

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Document number:	RIE-001-Rev0
Document name:	Policy for Master's and Doctoral Studies
Co-ordinating Exec Manager / Document owner:	Executive responsible for Research, Innovation and Engagement Executive responsible for Teaching and Learning
Operational manager/s	Executive Deans Deputy Registrar Academic Heads of Department Faculty Officers
Contact & tel. No. for support:	Quality Specialist: Postgraduate Studies 031 373 2013 Faculty Officers / Faculty Research Co-Ordinators
Status:	APPROVED
Approved by:	Senate
Date approved:	13 November 2024
Title of the manager responsible for monitoring policy implementation	Director responsible for Research and Postgraduate Support
Date for next review	Three years from the year of approval
Related Policies	1) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy 2) Language Policy 3) Persons With Disabilities Policy 4) Policy on Institutional Code of Ethics 5) Intellectual Property (IP) policy 6) Policy on Joint - Degrees with International Universities 7) Plagiarism Policy 8) Privacy and Protection of Personal Information Policy 9) Student Records Policy 10) PhD/Doctorate by Publication 11) Policy on Research Integrity, Ethics and Authorship (note concurrent serving at Senate)
Version control	Version 0, revised in 2024

	Supersedes the following Policies: 1) Higher Degrees Assessment Policy 2) Postgraduate Admissions Policy 3) Supervision Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees
--	---

TABLE OF CONTENT

1. PREAMBLE.....	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Purpose	1
1.3 Applicability	1
1.4 Acronyms	2
1.5 Definitions	3
1.6 Procedural Guidelines	7
1.7 Policy Review	7
2. POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS	7
2.1 Legislation governing admission	7
2.2 Student Recruitment	8
2.3 Admissions and Registration	8
2.4 Admission of International students	9
2.5 Recognition of Prior Learning	10
2.6 Departmental Rules	10
3. POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION	10
3.1 Supervision principles	10
3.2 Responsibility for providing supervision.	11
3.3 Factors to be considered when supervisors are allocated	11
3.4 Roles of supervisors and students	12
3.5 Eligibility of supervisors	13
3.6 Internal main supervisor	13
3.7 Internal co-supervisor	14
3.8 External main supervisors and co-supervisors	14
3.9 Clinical/industrial/technical supervisor	15
3.10 Appointment of supervisors	15
3.11 Reappointment of staff who have left the University	16
3.12 Change of supervisory role	16
3.13 Termination of the supervisory role of university staff members	16
3.14 Termination of the supervisory role of honorary/clinical honorary fellows	17
3.15 Considerations for termination of supervisor appointment	17
3.16 Retention of terminated supervisors for remaining candidates	17
3.17 Appeals against termination of supervisor appointment	18
4. HIGHER DEGREES ASSESSMENT	18
4.1 Principles	18
4.2 General rules governing the assessment of students	19
4.3 Master's programmes	19
4.4 Doctoral programmes	20
4.5 Publication as a Requirement for Graduation	20
4.6 Responsibilities	20
4.7 Examination process	21
4.8 The principles of appointing examiners	21

4.9	Approval of examiners.....	22
4.10	Coursework master's examination requirements.....	23
4.11	Full research master's examination requirements.....	23
4.12	Mark Adjustment for Master's degrees	23
4.13	Arbitration for Master's degrees	23
4.14	Doctoral examination requirements	24
4.15	Arbitration for Doctoral degrees.....	26
4.16	Administration of the Appointment of examiners	27
4.17	Communication between individuals.....	27
4.18	Blind Review and Assessment of thesis/dissertation	27
4.19	Submission of a mini-dissertation without the supervisor's consent.....	27
4.20	Submission of full research dissertation/thesis without supervisor's consent.....	28
4.21	Number of times a dissertation/mini-dissertation may be submitted	28
4.22	Notification to students of corrections.....	28
4.23	Notification to students of results	29
4.24	Procedure for the award of a distinction for a master's degree	29
4.25	Academic Integrity and Plagiarism.....	29
5.	IMPLEMENTATION DATES	30
6.	DOCUMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS POLICY	30

Policy for Master's and Doctoral Studies

I. PREAMBLE

I.1 Background

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) is a vibrant and dynamic institution dedicated to shaping the future through education, research, and innovation. The higher education environment in general has undergone a period of accelerated change of late, and the postgraduate studies environment needs to respond and adapt to respond to the new needs of this sector of academia. The entire postgraduate ecosystem needs to continually adapt to proactively enable all involved to vigorously pursue academic excellence and societal progress, and this is guided by the strategic vision outlined in ENVISION2030, which serves as our guiding star towards a future of transformative impact and global leadership. This policy is therefore guided by the following principles:

- I.1.1. In alignment with the Institutional Strategic Plan, DUT recognizes the pivotal role of higher degrees in advancing knowledge, fostering innovation, and addressing complex challenges that transcend borders. These degrees represent a significant dimension of our educational and research landscape, contributing to our mission of creating empowered, responsible, and forward-thinking global citizens.
- I.1.2. With the Institutional Strategic Plan as our compass, this Policy for Master's and Doctoral Studies is conceived as a blueprint that harmonizes our commitment to academic rigour, equity, innovation, and global relevance. It underscores our aspiration to set and maintain the highest standards of academic excellence in the entire life cycle of higher degree candidates.
- I.1.3. In keeping with the spirit of the Institutional Strategic Plan, this policy is designed to provide a framework that transcends current boundaries, adapts to evolving academic landscapes, and ensures that our higher degree candidates are supported and equipped not only with deep subject expertise but also with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.
- I.1.4. The Institutional Strategic Plan calls for us to nurture a culture of continuous improvement, and this policy reflects that commitment by establishing transparent, fair, and robust processes. These processes serve as the cornerstone of our mission to graduate leaders, researchers, and innovators who can drive progress and effect meaningful change.
- I.1.5. With the principles of the Institutional Strategic Plan firmly in our hearts, this Policy for Master's and Doctoral Studies reaffirms our dedication to academic excellence, equity, and global relevance. It stands as a testament to our commitment to creating a brighter future for our students, our institution, our community, and the world beyond.

I.2 Purpose

This policy aims to ensure that DUT maintains rigorous academic standards and integrity in the admission and supervision of postgraduate students, as well as in the assessment of higher-degree candidates. It provides a comprehensive framework outlining principles, procedures, and criteria for the appointment of postgraduate supervisors, the management of the supervision process, and the evaluation of candidates. The objective is to uphold academic excellence, ensure consistent, reliable, fair, and transparent processes, and produce graduates who are experts in their fields and adept at engaging in scholarly discourse, critical thinking, and intellectual leadership.

I.3 Applicability

This policy relates to the following Postgraduate Study activities:

- a) For which the University is accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE),

- b) Which appear on the University's Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM),
- c) For which the University receives a formal subsidy from the Department of Higher Education and Training.
- d) Higher degree programmes offered at the University are those at master's (NQF 9) and doctoral (NQF 10) level.
 - i) Master's programmes may be undertaken as full research or coursework with a mini-dissertation component.
 - ii) Doctoral programmes are undertaken as full research only.

Individuals that this policy therefore applies to are:

- 1.3.1. Persons wishing to register for postgraduate programmes
- 1.3.2. All students registering, pursuing and being examined for higher degree qualifications at the University
- 1.3.3. Postgraduate supervisors/co-supervisors, both internal and external to the University
- 1.3.4. University staff responsible for the administration and support of postgraduate research candidates
- 1.3.5. University staff responsible for the review and processing of academic matters related to a postgraduate student

1.4 Acronyms

CHE	Council for Higher Education
DRC	Department Research Committee
DUT	Durban University of Technology
FRC	Faculty Research Committee
FREC	Faculty Research Ethics Committee
HDC	Higher Degrees Committee
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
HoD	Head of Department
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority

1.5 Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Admission	The formal acceptance and registration by the University of an applicant into a programme.
Advanced standing	The process whereby a candidate that has sufficiently mastered the content of a specified prerequisite qualification through prior informal or non-formal means is recognized, allowing the candidate to register conditionally or unconditionally for an appropriate higher qualification without awarding the prerequisite qualification. Refer to DUT General Rule G10B. Rules G24 and G25 should also be noted.
Assessment	The comprehensive and rigorous evaluation process involves reviewing and evaluating the research output submitted by the candidate, which may include written research work, creative performances or artefacts, and other forms of scholarly output. It is to ensure that the candidate's work meets defined outcomes and standards in their respective field of study.
Co-Supervisor	An appropriately qualified person designated to assist in the academic co-supervision of a candidate's research and candidature. A co-supervisor works as part of the supervisory team with the main supervisor. They may be an internal or externally appointed individual based nationally or internationally and may be an expert from industry/a company if none is available at DUT or other academic institutions. Their appointment must be approved by the relevant FRC and noted by the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC).
Completion time	The amount of time taken or given once a postgraduate student is registered. This is measured in calendar years and registration/re-registration at any time during a year counts as a full year.
Conferment of Status	The process whereby a candidate is recognized as having qualified for a prerequisite qualification, allowing them to be considered for registration conditionally or unconditionally for an appropriate higher qualification. Refer to DUT General Rule G10A. Rules G24 and G25 should also be noted.
Coursework Master's	A coursework programme requiring a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence, and in some cases demonstration of the ability to relate knowledge to a range of contexts for professional practice. In addition, the degree must contain a research component, such as a mini-dissertation or research project comprising a minimum number of credits at NQF level 9 dependent on the type of degree it is as defined by the CHE's HEQSF.
Department	Refers to the academic department or programme responsible for the enrolment and monitoring of all aspects related to postgraduate students or candidates and their studies in a respective programme.
Dissertation	See the definition for <i>Master's Dissertation</i>
Doctoral Degree	A doctoral degree is an advanced academic qualification requiring rigorous research culminating in the submission, assessment, and acceptance of a thesis at the most advanced academic levels. The traditional thesis-based form is complemented by forms grounded in professional practice, peer-reviewed publication, and creative works and performance, therefore candidates may also present alternative works in partial fulfilment of the research requirements. Typically undertaken after a Master's degree, it demands high-level research capabilities and the creation of a significant, original academic contribution that meets peer review standards and may be published. Coursework, while sometimes required, does not contribute to the degree's credit value. Graduates are prepared to lead and evaluate research in their specialized fields.

Doctoral Thesis	A doctoral thesis is a comprehensive and original research document that represents the culmination of a candidate's doctoral studies. It demonstrates the candidate's mastery of their field through rigorous investigation, analysis, and synthesis of existing knowledge, and often includes the presentation of new insights or findings. The thesis must meet the CHE's Qualification Standard for Doctoral degrees, whether awarded based on a single thesis, a publication-based thesis, or a thesis accompanied by coursework and/or work-integrated learning, or a combination of publications, creative work, artefact or other scholarly contributions.
Emerging Supervisor	Research individuals who are relatively new to supervising postgraduate research students. They may have recently completed their own doctoral or postdoctoral work and are beginning to take on supervisory roles. These supervisors are still building their experience and developing their research profiles.
Examination Narrative Report	This is a detailed, descriptive evaluation of a student's performance, and competencies demonstrated in their submission for examination. Unlike traditional examination reports that focus primarily on grades or scores, a narrative examination report provides a qualitative assessment that highlights the strengths, weaknesses, and items required for revision/correction. A template for examiners will be made available.
Examination Report on Results	This is a formal report on results that summarizes and evaluates a student's performance. This report focuses on quantitative results (grades or scores) and provides an analysis of the student's academic achievements in their submission for examination. A template for examiners will be made available.
Examiner	An individual appointed to assess a postgraduate student who possesses relevant expertise, qualifications, and scholarly integrity in the subject area being examined. They must be impartial, free from conflicts of interest, and demonstrate a reputation for scholarly excellence. Their role includes evaluating the research work based on clear criteria communicated in advance, maintaining strict confidentiality, and providing constructive feedback to enhance the scholarly contributions of the candidate. The appointment process ensures diversity of perspectives and upholds academic standards, ultimately contributing to the integrity and fairness of the examination process minimally the individual therefore should not have been involved with any teaching, supervision, research project, or other activities related to the dissertation, the past and current association related to any member of the supervision team. Their appointment must be approved by the relevant FRC and noted by the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC).
Extension of Study	This refers to a formal request and approval process allowing a student to continue their academic program beyond the standard timeframe allocated for degree completion. This extension is granted under specific conditions when the student is unable to meet the degree requirements within the prescribed period due to various unforeseen circumstances. A formal application by the student needs to be made to the relevant Executive Committee of the Faculty Board for an extension at the time of the intervening occurrence.
External Examiner	An individual that is external to the University is appointed for assessment purposes. They may not have been involved with any teaching, supervision, research project, or other formal activity related to the Institution that may bring their independence and impartiality into question. They will also need to fulfil the definition of <i>Examiner</i> .
External Supervisor	An appropriately qualified person who is neither employed by the University nor holds an honorary appointment at the University, but who is appointed in a supervisory capacity by DUT through the relevant approved policy to assist in the academic supervision of a candidate's research. Their appointment must be approved by the relevant FRC and noted by the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC).
Higher Degree	A Master's or doctoral qualification, whether completed by partial research and/or coursework that may be complemented by forms grounded in professional practice, peer-reviewed publication, and creative works and performance, or by full research.

In-situ	This refers to something being in its original or natural location, context, or position. When applied to a tangible artefact, it means that the artefact is still located where it was originally found or used, undisturbed and in its original context. This can be important for preserving the integrity and understanding of the artefact's significance. For an intangible artefact, it is still practised, preserved, or passed down in its original setting, culture, or environment. This concept is crucial for understanding the full meaning and value of the intangible artefact, as its significance is often deeply tied to its context.
International Examiner	An individual that is appointed from a foreign institution or country in addition to fulfilling the definition of <i>External Examiner</i> .
International Students	The University regards international students as those who require study permits issued by the Department of Home Affairs in terms of the Aliens Control Act No. 96 of 1991, as amended. They are required to comply with all requirements of any postgraduate student, irrespective of their physical location for the duration of their studies. Refer to DUT General Rule G4.
Internal Examiner	A member of the University academic staff (including persons who hold honorary/part-time/contract appointments in the University) other than the supervisor(s). They will also need to fulfil the definition of <i>Examiner</i> . This relates to coursework master's qualifications.
Internal Supervisor	Supervisors who are part of DUT staff, including adjunct/honorary appointees appointed to supervise candidates for postgraduate degrees.
Interruption of Studies	This refers to a temporary halt in a student's academic enrolment in a degree program. This pause can be due to various reasons including personal circumstances. During this period, the student is not actively participating in coursework, research, or other academic activities related to their program. The interruption must be formalized and approved through the University's formal process at the time of the interruption and not retrospectively, and it may come with specific conditions or time limits for resuming studies. The period approved for the interruption of Studies does not count towards minimum and maximum completion times.
Main Supervisor	An appropriately qualified person who takes primary responsibility for the academic supervision and administration of a candidate's research and candidature. Main supervisors are always internal staff of the University except in exceptional cases where there is no adequate internal capacity. Such cases must be motivated and approved by the relevant Faculty Board.
Master's Degree	A Master's Degree is an advanced academic qualification designed to educate and train individuals either as specialized professionals capable of applying theoretical knowledge to complex problems in professional contexts or as researchers equipped to contribute to the advancement of knowledge through rigorous research and critical analysis. It typically includes a significant research component, such as a dissertation, research project or artefact creation, aimed at demonstrating intellectual independence, theoretical engagement, and the ability to generate original insights or solutions relevant to the field of study. Graduates are expected to possess advanced analytical, research, and communication skills suitable for both specialized and broader audiences, while also exhibiting autonomy in professional practice or research endeavours.
Master's Dissertation	A Master's dissertation is a comprehensive academic research document that represents the culmination of a candidate's Master's degree studies. It aims to demonstrate the candidate's ability to contribute new knowledge or insights to the field of study through their ability to conduct independent research, critically analyse existing literature, formulate hypotheses, gather and interpret data, and draw meaningful conclusions.
Maximum Completion Time	The prescribed maximum period that a student can be registered for in which they have to complete their qualification.
Minimum Completion Time	The prescribed minimum period that a student can be registered for before they can complete their qualification.

Oral (Viva Voce) Examination	An assessment method used in academic and professional contexts to evaluate a candidate's knowledge, expertise, and understanding of a specific subject, research project, or thesis. During a viva voce examination, the candidate is required to present and defend their work orally in front of an examination panel or committee. The panel will then primarily assess the candidate's defence and the merits of the work.
Postgraduate	This refers to aspects related to Master's and Doctoral degrees offered by the University
Postgraduate Programmes	This refers to Master's and Doctoral programmes by partial or full research offered by the University.
Postgraduate Student/ Candidate	This refers to any person admitted to and enrolled in a postgraduate programme at the University that leads to the award of a postgraduate degree.
Practice-based Research	Practice-based Research is an original investigation undertaken to gain new knowledge partly employing practice and the outcomes of that practice that are not just novel to the creator or individual observers of an artefact but that adds to a greater collection of general knowledge for the discipline. Claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes in the form of creative outputs such as designs, music, digital media, performances and exhibitions, but this is augmented through written documentation.
Professional Doctoral qualification	This is and HEQSF doctoral-level qualification that is primarily focussed on the application of advanced knowledge and research to solve complex professional or practical problems. It is designed to contribute directly to professional practice.
Programme	This refers to a purposeful and structured set of learning activities designed to enable a student to meet the outcomes necessary for the award of a qualification.
Qualification	The formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by the University which appears on the University's approved Programme and Qualification Mix, formally recognizing a postgraduate learning achievement.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	The assessment of an applicant's previous non-formal and informal learning and experience to determine the extent to which this meets the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry or access into a specified level of study at the University. Various assessment methods are used to determine the relevance, depth, and extent of an applicant's prior learning. Refer to DUT General Rule G7(8).
Registration	The administrative process which culminates in applicants becoming students of the University. Refer to DUT General Rule G3, G5, G6A, G6B, G7, G11, G17, G24, G25. Students must re-register each calendar year until the completion of the postgraduate degree.
Selection	The specific criteria and procedures that the University and the programme use to select potential students from persons who have applied to study at the University.
Student	A person with current registration at the University to study for a programme.
Supervisor	The person who guides the candidate through the entire research process and related administration until the qualification is to be awarded. For this policy, supervisor categories can include main supervisor and co-supervisors which may be internal or external to DUT.
Thesis	See the definition for a <i>Doctoral Thesis</i> .
University	Refers to the Durban University of Technology, as duly constituted in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), as amended.
Viva Voce	See the definition for the <i>Oral (Viva Voce) Examination</i> .

1.6 Procedural Guidelines

The specific procedures involved in the application of this policy are primarily contained in the DUT Postgraduate Student Guide and Postgraduate forms (available on student/staff portals through the link <http://www.dut.ac.za/research/forms/>). Procedures not in these and related documents and/or policies will be contained in an Addendum (attached), which will be updated regularly to keep them aligned with changing University procedures.

1.7 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years from the date of formal approval and adoption or earlier if circumstances so dictate as required by the standard operating procedures of Senate.

2. POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

2.1 Legislation Governing Admission

2.1.1. The University's General Admission Rules (G-Rules) and Departmental Admission Rules are derived from:

- a) Section 37 of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997, as amended;
- b) Aliens Control Act No. 96 of 1991, as amended;
- c) Paragraph 57 of the DUT Statute; and
- d) Various policies governing the University as approved by the Senate and Council.

These are published in the Annual General Handbook for Students and Departmental Handbooks.

2.1.2. The General Admission Rules stipulate inter alia:

- a) The overall minimum admission requirements of the University (G24, G25 and where appropriate rule G10 in the General Handbook) which must be met to enable a person to be considered for registration as a student for study towards any postgraduate qualification, offered by the University. Note that these rules must be applied in the interest of the students and every provision should be made to enable students to register for postgraduate studies.
- b) The minimum and maximum durations of study of postgraduate qualifications at the University.
- c) The refusal to reregister students or to impose any conditions it deems fit for those exceeding the maximum duration.
- d) The minimum instructional programmes e.g. Master's programme may either be a full research option or a combination of coursework study or creative output and a short research project.
- e) The conditions under which the University will grant exemption from registration for a subject(s)/module(s) for a coursework postgraduate degree that a student has already passed at any other equivalent educational institution and/or in terms of the University's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.

- f) The conditions under which the University will grant conditional or unconditional conferment of status and/or advanced standing of the equivalent pre-requisite qualification, for registration for a higher qualification.
- g) The University may refuse the admission or readmission of any person as a student of the University. In so doing the University will stipulate the conditions which a person must meet to be considered for admission or readmission.
- h) The medium of instruction is to be consistent with the DUT language policy.

2.2 Student Recruitment

2.2.1. The respective University Faculties/Institutes/Research Focus Areas are responsible for recruiting students into their respective entities.

2.2.2. The Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate provides an additional support base to the University for these functions.

2.2.3. The retention of postgraduate students and the creation of an enabling environment is enabled by:

- a) Offering and administering scholarships and bursaries;
- b) Promoting the opportunities for postgraduate study in the research and innovation activities of the University's Research Institutes, Centres, Research Focus Areas, Units, Departments, Programmes and Faculties;
- c) Establishing national and international linkages regarding postgraduate students and study opportunities, in conjunction with the International Education and Partnerships Directorate;
- d) Forging strong links with, inter alia, local government and Non-Government Organisations, industry, professional councils, donors and fundraisers, to promote postgraduate study opportunities;
- e) Fostering a culture of quality assurance and practically implementing quality assurance measures across the postgraduate studies environment; and
- f) Providing equitable access to adequate facilities that are regularly maintained and resourced at institutional, faculty and departmental levels, where available.

2.3 Admissions and Registration

2.3.1. The Admissions and Registration process consists of the following steps:

2.3.2. A potential student interested in postgraduate studies at the DUT should consult with the department in which the intended qualification is offered or an appropriate supervisor. Should the student query not come to a specific supervisor, the department is to refer the matter to the DRC Chair for allocation to a specific supervisor.

2.3.3. The Supervisor is to ensure that the applicant fully appreciates the scale of the decision to enrol for their postgraduate studies before they can submit their candidature further.

2.3.4. The proposed supervisor must then submit the candidate to the DRC, who must confirm the following:

- a) The potential of the applicant to complete the qualification;

- b) Agreement on the applicant's proposed field of study;
- c) Availability of resources to conduct the study;
- d) The capacity to host the student in the department;
- e) Confirmation of the supervisor; and
- f) Suitability of the remaining members of the proposed supervision team.

2.3.5. Once the applicant has been accepted for admission by the relevant DRC and HoD, they are registered and, after registration:

2.3.6. They are issued with a student identity card, allowing then access to the facilities of the University, which must be produced on request.

2.3.7. They are also given online access to the Postgraduate Student Guide, the General Handbook for Students and the relevant Departmental Handbook which includes all Rules governing their studies at the University.

2.3.8. The Postgraduate Supervision Agreement between the supervision team and the student must be completed and signed before commencing with the proposal stage. Any requirements additional to those required at an institutional level, such as publication requirements by the supervisor or department that exceed the university-approved requirements, need to be included in this agreement. Any subsequent changes to this agreement will need to be formalized through the completion of a new agreement and are to be approved by the registering department Research Committee Chair/HoD.

2.3.9. It is recommended that the student in consultation with the supervisor takes a maximum of six months thereafter in which to complete their research proposal and submit this to the relevant Departmental/Faculty Research Committee for approval.

2.3.10. The student may apply to the Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate for any scholarships and bursaries for which s/he is eligible.

2.3.11. After the first year of registration, the student is expected to re-register for every consecutive year by the close of the annual registration period stipulated in the published university calendar of each respective academic year.

2.4 Admission of International Students

The University encourages applications by international students. The admission of international students is coordinated by the respective supervisors with assistance from the International Education & Partnerships office.

2.4.1. Admission of postgraduate students from foreign countries requires:

- a) After being accepted for a particular programme, international applicants are required to apply in their country of origin for a valid study permit in terms of the Aliens Control Act No. 96 of 1991, as amended. Study visas must be applied for at a VFS Centre across the country near the educational institution or at the nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate abroad. International students should contact the University's International Education and Partnerships unit for the study permit required for registration. For this process, supporting documents are required.
- b) Refers General Rule G25, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is not required to evaluate previous qualifications for international students from accredited

universities registering for a Master's or Doctorate at DUT. The Dean/Faculty Board/Faculty Exco has discretion on conferring status and thus facilitating registration. Registration may proceed using certified copies of degree certificates. The International Education and Partnerships Unit is to be consulted by faculties in determining the status of international programmes through multiple alternative methods to SAQA equivalency processes.

- c) In cases where a student with a foreign qualification is admitted without a SAQA evaluation, the services of SAQA may be used for authentication of the qualifications. This is to guard against fraudulent certificates. This does not have to delay registration and the student can be required to produce this document if required by a faculty after registration and deregistration permitted for submission of false information as per General Rule G3(1)(b).

2.5 Recognition of Prior Learning

- 2.5.1. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is promulgated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act No. 58 of 1995 and the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 as a transformation strategy in the South African education system.
- 2.5.2. The University, through its RPL Policy, strives to build a viable, sustainable and credible system to implement RPL to facilitate access and admission to learning programmes, to accelerate redress of past unfair discrimination in education and to promote and facilitate lifelong learning.
- 2.5.3. Applicants requiring RPL should contact the University's RPL Administrator: Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) for full details.

2.6 Departmental Rules

- 2.6.1. Officially approved Department Rules may stipulate any additional requirements for admission or readmission; and stipulate the requirements to graduate.
- 2.6.2. Where a General Admission Rule and a Departmental Rule deal with the same matter, the more limiting rule applies. Both sets of rules provide for an appeal process.
- 2.6.3. Procedures for admitting students must conform as closely as possible to those set out here and in a manner to benefit best a qualified candidate.

3. POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

3.1 Supervision Principles

- a) Commitment to Continuous Supervision. DUT is committed to ensuring that students receive appropriate and continuous supervision throughout their study period.
- b) Qualified Supervision. Students should receive Student-Centred Supervision and be supervised by individuals who are suitably academically qualified, with expertise and experience in the relevant field and have the necessary supervision skills. Supervisors' other commitments should ensure they can effectively supervise students.
- c) Clear Roles and Responsibilities. The roles of all involved in postgraduate studies are clearly articulated to ensure a quality experience and adherence to university policies, ethical standards, and procedural guidelines.

- d) Transparency and Accountability. Student progress is regularly monitored, and quality feedback is regularly provided.
- e) Collaborative Supervision. Collaboration and communication between supervisors and students are encouraged and the supervision team includes specific expertise.
- f) Ethical and Professional Conduct. Those involved in the research adhere to ethics policies and maintain confidentiality and intellectual property rights.
- g) Professional Development. Both students and supervisors are supported in their professional development through regular training and capacity-building.
- h) Quality and Originality in Research. The research work is of quality and originality and supported through critical commentary and guidance on research planning, execution, and examination preparation.
- i) Conflict Resolution. To establish clear mechanisms for conflict resolution between supervisors and students that allow for issues to be promptly addressed to maintain a productive supervisory relationship.

These principles provide a structured approach to ensuring effective, ethical, and high-quality supervision for postgraduate research students, fostering a supportive and productive research environment.

3.2 Responsibility for Providing Supervision.

- 3.2.1. Department Research Committees are responsible for ensuring that admitted postgraduate research students in their department receive appropriate and continuous supervision during their period of registered study.
- 3.2.2. Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that Department Research Committees are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.
- 3.2.3. A research student should be admitted only if the Department Research Committee and HoD are satisfied that:
 - a) There is a member of staff/supervisor suitably academically qualified for the task and who has the academic expertise and supervisory experience to supervise the student;
 - b) The member of staff/supervisor is willing to supervise the student and the student is willing to accept him/her as supervisor;
 - c) The member of staff's/supervisor's other teaching and research commitments are taken into account when taking up additional supervisory roles;
 - d) The member of staff/supervisor is aware of the role and responsibilities of supervisors; and
 - e) The member of staff/supervisor has the necessary supervision skills or experience and that they have and continue to receive regular training in supervision skills.

3.3 Factors to be Considered when Supervisors are Allocated

- 3.3.1. When supervisors are allocated, the following factors should be considered:
 - a) Departmental/programme and faculty workload models;

- b) Workload balance between teaching and learning, administrative and research, innovation and engagement commitments;
- c) Completion rates of the supervisor's previous students;
- d) Consideration for exceptions based on discipline-specific issues and evidence that there is a supervisory team with co-supervisors;
- e) Consideration for supervisors appointed in purely research and innovation positions with limited teaching commitments;
- f) Consideration for adjunct/honorary appointments as part of the supervisory team in cases where there is insufficient internal capacity or specific skills are sought for the research project; and
- g) Consideration for the development of emerging supervisors by considering their inclusion within a supervision team containing experienced supervisors.

3.3.2. Any changes of supervisors (or addition thereof) are done in consultation with the Head of Department/Programme

3.4 Roles of Supervisors and Students

3.4.1. The Postgraduate Supervision Agreement articulates the roles and responsibilities of supervisors, co-supervisors and students. This agreement must be completed by the supervision team and the student before commencing with the proposal stage. This agreement encapsulates the following aspects required from the supervision process:

- a) Adherence to University Policies;
- b) Collaboration and Communication;
- c) Safety and Ethics;
- d) Research Planning and Execution;
- e) Feedback and Progress Monitoring;
- f) Quality and Originality;
- g) Conflict Resolution;
- h) Thesis Preparation and Submission;
- i) Professional Development; and
- j) Confidentiality and Intellectual Property

3.4.2. The supervisory process must be documented so that there is evidence that supervision has taken place and documented indicators of the student's progress. This is to be provided as evidence for audit purposes and, therefore must be filed.

3.4.3. All supervisors are to contribute meaningfully and consistently towards the supervision of the student as outlined by their roles and responsibilities in the supervision agreement

3.4.4. HoD's are obliged to consider termination of supervisory roles where supervisors are not

performing their roles and responsibilities adequately.

3.5 Eligibility of Supervisors

All appointed supervisors must satisfy the following requirements. They must:

3.5.1. All appointed supervisors must satisfy the following requirements. They must:

- a) Meet the eligibility criteria of this policy;
- b) Be appointed as supervisors in the faculty per this policy;
- c) Adhere to and abide by all relevant policies and University regulations, including this policy, and particularly the policy on research ethics; and
- d) In the case of supervision of a doctorate, be qualified at the doctoral level.

3.5.2. Co-supervisors for a doctorate with equivalent professional experience¹ at the doctoral level may be considered in cases where such experience is required. Their inclusion is to be approved by the relevant FRC.

3.5.3. In the case of a research and coursework master's, have a doctorate (i.e., a qualification one level above the qualification being supervised). Co-supervisors with a master's may be considered as long as they are part of a supervisory team which has a supervisor with a doctorate as the main supervisor. Their inclusion is to be approved by the relevant FRC.

3.5.4. In the case of a coursework master's, have a doctorate. A supervisor with a master's may be accepted in certain qualifications where the profession has not had a sufficient pool of supervisors with doctorates or an equivalent. These cases have to be approved by the faculty.

3.5.5. Only have a manageable number of postgraduate students being supervised at any given time. This should ideally not be more than ten students if supervisors have regular undergraduate/coursework teaching responsibilities. Supervisors who are full-time researchers (that may include limited undergraduate/coursework teaching responsibilities) are anticipated to have the capacity to supervise more students than those with full teaching responsibilities.

3.5.6. Complete at least one supervisory and ethics capacity training workshop if a first-time supervisor or be part of a supervisory team as a co-supervisor. Supervisors are required to undertake refresher supervisory training every five years.

3.5.7. Not have a conflict of interest related to the study, student or others on the supervision team. The Research Integrity, Ethics and Authorship further details aspects of conflict of interest

3.6 Internal Main Supervisor

3.6.1. The main supervisor must take full responsibility for the overall progress and direction of the student's research. This includes administrative issues relating to the student's registration, attendance, supervisor-student agreement, research ethics compliance and progress reports.

3.6.2. Where two staff members are both actively involved in the supervision, a requirement to appoint one of them as the main supervisor still stands, while the equal academic contributions that they

¹ In this case "professional experience" means experience, in a relevant Industry, of a complexity and depth equivalent to a doctorate in that discipline. The professional experience of one supervisor is then complemented by the requisite qualification/s of the other supervisor/s.

each bring to the team should be acknowledged.

3.6.3. Internal main supervisors must be academic/research staff members of the University in a permanent or continuing fixed-term role who are either:

- a) Classified as research/innovation-focused or academic specialists;
- b) Staff members with active participation in original research, innovation and active publishers or researchers as determined relevant by the University;
- c) Honorary/adjunct fellows who have active participation in original research, and innovation and are actively publishing; or
- d) Clinical/industrial/technical honorary fellows who are active and participating in original research and innovation.

3.7 Internal Co-supervisor

3.7.1. The co-supervisor is usually appointed to contribute their specific expertise in assisting the main supervisor throughout the development of the student's research.

3.7.2. The co-supervisor is also expected to provide continuity of supervision when the main supervisor is absent from the University.

3.7.3. While providing expertise and assistance, a co-supervisor may also be appointed for their individual development as a supervisor.

3.7.4. Internal co-supervisors must be either:

- a) Any person eligible as determined by the policy elsewhere;
- b) Academic staff members in a continuing or fixed-term contract for the period of the registered degree being supervised;
- c) Research and innovation-focused staff appointed as postdoctoral fellows and/or research associates who are actively involved in original research; or
- d) Adjunct and emeritus professors who have an active continuing participation in research and innovation.

3.8 External Main Supervisors and Co-supervisors

3.8.1. External main supervisors and co-supervisors must be:

- a) Appropriately qualified with sufficient experience to assist in supervision, as approved by the Faculty;
- b) Prepared to adhere to DUT University rules and regulations;
- c) Aware that conditions of employment will differ from employees in permanent employment;
- d) Aware that payment of remuneration is subject to deductions per statutory requirements. Tax (PAYE and SITE) will be deducted where applicable;
- e) Aware that the contract may be terminated before the end of the term or any renewal period for misconduct, incapacity, and operational requirements;

- f) Aware that the handling of challenges experienced concerning student performance must follow relevant protocol, that is, through the relevant academic Department and Faculty; and
- g) Aware that changes of supervisors (or addition thereof) are done in consultation with the Head of the Department/Programme.

3.9 Clinical/Industrial/Technical supervisor

In certain research and innovation areas of study, it may be necessary to appoint a clinical/industrial/technical supervisor to cover the clinical, industrial or technical aspects of the research degree, or where students are pursuing research and innovation which involves collaboration with an external body. In these instances, the following should be noted:

- 3.9.1. The duties of such supervisors should focus on providing critical commentary on planned research and the programme of work completed.
- 3.9.2. These supervisors may also enable access to equipment or data resources otherwise inaccessible to the student.
- 3.9.3. A supervisor of this nature should be appointed only if the arrangement is covered by a formal agreement.

3.10 Appointment of Supervisors

- 3.10.1. The appointment of supervisors must be approved by the relevant FRC and noted by the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC).
- 3.10.2. All first-time supervisors must complete supervisory training before being appointed or be appointed only in a co-supervision role while concluding supervisory training.
- 3.10.3. Supervision training for all supervisors is the responsibility of faculties. Training activities are to be developed and hosted in collaboration with the Research, Innovation and Engagement division.
- 3.10.4. The Faculty Office and Departments with the support of the Faculty Research Coordinator/Officer must maintain the record of appointment of all supervisors in their faculty with their full contact details.
- 3.10.5. The appointment as main/co-supervisor of university staff continues until one of the following conditions applies:
 - a) They cease employment with the University;
 - b) They are no longer actively participating in original research; or
 - c) They have their supervisory role terminated.
- 3.10.6. The registration of adjunct/honorary fellows and clinical honorary fellows continues until one of the following conditions applies:
 - a) They cease their honorary appointment with the University;
 - b) They are no longer actively participating in original research; or
 - c) They have their supervisory role terminated.

- 3.10.7. In circumstances where the student will no longer have an internal supervisor, the HoD of the department they are registered in is to appoint an alternative internal supervisor to the supervision team, preferably before the loss of the original internal supervisor.

3.11 Reappointment of Staff who have Left the University

- 3.11.1. A supervisor whose appointment comes to an end at the University may apply to the relevant FRC for reappointment to continue as external supervisor for the current candidates.

3.12 Change of Supervisory Role

- 3.12.1. Any member of the supervisory team may request to be removed from their role. Evidence in support of the request is to be submitted with the request.
- 3.12.2. The Main supervisor or the HoD may request the addition of supervisors to the supervision team.
- 3.12.3. The student may request a change in the supervision team, including the addition or removal of supervisors or the changing of roles.
- 3.12.4. All requests for changes to the supervision team are to be tabled at the relevant Department Research Committee for discussion and a recommendation made to the HoD for consideration and onward motivation. Should the change be recommended by the HoD, this is then to serve at the relevant Faculty Research Committee for approval. If the HoD is part of the supervision team, the Department Research Committee Chair is to make the recommendation to serve at the FRC.
- 3.12.5. It remains at the discretion of the relevant FRC to approve any changes to the supervision team and due consideration is to be given to the best interests of all concerned.
- 3.12.6. The removal of a member of the supervisory team is not automatically deemed a termination of the supervisory role as the request may have to do with circumstances other than the required performance of duties of the supervisor.
- 3.12.7. Should the circumstances for the request for the removal of a member of the supervisory team reveal circumstances that would warrant consideration for termination of the supervisor, the HoD is obliged to consider their termination and follow the relevant process outlined in this policy.

3.13 Termination of the Supervisory Role of University Staff Members

The following procedures should be carried out if termination of the supervisory role is considered:

- 3.13.1. Matters related to supervisor appointment, load and performance should be managed within the department and discussed with the relevant line manager and/or HoD.
- 3.13.2. The following procedures should be carried out if termination of the supervisory role is considered:
- a) The supervisor's line manager discusses any concerns with the supervisor, and, where required, agrees to a remedial plan and gives the supervisor a reasonable length of time to rectify any problems.
 - b) If, after having agreed on a remedial plan and having given the supervisor time to rectify any problems, the line manager believes the supervisor's appointment should be terminated, they then send a recommendation to the relevant Chair of the Faculty Research Committee that the supervisor contract be terminated, and that the supervisor be removed from the Faculty supervision list. The Chair of the Faculty Research Committee is to make the final decision on the termination of the supervisor's role.

- c) In circumstances where the failure to perform their duties or where the breach of duties is sufficiently prejudicial to the university and has been substantiated after investigation, the HoD may recommend to the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee for immediate termination of the supervisor.
- d) The Chair of the Faculty Research Committee is to make the final decision and must table the item with the relevant Faculty Research Committee to note their decision.

3.14 Termination of the Supervisory Role of Honorary/Clinical honorary fellows

The following procedures should be carried out if termination of the supervisory role is considered:

- 3.14.1. In the first instance, the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee/faculty-designated person must discuss any concerns with the supervisor.
- 3.14.2. If the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee /faculty designated person determines that remedial action is required, they must consult with the supervisor and give the supervisor a reasonable amount of time to rectify any problems.
- 3.14.3. If, after the supervisor has been given sufficient time to rectify any problems, the HoD believes the supervisor's appointment must be terminated, they should recommend to the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee that the supervisor's contract be terminated. The chair of the Faculty Research Committee is to make the final decision and must table the item with the relevant Faculty Research Committee to note the decision.
- 3.14.4. In circumstances where the failure to perform their duties or where the breach of duties is sufficiently prejudicial to the university and has been substantiated after investigation, the HoD may recommend to the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee for immediate termination of the fellow.

3.15 Considerations for Termination of Supervisor Appointment

- 3.15.1. On deciding to terminate a supervisor's appointment, the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee, may consider, though not limited to, aspects such as the following:
 - a) A supervisor no longer has continued active participation in original research;
 - b) There is a record of students failing and/or not completing owing to poor supervision, as substantiated by the HoD;
 - c) There is evidence of multiple student requests to change the particular supervisor and the standard of supervision is a common factor in the change requests;
 - d) There is evidence of a pattern of non-compliance with research ethics policies, procedures and guidelines, which has been substantiated after investigation;
 - e) There is evidence of a lack of complying with the requirement for ongoing supervisory training; and
 - f) The failure to perform duties or where the breach of duties is sufficiently prejudicial to the university to warrant immediate termination which has been substantiated after investigation.

3.16 Retention of Terminated Supervisors for Remaining Candidates

- 3.16.1. A supervisor whose contract for one student has been terminated may, with the approval of the relevant Executive Dean and FRC, retain supervision of the remaining candidates where:
- a) A supervisory plan has been agreed upon by the supervisor and the HoDs of the postgraduate candidates; and
 - b) The supervisor will not be allowed to be assigned to new students or be added to any existing supervisory teams once they have been terminated as a supervisor for any student.

3.17 Appeals Against Termination of Supervisor Appointment

- 3.17.1. At the request of the supervisor, the Executive Dean should chair a meeting between the supervisor, their line manager and the relevant Chair of the Faculty Research Committee to appeal the termination of the supervisor's appointment.
- 3.17.2. The supervisor is entitled to have the support of another staff member at the meeting.
- 3.17.3. At this meeting, the Executive Dean should consider:
- a) Whether the principles of procedural fairness have been applied;
 - b) Whether the decision to terminate the appointment was justified; and
 - c) Make suggestions as to how the appeal might be resolved.
- 3.17.4. If a decision is made by the Executive Dean to affect the termination of the supervisory role, despite the appeal process described above, and the staff member wishes to appeal this decision, they may do so by appealing through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) in charge of Research, Innovation and Engagement.
- 3.17.5. A supervisor whose supervisor appointment has been terminated may apply to be re-appointed by outlining how the conditions leading to the termination have been dealt with and getting an endorsement from the relevant HoD and Executive Dean. The application must then be submitted to the FRC for approval and noting at the Higher Degrees Committee.

4. HIGHER DEGREES ASSESSMENT

4.1 Principles

Regarding the assessment of higher degrees, the following principles are to be considered:

- a) Academic Rigor: DUT is committed to maintaining high academic standards in the assessment of higher degree candidates, ensuring that their work meets the criteria of originality, intellectual rigour, and scholarly excellence.
- b) Fairness and Equity: Assessment processes must be fair, transparent, and unbiased, treating all candidates equitably regardless of background, identity, or affiliation.
- c) Continuous Improvement: The policy encourages continuous improvement in the assessment and evaluation of higher-degree candidates, adapting to evolving academic practices and standards.
- d) Alignment with Regulations: Assessment procedures align with institutional, national, and international

regulations, ensuring compliance and credibility.

- e) Academic Integrity: The policy emphasizes the importance of academic integrity, ensuring that higher degree candidates adhere to ethical research and scholarship practices.

4.2 General Rules Governing the Assessment of Students

- 4.2.1. The annual General Handbook for Students, and the Departmental Handbooks, stipulate the assessment rules for higher degrees (See higher degrees rules of the General Handbook).
- 4.2.2. The Departmental/Faculty Rules may stipulate any additional requirements for assessment as well as additional requirements to graduate. In cases where departmental/ faculty rules have additional requirements, these requirements/rules must be enforced.
- 4.2.3. Where a General Admission Rule and a Departmental Rule deal with the same matter, the more limiting rule applies. Both sets of rules provide for an appeal process.
- 4.2.4. Where a postgraduate student has failed a qualification, they cannot be awarded a lower qualification.

4.3 Master's Programmes

The following describes the overall academic requirements and expectations for obtaining a master's degree.

- 4.3.1. A core intention of a master's degree is to equip students with specialised knowledge through research training, practice-based research or coursework, and to provide sound training in research methodologies.
- 4.3.2. Candidates are not generally expected to make an original theoretical or fundamental contribution to their field of knowledge, but through the provision of new data, information, or new knowledge and understanding they should demonstrate proficiency in research methods and the ability to work independently.
- 4.3.3. Master's graduates are expected to exhibit mastery of research methodology and evidence of understanding scholarly processes at work, as evident through a novel research project (i.e., a new project, one which has not been carried out and submitted for degree purposes previously).
- 4.3.4. The core output of a research master's degree takes the form of a dissertation, a written document communicating the work that was pursued during the project, its context and outcomes.
- 4.3.5. In some cases, the output may be expanded, supplemented or supported through other material or intangible items produced during the research, which departmental regulations may specify as an explicit expectation of the degree.
- 4.3.6. In practice-based research qualifications, an artefact combined with a written document corresponding to the requirements of the specific discipline and qualification requirements is the core output. The process and production of an artefact heavily informs this core output.
- 4.3.7. In the case of a professional master's qualification, a dissertation or another form of research that is commensurate with the nature of the discipline or field and the specific area of enquiry is a core output apart from any other requirement to pass the modules/courses within the programme. The individual programme qualifier will stipulate the output requirements.
- 4.3.8. In the case of coursework master's, an independent study component is a core output apart from the requirement to pass the modules/courses within the programme. Depending on the individual programme qualifier, this consists of either a single research or technical project or a series of

smaller projects demonstrating innovation or professional expertise.

4.4 Doctoral Programmes

The following describes the overall academic requirements and expectations for obtaining a doctoral degree.

- 4.4.1. The necessary and defining requirement for the award of a doctoral degree is an original contribution to a field of study, the originality needing to lie more at a theoretical, conceptual or analytic level than at the level of producing new data.
- 4.4.2. Proficiency in research methods and the ability to think and work independently must be demonstrated.
- 4.4.3. The output of most doctoral degrees takes the form of a thesis, which is a written document communicating the work that was pursued during the project, its context and outcomes, and the original contribution being made by the project.
- 4.4.4. In some cases, the output may be expanded, supplemented or supported through other material or intangible items produced during the research, which departmental regulations may specify as an explicit requirement of the degree. PhD by publication falls into this category.
- 4.4.5. In qualifications that require practice-based research, the process and production of an artefact combined with a corresponding written document that corresponds to the requirements of the specific discipline and qualification is the core output.
- 4.4.6. In the case of a professional doctoral qualification, an original thesis or another form of research that is commensurate with the nature of the discipline or field and the specific area of enquiry is a core output apart from any other requirement to pass the modules/courses within the programme. The individual programme qualifier will stipulate the output requirements.

4.5 Publication as a Requirement for Graduation

- 4.5.1. For students to graduate from a PhD programme, it is a requirement that they must have at least one published or final acceptance in a peer-reviewed journal.
- 4.5.2. For students to graduate from a Full Research Master's programme, acceptance or proof of submission of a journal article, book, book chapter or creative research output is required.
- 4.5.3. Accredited Creative Outputs will also count as accredited outputs for postgraduate students. The Faculty Creative Outputs Committee must have approved such submissions and there must be proof that these are accredited outputs.
- 4.5.4. Faculties may make more stringent requirements, or indicate which publications are more appropriate or accessible for the disciplines in that Faculty. This needs to be highlighted and agreed upon in the signed formal supervision agreement with a student.

4.6 Responsibilities

- 4.6.1. There is a clear separation of responsibilities between the departments, the faculties and the associated Senate structures.
- 4.6.2. For all academic and most operational purposes, the point of contact of higher degree students will be their supervisors, their department, and their faculty.
- 4.6.3. The University's Research and Postgraduate Support Office will be involved in supporting those relations where required.

- 4.6.4. The Faculty Board is the primary custodian of academic quality concerning postgraduate programmes in the faculty, and it is expected to formally establish appropriate structures or mandate existing ones to assist the faculty in exercising this responsibility, for example, the Departmental Research Committee (DRC), Faculty Research Committee (FRC), Faculty EXCO.
- 4.6.5. The Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC), a sub-committee of Senate, supports faculties in ensuring that research undertaken meets appropriate international ethics standards.
- 4.6.6. The Higher Degrees Committee (HDC), a sub-committee of Senate, approves the examiner's reports as recommended by the faculty structures.

4.7 Examination Process

Regarding the examination process for higher degrees, the following principles are to be considered:

- a) While the University strives to deal with all examination processes promptly and timeously, the primary consideration is fairness and comprehensive examination of the dissertation/thesis, with emphasis on the maintenance of high standards.
- b) The University commits itself to ensuring a rigorous and equitable evaluation process for candidates.
- c) The University's principles of fairness, openness, and transparency underscore the university's dedication to conducting examinations in a manner that upholds academic integrity and accountability.
- d) The University further commits to consistency and adherence to best practices in oral examinations, promoting the credibility and trustworthiness of the evaluation process.

4.8 The Principles of Appointing Examiners

Regarding the appointing of examiners for higher degrees, the following principles are to be considered:

- a) Examiners should possess relevant expertise and qualifications in the subject area of the dissertation or thesis. They should have a strong academic background, research experience, and familiarity with the methodologies and theories relevant to the research topic.
- b) Examiners should be impartial and free from conflicts of interest with the candidate, or the research work being evaluated. They should have no personal or professional relationships that could bias their assessment of the dissertation or thesis.
- c) Examiners should demonstrate fluency in the language in which the candidate has submitted their research and ideally should themselves be publishing in that language.
- d) Examiners should have a reputation for scholarly excellence and integrity within their respective fields. Their standing in the academic community lends credibility to the evaluation process and the outcome of the examination.
- e) Efforts should be made to appoint examiners who represent diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and academic institutions. This diversity enriches the evaluation process and promotes fairness and inclusivity.
- f) Clear criteria and expectations for evaluation should be communicated to the examiners in advance. This includes guidelines on the evaluation process, assessment criteria, expectations for the quality of the research, and the format of the examination report.
- g) Examiners should be able to commit to completing their evaluation within a reasonable timeframe and responding promptly to any queries or requests for clarification from the candidate or the examination committee.

- h) Examiners may benefit from training or orientation sessions to familiarize themselves with the evaluation process, institutional policies, and expectations for examination. Adequate support should be provided to address any questions or concerns that may arise during the evaluation process.
- i) Examiners are expected to maintain strict confidentiality regarding the content of the dissertation or thesis and the examination process. They should handle sensitive information with care and refrain from discussing the details of the examination outside of the designated channels.
- j) Examiners should provide constructive feedback to the candidate, highlighting strengths and weaknesses in the research work and offering suggestions for improvement where appropriate. Feedback should be specific, objective, and focused on helping the candidate enhance their scholarly contributions and developing their future careers in research.
- k) Institutions must ensure the integrity, fairness, and effectiveness of the examination process for master's and doctoral dissertations and theses, ultimately upholding academic standards and fostering excellence in research and scholarship.

4.9 Approval of Examiners

- 4.9.1. Our institutional Values and Principles should be the primary consideration in the appointment of examiners.
- 4.9.2. Examiners should be suitably qualified and should have had experience in supervision, research publications and/or higher degree examination. There should be due consideration given to a balance of strengths and need for development in the selection of the examination panel.
- 4.9.3. Examiners must not have had any prior involvement with the candidate's project and supervisor which might compromise their objectivity when assessing the dissertation/thesis.
- 4.9.4. For research-based postgraduate studies, an examiner may only examine a maximum of two postgraduate students per faculty per academic year.
- 4.9.5. For coursework master's studies, an examiner may only examine a maximum of five postgraduate students per faculty per academic year. This relates to both internal and external examiners.
- 4.9.6. Former employees of the University (including those institutions that were merged to form DUT), whether in a full-time, part-time or contract capacity, should avoid being appointed as external examiners. They may be considered under exceptional circumstances after a minimum of a three-year cooling-off period between the date of departure from the university and the date of appointment by the Higher Degrees Committee. The nature and details of their prior employment are to be included with their nomination by the FRC to the HDC.
- 4.9.7. Any person who may reasonably be expected to lack sufficient objectivity in the assessment of any research work is to be excluded from acting as an examiner. This includes, for example, relatives or dependents of degree candidates, persons over whom any of the supervisors could exert undue influence, even by default, and those individuals that either the student or supervisors have a prior working relationship or interact socially on a fairly regular basis.
- 4.9.8. The responsibility for the appointment of examiners, including the oral examination panel, rests with the Faculty Research Committees (FRC), which will act on recommendations from the DRC having considered the input from the supervisor(s).
- 4.9.9. The FRC sends the approved list of examiners to the HDC for ratification.
- 4.9.10. Supervisors and co-supervisors may not be appointed as examiners of the students whom they are supervising.

- 4.9.11. The approval of an examiner who has previously published with the supervisor or co-supervisor of the student or where the supervisor or co-supervisor of the student was themselves supervised by the proposed examiner is strictly prohibited.
- 4.9.12. The HDC has the right to revoke examiners at any time after due consideration to any real or perceived conflicts of interest or shortcomings in their expertise to examine or ethical concerns that emerge.

4.10 Coursework Master's Examination Requirements

4.10.1. For mini (partial) dissertations at the master's level, the following requirements apply:

- a) A minimum of two examiners must be appointed;
- b) At least one examiner must be external to the University; and
- c) At least one examiner must hold a doctoral degree.

4.11 Full Research Master's Examination Requirements

4.11.1. For full research master's degrees, the following requirements apply:

- a) A minimum of two examiners must be appointed;
- b) All must have a doctoral qualification; and
- c) All must be external to the University in addition to fulfilling other requirements laid out in this policy.

4.11.2. Examiners may not be from the same institution or university.

4.11.3. All full research master's students are to minimally undergo a presentation of their studies up to the research findings to assist in receiving feedback beyond their supervision team in the preparation of their dissertation submission for examination. This presentation is to allow for the following:

- a) The session is to include a question-and-answer session.
- b) Invitations are to be minimally circulated to all research staff and PG students within the relevant faculty.
- c) Formal feedback is required to be given to the presenter and those required to give feedback must include one research staff member outside of the department from which the student is registered and one department research staff member not part of the supervision team. Supervisors may be included as additional members to provide formal feedback.
- d) This presentation process may also be used to combine DRC's deliberations on proceeding with relevant notifications to FRC in the PG process.

4.12 Mark Adjustment for Master's Degrees

4.12.1. The HDC may adjust marks for the master's degree subject to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) as approved by Senate.

4.13 Arbitration for Master's Degrees

- 4.13.1. In cases where there is a 20% discrepancy between the marks awarded by two examiners or where one examiner awards a pass and another a failure, the relevant FRC will appoint an external arbitrator.
- 4.13.2. The arbitrator must not only meet the minimum requirements stipulated for examiners but must in addition be an experienced academic in the field.
- 4.13.3. The arbitrator shall consider the same version of the dissertation which was sent to the examiners, and all the examiners' reports and any other relevant information or work relating to the research project, for example, compositions, designs or artefacts.
- 4.13.4. The arbitrator may in addition make use of an oral examination of the candidate as part of the process of deciding on the awarding of the degree and its overall mark.
- 4.13.5. The arbitrator shall make a final decision on the award of the degree and the mark to be awarded based on the evidence considered during the arbitration process. This decision is then submitted to HDC for final consideration and adoption.

4.14 Doctoral Examination Requirements

4.14.1. The Doctoral examination process is as follows:

- a) The candidate² submits their thesis document and any associated artifact/s (if relevant) for examination, which proceeds through all internal processes and checks before being released to external examiners.
- b) In the case of artefacts, the following applies:
 - i) Intangible artefacts or fixed installations, such as performances or exhibitions, must contain a suitable recording thereof that is permanently kept as part of the institution's records and made available to examiners concurrently with the document for evaluation. The recording must try to capture all relevant aspects related to the interpretation and understanding of the artefact, such as surrounding context, optimal physical conditions of the space, etc. The document must contain links to this permanent location of storage of the record.
 - ii) Every practical effort should be made for at least one external examiner to be able to examine the artefact *in situ*. Consideration should therefore be given to the appointment of one of the external examiners to allow for this practically being implemented.
- c) The appointed external examiners comprehensively review and report on the document and associated artifact/s, including supporting that the candidate may progress to the oral examination stage. A consensus must be reached that the candidate is ready to proceed to the oral examination stage.
- d) There is no determination of an overall result at this stage, only that the candidate may proceed to the oral examination stage.
- e) External examiners may suggest that resubmissions be made before progressing to the oral examination stage. These revisions must be concluded and reassessed by the relevant external examiner/s to be satisfactory before the candidate may proceed to the oral

² The HEQSF only distinguished between 'Doctoral Degree' and 'Doctoral Degree (Professional)'. Section 4 - Graduate Attributes of the CHE 's *Qualification Standard for Doctoral Degrees* applies to all doctoral qualification. All Doctoral qualifications, irrespective of their modality therefore will follow the same examination process including oral examination.

examination stage.

- f) The final version of the thesis document and all external examiner reports are released to all the oral examination panel members, excluding any observers of the panel, in advance of the oral examination.
- g) The candidate then undergoes the oral examination conducted by the appointed panel and observed by open invitation. The panel convenes after the candidate's defence to assess the candidate's thesis document and oral defence as a collective body of evidence and to determine the result of the entire process. They then provide a consolidated report to HDC with the recommended outcome for the candidate.

4.14.2. A minimum of three examiners are appointed to examine a doctoral thesis. These examiners will also form part of an oral (Viva Voce) examination panel.

4.14.3. All external examiners must hold a doctoral degree, must all be external to the University, and may not be from the same institution or university in addition to fulfilling other requirements laid out in this policy.

4.14.4. At least one examiner from outside South Africa (international examiner) must be appointed.

4.14.5. In addition to a thesis document assessment process, all doctoral candidates are required to undergo a Viva Voce (oral) Examination. This assessment format involves a rigorous oral examination in which candidates defend their thesis and respond to questions posed by the Viva Voce Examination panel. This provides an opportunity for in-depth academic discussion and evaluation of the candidate's research.

4.14.6. The candidate and the supervision team must have access to the reports from the external examiners to prepare for resubmissions/revisions or the preparation of the oral examination presentation. Adequate time must be afforded to the candidate to make suitable preparations based on the required amount of work involved.

4.14.7. The examination panel for a PhD candidate must minimally consist of the following individuals:

- h) Two of the three external thesis document examiners.
- i) An academic staff member internal to DUT who holds a PhD and has some expertise in the discipline. This individual should be from the Department the student is registered in but not associated with the research. Should the department not be able to appoint such an individual, another internal academic staff member with a PhD in a related field and expertise in the discipline may be appointed.
- j) The Chair of the relevant Faculty Research Committee or duly appointed alternative should the chair be unavailable. This individual will act as the facilitator of the panel.

4.14.8. The examination panel must be able to conduct the oral defence in the language that the thesis is submitted in.

4.14.9. The examination panel will have access to all thesis document examination reports at least 14 days before the scheduled oral defence.

4.14.10. A candidate may not progress to the oral defence stage if one or more of the examiners requires major revision and/or resubmission of the document. The issues with the document will need to be addressed and reassessed and deemed to have been adequately resolved by the examiner/s before proceeding to the oral defence.

4.14.11. The supervision team may appeal for arbitration of the decision to proceed to the oral examination stage in the following circumstances:

- a) Where at least one external examiner clears the thesis for progression to the oral examination stage and the remainder do not without the option of re-submission for consideration.
 - b) Where an examiner continues to deny that the candidate is ready to progress to the oral defence stage after revisions have been made. At least one examiner must support the progression to the oral examination stage for the supervision team to appeal.
- 4.14.12. The external examiners may be virtual participants, but the internal participants and the candidate should ideally be physically present in the venue. Exceptions need to be approved by the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee.
- 4.14.13. The examination panel is guided by guidelines for the assessment of oral defence as approved and published by the relevant university structure.
- 4.14.14. Immediately after the oral defence of the candidate, the examination panel will consider in private all examination reports submitted before the oral defence and the oral defence itself in determining the final result of the candidate. One member of the supervision team, preferably the Main Supervisor, is allowed to observe the deliberations and answer any queries or comments the panel may raise. They are not permitted to make representations related to the result and may not engage in discussion besides answering directly posed questions or queries.
- 4.14.15. The result of the Oral examination must be by consensus of the panel.
- 4.14.16. Should the panel fail to reach a consensus, the arbitration process will need to be followed.
- 4.14.17. The result of the panel needs to be captured alongside a detailed report and submitted to the HDC for acceptance. Only on acceptance of the result by the HDC will the candidate be deemed to have completed the assessment of their thesis work. The HDC will also need to satisfy itself that all other requirements have been met to allow for the award of a qualification.

4.15 Arbitration for Doctoral Degrees

- 4.15.1. Should the need for arbitration arise, the relevant FRC will nominate an external arbitrator to the HDC for approval.
- 4.15.2. The Higher Degrees Committee shall approve the arbitrator, who must not only meet the minimum requirements stipulated for examiners but must in addition be an experienced academic in the field.
- 4.15.3. For arbitration before the oral defence stage, the arbitrator shall consider the same version of the thesis which was sent to the examiners, all subsequent revisions, and all the examiners' reports and any other relevant information or work relating to the research project, for example, compositions, designs or artefacts.
- 4.15.4. Should the arbitration process be found against the examiner before the oral defence, they are to be removed from further assessment duties and be substituted by the arbitrator.
- 4.15.5. A consensus decision of the oral examination panel is final and may not be appealed.
- 4.15.6. For arbitration at the oral defence stage where the panel cannot reach a consensus decision, the oral defence will have to be run again and include the arbitrator on the panel.
- 4.15.7. The arbitrator shall make a final decision on the awarding of the degree based on the deliberations of the examination panel of which they form part. The arbitrator then prepares a comprehensive report and their decision on the award. This decision is then submitted to HDC for final consideration and adoption.

4.16 Administration of the Appointment of Examiners

- 4.16.1. Only after approval by the FRC for the appointment of examiners does the Faculty Research Officer administratively handle the appointment process and inform the examiners. This decision is ratified by HDC.
- 4.16.2. All Examiners must sign the Non-Disclosure Agreements
- 4.16.3. All examiners must be validated, verified and quality assessed before being appointed for examination of any thesis and dissertation.

4.17 Communication Between Individuals

- 4.17.1. Candidates may not know details of any person who has been nominated or appointed to examine their work until the examiners' reports are accessed to the student or the Oral examination Panel is announced.
- 4.17.2. Interference in the examination process by any party with a vested interest could invalidate the entire examination process and the award of the degree. Should interference become known, the entire assessment process is to start de novo and necessary consequence management applied to those implicated.
- 4.17.3. Any queries relating to the progress or process of examination may only be through the respective Faculty Research Office.
- 4.17.4. Supervisors must not contact examiners during the entire assessment process. Should clarity be sought on an examiner's comments, etc. this must be done via the official faculty structure.
- 4.17.5. Likewise, examiners should have no communication with the candidate during the entire assessment period nor relating to the thesis examination after the conclusion of the assessment process.

4.18 Blind Review and Assessment of Thesis/Dissertation

- 4.18.1. In the interests of academic development, transparency, and the desire to increase trust in the assessment system, an examiner may not remain anonymous.
- 4.18.2. Candidates may have access to their original examiner reports, including that of the Oral examination, once results have been finalized and approved by the HDC.
- 4.18.3. Candidates must have access to the original examiner's comments if corrections/revisions are required, though not the final mark or result suggested by the examiner. Comments related to corrections and revisions are to be contained on a separate document from any marking rubric and outcome suggested that can be issued to the student.

4.19 Submission of a Mini-dissertation Without the Supervisor's Consent

- 4.19.1. No mini-dissertation may be submitted for final assessment without the permission of the supervisor.
- 4.19.2. Where a supervisor withholds this permission and a candidate believes the mini-dissertation is ready for submission, the candidate may appeal against the supervisor's reluctance through the relevant HoD to the relevant FRC.
- 4.19.3. A detailed appeal from the student and a detailed motivation by the supervisor in defence of their position must be supplied for the committee's consideration.

4.19.4. If the appeal to FRC is successful, the dissertation will be processed for examination.

4.19.5. If the appeal to FRC is not successful, the student may appeal to the Executive responsible for Research, Innovation and Engagement. The decision of this executive is final and binding.

4.20 Submission of Full Research Dissertation/Thesis Without Supervisor's Consent

4.20.1. In the case of a full research dissertation/thesis, the student has a right to submit a completed thesis/dissertation for examination against the advice of the supervisor.

4.20.2. If the supervisor does not approve the submission of the dissertation, they are required to submit a report to accompany the application of intention to submit.

4.20.3. The supervisor report may not be made available to the examiners

4.20.4. The internal members of any examination panel may not reveal the submission has occurred without the supervisor's consent should they be aware of this occurrence.

4.21 Number of Times a Dissertation/Mini-dissertation may be Submitted

4.21.1. A full research or mini-dissertation may be submitted for examination once only. Should the result of the assessment process result in an overall fail for the candidate, the same project may not be reworked for re-enrolment.

4.21.2. However, there may be cases where one (or more) of the examiners may require a student to revise and re-submit the document. This is specifically noted by the examiner as requiring major revision and not an outright fail. In these instances, the following apply:

- a) Once major revisions are undertaken to the satisfaction of the supervision team, the document needs to be reissued to the examiner/s that require resubmission for reassessment.
- b) Master's dissertations or mini-dissertations that require resubmission are only eligible to be resubmitted once to the examiners.
- c) Once resubmitted, the examiner may only indicate a failure or a pass (with or without minor corrections) with a maximum of 50% mark awarded.

4.21.3. In cases where a resubmission would automatically result in a difference of 20% between examiners marks (i.e. one of two examiners awarded 70% or more for the original submission), the following is to apply:

- a) The original document must be referred to arbitration before the candidate and supervision team are notified of the need for resubmission.
- b) The decision and result of the arbitrator will replace the results of the original examiners
- c) Should the arbitrator find that resubmission is required, the arbitrator will reassess the resubmitted document and their results will be taken as the final results.

4.22 Notification to Students of Corrections

4.22.1. Full research master's dissertation examination narrative report and examination report on results

are to be processed and approved by the relevant FRC before submission to HDC.

- 4.22.2. Coursework master's dissertation narrative examination report and examination report on results are to be processed and approved by the relevant DRC and noted at FRC and HDC.
- 4.22.3. Doctoral examiner narrative reports produced before the oral examination stage are to be processed by the relevant Faculty administrators for noting at FRC.
- 4.22.4. Doctoral reports by the oral examination panel are to be processed by the relevant Faculty administrators for postgraduate studies and submitted and approved by the HDC. The previous examination narrative reports issued before the oral examination stage must be included but for information purposes only.
- 4.22.5. If there is no dissent in the examiners' narrative reports or no need to proceed to arbitration, reports may be released to students and supervisors once all reports are received. There is no need to await approval as the narrative report is separate from a report on results.
- 4.22.6. In the case of all master's dissertations, the supervisor oversees and certifies in writing that all corrections requested by the examiners have been addressed. In the case of Doctoral studies, all document corrections are required to be completed before the oral examination phase.

4.23 Notification to Students of Results

- 4.23.1. The results of an examined dissertation/thesis will be communicated to the student by the Faculty Research Officer/HDC administrator only after the HDC has approved the recommendations made by the FRC/examinations panel.
- 4.23.2. The result of the examination may not be communicated to the student until after HDC approval of the final results.

4.24 Procedure for the Award of a Distinction for a Master's Degree

- 4.24.1. For a distinction to be awarded, the average mark must be 75% or above, with 65% as the minimum allowable mark from any examiner. FRCs must deliberate and decide any final aggregated marks that fall between 74,50% and 74,99%.
- 4.24.2. A distinction will not be awarded where there are major revisions recommended by any examiner to the argument analysis and methodology sections of the dissertation, irrespective of the final result.

4.25 Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

- 4.25.1. Candidates are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity and must adhere to DUT's policies and regulations regarding plagiarism and research misconduct.
- 4.25.2. All dissertations and theses must be subjected to plagiarism check through the institutionally designated central process independently of the student and the supervisor before it is sent for examination.
- 4.25.3. Once the facility exists at the university, all dissertations and theses must also be subjected to AI writing reporting
- 4.25.4. The dissertations and theses settings and tolerances permitted, such as percentage matches, exclusion of short phrase length, etc. are to be approved by the HDC and applied to all postgraduate students.

4.25.5. Students may not submit their work for examination if these thresholds are exceeded. Students may also be referred for further investigation and disciplinary measures should it be found that they intend to submit for processing work that is suspected of plagiarism or dishonesty in its production.

5. IMPLEMENTATION DATES

Aspect	Notes	Effective Date
POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS	Relates to all 1 st time registrations	From beginning 2025
POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION	Relates to all pre-existing and new supervision. Noted that a pre-existing appointment of an individual to a supervision team is governed by the policy at the time of their appointment.	From the date of Senate adoption of policy
HIGHER DEGREES ASSESSMENT	Relates to all students registered from 2025 onwards (new and returning)	From beginning 2025

6. DOCUMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS POLICY

1. Assessment criteria, University of Technology Sydney (UTS). Available: (<https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/learning-and-teaching/assessment/assessment-criteria>). Accessed: 10 October 2018.
2. Candy, Linda. (2006). Practice Based Research: A Guide. Creativity and Cognition Studios Report. 1.
3. The Council for Higher Education (CHE) National Review of South African Doctoral Qualifications 2020-2021: Doctoral Degrees National Report March 2022.
4. DUT Postgraduate (PG) Forms. 2024.
5. DUT Postgraduate Student Guide. 2024. Available: (<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/handbooks/Postgraduate%20Handbook.pdf>). Accessed: 21 July 2024.
6. DUT Guidelines for Publication Requirements for PhD and Full Research Master's Candidates. 2024
7. National Qualifications Framework Act (67/2008): Publication of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework and Higher Education Qualifications of the National Qualifications Framework. Available: (http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/pol/2013/gfetqs_heqsf.pdf). Accessed: 4 March 2019.
8. Rhodes University Policy on Postgraduate Supervisory Practice. 2001. Available: (<https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Postgraduate%20Supervision%20Policy.pdf>). Accessed: 11 November 2017.
9. The South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Time Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa. Available: <http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/pol/2015/National%20Policy%20for%20Assessment.pdf>. Accessed: 21 July 2019.

10. University of Manchester Supervision Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees. 2016. Available: (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=615>). Accessed: 11 November 2017.
11. University of Melbourne Supervision Policy and Guidelines. 2009. Available: (<https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPFI322>). Accessed: 11 November 2017.
12. University of Nottingham Appointment of Supervisors Manual. n.d. Available: (<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/academic-services/qualitymanual/researchdegreeprogrammes/appointment-of-supervisor.aspx>). Accessed: 8 November 2017.
13. University of Zululand Postgraduate Assessment Guide. 2013. Available: (<https://www.unizulu.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/RI-PI.pdf>). Accessed: 17 July 2024.