ethics resides in Senate which may delegate responsibility in line with principles of governance.
- 11.2 All higher degree students (and supervisors) are expected to familiarise themselves with and adhere to the *Code of Academic and Research Ethics*. For this purpose, all master's and doctoral research proposals must receive ethics clearance before a project can commence.
- 11.3 Executive deans are accountable for ensuring that all research activities in their faculties have undergone the necessary scrutiny and clearance in regard to considerations of research ethics.

## **12 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Health and safety matters attendant on all research activities are subject to the University's *Policy on Occupational Safety*, and are the responsibility of persons and bodies listed in those policies, accountability also being assigned in accordance with the policy.

## **13 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

All higher degree research projects are subject to the University's *Policy on Intellectual Property*, and students are required to signal their adherence to this policy as part of the annual registration process.

## **14 CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE QUALIFICATION**

Certification of compliance with the requirements of the qualification is in accordance with the *Policy: Academic Certification and Related Matters* of the University, with due regard to the responsibility of the candidate, supervisor, relevant faculty administration officer, the Executive Dean of the Faculty and the DVC Research, Postgraduate Studies, Library & Information Centre.