GUIDELINES FOR DOCTORAL RESEARCH IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

2025

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CONTENTS

Why this document?

We strive towards research that is locally relevant, internationally recognised and intellectually excellent. We wish to enable graduate research that is ethically mindful and makes an original contribution to the Arts and the Social Sciences.

In this vision, research has high prominence, together with the other strategic aims of the University. Research plays an important role in the institutional focus on four strategic areas, namely, (i) to broaden our knowledge base, (ii) to promote student success, (iii) to increase diversity, and (iv) to become systemically sustainable. It is clear from this vision that one of the strategic goals of the University, as a 21st-century institution, is to be a leading research-intensive higher education institution on the African continent.

This document serves as a roadmap for all processes involving doctoral degrees in the Faculty. It is not a legal text intended to replace the **SU Calendar / Yearbook** and/or **Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Calendar / Yearbook**. Rather, it captures the values informing higher degrees, from planning, through execution, to publication. **Supervisors and students can click on any of the underlined text throughout the Guide to access the relevant policy document, form, or website**. This set of guidelines is written around the three macro phases of higher degrees research:

PART 1: **ADMISSION TO DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES**
PART 2: **CONDUCTING AND SUPERVISING PhD DEGREES**
PART 3: **SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION**

Following this, there is a section on Guidelines for joint degree purposes and then on additional resources. In addition to the various **libraries** on campus, students can also make use of several **computer facilities** and a **language centre**. The **Division for Research Development** provides services and information related to funding, scholarships and the ethics of research. The **Postgraduate Skills Development Office** and **Graduate School for the Arts and Social Sciences** offer workshops, seminars and short courses on various aspects of doctoral research.

1.   ENROLMENT FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

Specific requirements for admission differ from one department to another. In general, however, the minimum requirement for admission to doctoral programmes is an excellent Master's degree. Students and supervisors should check with their host departments regarding specific admissions requirements and procedures.

Before recommending an applicant for admission to doctoral studies, the supervisor and department should be convinced that the student has the capacity to complete the study successfully, bearing in mind the nature and quality of previous study, commitment to research, and available time (in particular for working students who study part-time).

Students with qualifications from foreign universities who wish to proceed to doctoral studies should ensure that their application is submitted before the programme's closing date. The **Postgraduate Office** is responsible for conducting an evaluation of the foreign qualifications upon receipt of a formal application submitted to the University.

In certain cases, candidates who do not have the minimum academic qualifications may be considered for admission on the basis of professional experience. This process is called Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and is administered by the host department. For more on RPL, see the **Faculty's Calendar / Yearbook**.

Enrolment (sometimes called 'provisional registration') involves an online application process that precedes full registration and provides students with a student number. This is used in all correspondence with the University, provides students with an e-mail address, and access to the library and other University resources.

Although the same online application is used for all doctoral programmes, the procedure for doctoral enrolment is not the same for all departments. Prospective students should check this with the supervisor and/or department concerned.

1.1. ADMISSION TO DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

Once a department has provisionally accepted a PhD candidate and a supervisor has been assigned, there are three pathways to successful registration for the relevant PhD programme. The figure below illustrates these pathways.

PATHWAYS to REGISTRATION for PhD PROGRAMMES

1. Candidate contacts relevant department
2. Candidate completes online application to be handled by the Faculty
3. Departmental screening of CV + concept note

Provisional departmental acceptance

NOT ACCEPTED

4. Supervisor is assigned

Departmental recommendation ←

→ *If funding and/or study leave is secured + registration is required*

REGISTRATION as PREPARATORY DOCTORAL STUDENT

5. Candidate completes the research proposal
6. Proposal presented to the DAC
7. Once DAC approves, submit proposal to HDRC **by the first meeting of the following year (Jan)**

5. Candidate completes the research proposal
6. Proposal presented to the DAC
7. Once DAC approves, submit proposal to HDRC

REGISTRATION WITHOUT an APPROVED PhD PROPOSAL

5. Candidate completes the research proposal
6. Proposal presented to the DAC
7. Once DAC approves, submit proposal to HDRC **by the last meeting of the current year (Sep)**

APPROVED   **NOT APPROVED**

NOT APPROVED
Should the proposal NOT be approved by the first meeting of the following year (Jan), the student will only be able to reapply the year after.

8. Recommendation to FB + SENATE

REGISTRATION for PhD programme

9. Proceed with study ←

The central path is followed by most candidates. This involves **registration with an approved research proposal**. Please note the following regarding this option:

- An approved research proposal must reach Cheryl Richardson at fasscomm@sun.ac.za by the January deadline of the HDRC's agenda.
- The deadline for registration with an approved research proposal is the end of March of the given year.
- Full registration fees apply.
- If the research proposal is submitted after the January deadline of the HDRC agenda, the student will need to register without an approved proposal (deadline also the end of March) and have the proposal serve at the next HDRC meeting.

A department may also motivate for a candidate to register for the module **Preparatory: Doctoral Studies (63797901)** through the Postgraduate Office (**the path on the left**). This special type of registration grants a candidate a year's access to SU resources like the library while working on their proposal.Please take note of the following key points concerning this registration option:

- Prospective students must submit a formal application on https://www.sun.ac.za/english/pgstudies/Pages/How-to-apply.aspx and must notify Josephine Dzama (jdzama@sun.ac.za).
- There is no deadline for this registration option, but it is advisable to register early in the year.
- Registration as a preparatory doctoral student is only possible if specifically motivated for by the relevant department. The supervisor must send a request to Josephine Dzama (jdzama@sun.ac.za) with the student's APP/ID and provide formal written consent to supervise the student.
- There is no fee attached to this registration option for South African students, but international students do need to pay a nominal International Registration Fee (IRF).
- This registration does NOT guarantee acceptance into the intended PhD programme.
- This registration does NOT allow students to qualify for formal funding opportunities.
- This registration is not possible for a second year.
- Candidates registered as preparatory doctoral students must get their proposals to the HDRC by the first meeting of the following year (in January). Should this NOT be approved at this meeting, these students have the option to register without an approved

proposal for the current academic year OR wait to register in the following academic year.

Should funding be secured and/or study leave already be granted for a provisionally accepted PhD candidate, they have the option to **register without an approved research proposal (path on the right)**. This option is elaborated on in more depth in section 1.2 below. Please note the following:

- Full registration fees are applicable.
- A signed contract must reach Cheryl Richardson (cherylr@sun.ac.za) by March of the relevant year.
- This year counts as the first year of registration for the PhD degree programme.

1.1.1. Formats of Doctoral dissertations

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences offers **two kinds** of doctoral degrees:

(1) A PhD based on original research as a dissertation. This PhD is the general form of doctoral studies in the Faculty and can be submitted in **three formats**.
- A dissertation in the traditional/monograph format that documents original research and deals with one specific subject or central theme.
- A dissertation in which the theoretical component is integrated with creative work (particular to the arts and languages environments).
- A dissertation consisting mainly of a collection of scholarly articles in the discipline.

(2) A DPhil or senior/second doctoral degree based on a collection of publications of high quality produced over a long period on a specific theme or field. A DPhil may also include other research output that was produced prior to registration for the doctoral study.

The format of a doctoral dissertation must be declared during the research proposal phase. A request to change the format of any given dissertation (from monograph to publication, for example) must be approved before the end of the first year of registration for a doctoral degree.

All doctoral degrees, irrespective of the kind or format, are managed uniformly with regard to all established procedures, requirements and regulations for doctoral degrees, unless otherwise stated. For more information regarding the different formats of doctorates mentioned here, see the **Regulations for and formats of PhD dissertations** document.

1.1.2. Completion of a Doctoral research proposal
Proposals for doctoral research are approved at departmental, Faculty and institutional (Senate) level.

1.1.2.1. PURPOSE OF A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL
The proposal functions as part of the screening process of higher degree candidates and gives departments and prospective supervisors a sense of (1) the importance and feasibility of the study, (2) the candidate's ability to complete the project successfully, (3) the suitability of the approach, (4) the ethical considerations relating to the study, and (5) the financial viability of the study.

1.1.2.2. FORMATS OF A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL
At a minimum, any research proposal should include the following elements: (1) title of dissertation, (2) introduction and rationale, (3) problem statement and research question(s), (4) theoretical points of departure, (5) research design and methods, (6) structure and components of and timeframe for study, (7) budget, and (8) ethical considerations.

Templates for doctoral research proposals in the Faculty are differentiated according to the format of the dissertation. The prescribed elements in each proposal template as well as the word count should be adhered to:

- **Guidelines for PhD (by monograph) research proposal**
- **Guidelines for PhD (by publication) research proposal**
- **Guidelines for (integrated arts) PhD research proposal**

1.1.2.3. SUBMISSION OF A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL
The process of submitting a research proposal is simple:

- The preliminary proposal (sometimes called a 'concept note') is submitted to the department along with a comprehensive CV and a full academic transcript (and any other documentation specified by the department).

- If the preliminary proposal is accepted and the department has the capacity to supervise the proposed study, they will assign a supervisor.
- The supervisor then works with the student to finalise the proposal.

1.1.2.4. APPROVAL OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Once a supervisor is satisfied with a prospective student's research proposal, they nominate members of a Doctoral Admissions Committee (DAC). The committee should consist of at least four members, all of whom should have doctorates: (a) the supervisor(s); (b) the chair of the department (or a senior member from the department if the chair is the supervisor) who acts as the chair of the committee and reader; (c) an additional member who is a senior colleague in the department; and (d) one further member from a related department. If the chair of the committee acts solely in a facilitation role, then an additional independent reader from the department must be appointed. If preferred, the committee may have more than four members, but the committee must have at least two independent readers from the home department and representatives must be drawn from at least two departments.

The completed **Doctoral Admissions Committee form** must be submitted by the departmental chair to the Vice-Dean: Research (stella@sun.ac.za) and must be approved by the Vice-Dean: Research before the committee can begin with its activities.

The members of the Doctoral Admissions Committee are required to formulate a recommendation for the research proposal, which must be completed by the supervisor by way of the **Pro Forma Cover Page for Doctoral Submissions**. The recommendation should be unanimous, and all committee members are required to sign the form. The recommendation includes a summary (of around 150 to 250 words per section) of the academic merits of the research proposal on the following:

- The importance and feasibility of the study,
- The ability of the candidate to conduct the research,
- The suitability of the approach to be followed,
- The financial viability of the study,
- The proposed format of the study, and
- Any points of advice and potential concern, including ethical considerations relating to the study.

The (1) recommendation (completed and signed Pro Forma Cover Page for Doctoral Submissions), (2) final version of the research

proposal, and (3) the Vice-Dean's approval of the composition of the Admissions Committee must be submitted to the Faculty Administrator (fasscomm@sun.ac.za) on or before the deadline date to be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Faculty's Higher Degrees and Research Committee. Submissions received after the deadline will stand over until the next committee cycle.

If accepted by the Higher Degrees and Research Committee, the proposal is recommended to the Faculty Board, and Senate. If the Higher Degrees and Research Committee does not accept the proposal, the candidate will be given the opportunity to revise and resubmit it.

1.1.3. Who may supervise a Doctoral degree?

A supervisor of doctoral students must have a doctorate, with an established research and publication record. Deviations from this norm (e.g., in fields of study in which academic staff with doctorates are relatively rare) should occur only for sound academic reasons, and should a supervisor not have a doctorate, an internal supervisor with doctorate must be appointed as the primary supervisor.

Academic staff who retire from or have left the service of the University are considered "internal" for up to three years after their departure and may continue (co-)supervising doctoral students. Departments may offer such supervisors an honorarium at their own discretion (and expense).

Academic staff who have retired from or left the service of the University more than three years ago may be appointed as "external" (co-)supervisors, if their expertise is specifically suited to the research of a student and this expertise is not available in the department where the candidate is registered. In such cases, an internal (co-)supervisor must also be appointed. Similarly, if non-permanent members of staff (e.g. contract appointments) act as supervisors, a permanent member of staff must also be on the supervisory team.

Where the nature of the subject is such that expertise in more than one field of study is required or where the

research methodology requires it, the appointment of a co-supervisor from another field of study or an expert on the research methodology from outside the Faculty may be considered as an external (co)-supervisor.

The general remuneration tariffs for external (co)-supervisors apply and is payable upon completion of the study (i.e., graduation of the candidate). This payment is managed by the Postgraduate Examinations Office.

1.1.4. How to amend PhD supervisors

The supervisor(s) of doctoral studies are formally appointed once Senate approves the research proposal. Should there be a change to the supervisory arrangement (addition of a co-supervisor, change in roles of primary and co-supervisor, etc.) during the course of the study, supervisor(s) must complete and submit the **Amendment of Supervisors** form on or before the relevant Higher Degree and Research Committee agenda deadline date. The amendment of PhD supervisors may take place at the same time as the approval of PhD examination results, but no later.

1.2. REGISTRATION FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

Registration for all doctoral programmes is preceded by the completion of an online application for admission to a particular doctoral programme before the deadline date for enrolments. The registration deadline for first time and continued registration for any doctoral programme is the end of March annually. Annual tuition fees are payable upon registration.

1.2.1. First-time registration for a Doctoral programme

There are two types of first-time registration for doctoral students: (1) registration with an approved proposal and (2) registration without an approved proposal.

1.2.1.1. REGISTRATION WITH AN APPROVED PROPOSAL

This type of registration is the most widely practiced (and preferred) in the Faculty. Following the completion of the **online application**, successful submission and approval of a doctoral

research proposal (as outlined in the previous section) by the Doctoral Admissions Committee, Higher Degrees and Research Committee, and Senate, the prospective doctoral student will be issued with a confirmation letter from Senate and information about registration. It is important that a prospective student pays careful attention to ensuring that they provide their most recent contact details when completing the online application process during enrolment so that they receive this communication from the University. First-time registration for a doctoral programme takes place before the registration deadline (end of March) annually. Only in exceptional cases will second semester registration be considered by the Faculty's Higher Degrees and Research Committee.

1.2.1.2. REGISTRATION WITHOUT AN APPROVED PROPOSAL

In cases where prospective students can provide evidence to show that they have been awarded a scholarship for doctoral study or have been granted study leave to pursue doctoral study, they may be permitted to register for a full doctoral programme (before the registration deadline) without an approved proposal.

The departmental chair, prospective supervisor and the student must complete the **Admission to Doctoral Study without an Approved Research Proposal form** and submit it to the Faculty Administrator (cherylr@sun.ac.za) no later than the end of March. The form confirms that:

- Permission has been granted for a prospective doctoral student to register for a specific doctoral programme;
- In the opinion of the departmental chair and the prospective supervisor, the research proposal will be finalised by the deadline for the last meeting of the Higher Degrees and Research Committee (September of the academic year concerned);
- In the opinion of the supervisor, the candidate has the ability to carry the research proposal through the Doctoral Admissions Committee stage and to submit it in time for the Higher Degrees and Research Committee's last meeting of the academic year concerned; and
- The doctoral student has taken note of the above opinion and is aware of the potential academic and financial implications should the deadline not be met.

The following September deadline for the submission of research proposals which have been approved by a Doctoral Admissions Committee applies to students who registered without an approved research proposal at the beginning of the academic year, and at the

beginning of the second semester of the academic year. If this deadline is not met, the student <u>will not</u> be allowed to re-register for continuation of doctoral study for the following academic year. See the **Procedure for Managing Admission to Doctoral Study without an Approved Research Proposal and Dissertation Title**.

1.2.2. Continuation of registration for Doctoral programmes

Doctoral students must register every year for the full period of study until the degree is awarded to them. Should such students, before the degree is awarded, fail to register in any year before the prescribed date for that year, their registration will lapse. Should such students wish to be admitted again to the degree programme concerned, they will have to apply in writing for admission and will have to register for the programme concerned from the beginning and pay the required fees from the beginning. See the section on Continuation of registration for postgraduate programmes in **Part 1 of the SU Calendar / Yearbook** for more information.

The maximum registration period for a doctoral student is <u>five years</u>. Only in exceptional cases will continued registration beyond this date be considered by the Faculty. More specifically, further registration will only be allowed if the student can provide sufficient reasons for the slow rate of progress to date and submits a comprehensive work plan with deliverables, deadlines and relevant supporting documentation for consideration. This request must be approved by the departmental chair and supervisor(s) and then submitted to the HDRC (fasscomm@sun.ac.za) by the closing of the January agenda. The HDRC will consider the request and can possibly grant permission for the student to continue with their studies for an additional year.

2. CONDUCTING AND SUPERVISING PhD DEGREES

2.1. AGREEMENT BETWEEN SUPERVISOR(S) & DOCTORAL STUDENT

The Faculty has a formalised **Agreement**, which is intended to foster mutual understanding between supervisors and doctoral students. The document establishes some basic principles for undertaking doctoral research in the Faculty as well as the responsibilities of both supervisors and doctoral students. The implementation of the Agreement will depend on the needs and expectations of supervisors and individual doctoral students. The contents of the Agreement should be discussed and agreed upon as soon as possible after the admission and commencement of the study. All doctoral students are required to sign the Agreement between supervisors and higher degree students, which is available on the **HDRC webpage.**

2.2. RESEARCH SPACE, SEMINARS AND SUPPORT

The Faculty does not provide individual offices or assign individual workspaces for doctoral students. Some departments may have designated workrooms or communal areas for higher degree students; however, doctoral students must consult with their supervisor regarding any such space available in the department. Doctoral students may utilize the **Carnegie Research Commons**, which is a high-level research environment for all Master's and doctoral students at Stellenbosch University. The Research Commons, located on the lower level of SU Library, is equipped with computers, work stations and seminar rooms as well as areas for discussion and relaxation.

Several departments in the Faculty host weekly research seminars where guest speakers are invited to present their current research. Doctoral students are welcome to attend any of these departmental research seminars, regardless of whether they are enrolled at the host department.

There are a number of research skills and support seminars and workshops available to all doctoral students and their supervisors in the Faculty. These include, but are not limited to:

- Embarking on a research degree
- Library and information services
- Guidelines for doctoral research proposals
- Principles of research design
- Guidelines for ethical clearance applications
- Academic writing integrity: Avoiding plagiarism

Doctoral students may attend any of these research skills and support opportunities free of charge, however, prior registration for each is required. For more information regarding the research skills and support seminars and workshops on offer, please visit the following websites:

- **Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences**
- **Postgraduate Skills Development**
- **SU Library and Information Services**

In addition, several research training and skills development short courses are offered at departmental or institutional level. Unlike the research skills and support opportunities mentioned above, doctoral students are required to pay for their participation in these various short courses. Doctoral students should consult with their supervisors about any such offerings within their department. Doctoral students can also attend the selection of short courses available at the annual summer and winter schools hosted by the **African Doctoral Academy**.

2.3.   RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ETHICAL CLEARANCE

All research conducted at Stellenbosch University should safeguard the dignity, rights, safety, and well-being of all actual or potential participants. In almost all cases, the research ethics process in the Faculty is managed by the **Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research** (REC: SBER).

The research ethics application process starts with the **Departmental Ethics Screening Committee** (DESC) in each respective academic department. During the application process, students will be required to provide the approved title of their study and research proposal, with special attention paid to the research design and method of data collection.

In addition, a number of screening questions are used to determine whether ethics clearance is required or not:

(1) I will collect data from (or interact with) one or more individuals through interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations, video recording, etc.

(2) I need access to confidential data or information (or archival data, contact lists or reports), of an organisation (or institution or company) where the data is not available in the public domain (i.e., not available to the general public). The data can be linked to individuals (or clients or employees, etc.)

(3) I am collaborating with an institution (or organisation or company) that is giving me access to physical data (or financial data) that is NOT linked to individuals or any personal accounts (or information). I have been granted access to this data by an authorised representative of the organisation (or institution or company).

(4) I will have access to a database/archive that holds information linked to personal identifiers (e.g., names, ID numbers, account numbers, student numbers); AND/OR the database contains coded information, but I have access to the codes that links the information to personal identifiers.

(5) I will gather information/data that is available in the public domain, but that could be regarded as sensitive or potentially sensitive information (e.g., you will collect data via social media networks or public profiles such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook).

(6) None of the above.

2.3.1. Studies that require ethical clearance

A research study requires ethical clearance approval if a doctoral student has selected Options 1, 2, 4, 5 or Option 3 in combination with the other options. In these cases, more detailed information relating the data collection will be required to determine the level of risk associated with the study. Low risk projects are screened by the DESC and are ratified by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research. Doctoral students may commence their data collection once the DESC has approved a minimal risk or low risk research study. Only applications that are deemed as medium or high risk are referred to the REC for review at a convened meeting. In such cases, doctoral students may

only commence their data collection once the REC has approved their research study and issued their Ethical Clearance Approval Letter. This letter forms part of the supporting documentation upon submission for examination.

IMPORTANT: Ethical clearance may not be approved retrospectively so it is imperative that doctoral students who require ethical clearance complete the online ethics application once their research proposal has been formally approved by the Faculty Board and Senate.

The **Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research** webpage provides an overview of the DESC process, an overview of and access to the online application system, REC documents, meeting dates of the Research Ethics Committee and relevant contact information.

2.3.2. Studies exempt from ethical clearance

Using the six ethics screening questions above, a research study is exempt from ethical clearance if a doctoral student has selected: Option 6 (None of the above) OR Option 3 BUT only if none of the other options were also selected. [In other words: If Option 3 is selected in combination with the other options, then ethics clearance is required.]

Studies that are exempt from ethical clearance do not need to complete the online ethics application. Doctoral students and their supervisor(s) are required to complete and sign the **Provisional Ethics Exemption** as soon as the research proposal is formally approved by Faculty Board and Senate and submit the form to the respective Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC). Upon completion of the study, doctoral students and their supervisor(s) are required to complete and sign the **Ethics Exemption Declaration**, which forms part of the supporting documentation upon submission for examination.

2.4.   CHANGES IN THE RESEARCH TOPIC AND/OR TITLE

Changes in the research topic in doctoral studies must be submitted to the Faculty Administrator (fasscomm@sun.ac.za) for the Higher Degrees and Research Committee. Thereafter, the Faculty Board must recommend the change before it is approved by the EC(S) and Senate. If the change in topic is not simply a focusing of the original topic, a new research proposal must be prepared and approved by the original Doctoral Admissions Committee before submission to the Faculty Board via the Higher Degrees and Research Committee.

If the change is merely a focusing of one kind or another of the original topic, the supervisor must complete and submit the Amendment to PhD title form to the Faculty Administrator (fasscomm@sun.ac.za) before the relevant closing date for the approval by Higher Degrees and Research Committee and Faculty Board. Changes to the approved title may be recommended by the examination panel, which should be noted in the report of the non-examining chair. The amendment of a PhD title may take place at the same time as the approval of PhD examination results, but no later.

2.5.   INTERRUPTION OF STUDIES

The following acceptable reasons serve as guidelines for when a request must be considered for interrupting doctoral study: (1) medical reasons, (2) financial reasons, or (3) special well-justified personal circumstances. All requests must be accompanied by the appropriate supporting documents. These documents can include, amongst others, letters of appointment, assignments, medical certificates, financial statements, sworn statements etc.

The procedure for applying for interruption of study is as follows:

- Applications for interruption of study must reach the Faculty Administrator (cherylr@sun.ac.za) before or on 30 April of the year concerned. Students should not register in the year that they intend to interrupt their studies.
- No applications for interruption of study will be considered after 30 April of the year concerned as the student would already be registered for the year concerned by then.

- Approval of the application for interruption of study will be considered on the recommendation of the supervisor(s) and the chair of the department concerned.
- Applications that have been approved in accordance with the internal procedures of Faculty must be included in the next report of the Faculty Board and submitted to the Executive Committee of Senate (EC(S)) for approval.
- Permission to interrupt doctoral studies will be granted no more than twice for periods of one year each or once for a period of two years during the course of the programme.

3.   SUBMISSION & EXAMINATION

3.1.   COMPLETING THE DISSERTATION

Doctoral dissertations in the Faculty can be offered in one of four formats:

- A dissertation in the traditional/monograph format of a written document that reflects original research and deals with one specific subject or central theme.
- A dissertation in which the theoretical component is integrated with creative work (particular to the arts and languages environment).
- A dissertation consisting mainly of a collection of scholarly articles in the discipline.
- A dissertation for a senior/second doctoral degree that in addition to a collection of previously published scholarly articles may also include other research output that was produced before the student registered for the doctoral study.

The format of a doctoral dissertation must be declared during the research proposal phase. A request to change the format of any given dissertation (from monograph to publication, for example) must be approved before the end of the first year of registration for a doctoral degree. All doctoral degrees, irrespective of the kind or format, are managed uniformly w.r.t. all established procedures, requirements and regulations for doctoral degrees.

3.1.1. Technical formatting of Doctoral dissertations

Whilst there might be differences amongst the formatting specifications of each department, the following serve as general guidelines.

3.1.1.1. LENGTH OF DISSERTATION

While some disciplinary norms may differ, the general word count for doctoral dissertations (monograph, by publication, and senior doctorate) is 72 000 to 85 000 words. The word count includes in-text referencing and footnotes, but excludes front matter (abstract, declaration, acknowledgements, table of contents, etc.), bibliography and appendices.

Supervisor(s) must confirm the word count in their **Supervisor Declaration form**. Please note that examiners may decline to grade dissertations that fall below or well above the prescribed length. In these cases, a new examiner must be appointed, and the student's graduation may be delayed.

3.1.1.2. STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION AND TYPESETTING
All doctoral dissertations published by Stellenbosch University should contain the following compulsory information:

- Title page: **Doctoral degree**
- SU Crest: The SUNScholar team will add the SU crest to the accepted PDF format.
- Declaration: **Doctoral degree**
- Declaration by candidate and co-authors (only required for the PhD by publication format). See the **SU Calendar / Yearbook 2025** (section 6.9.26 on pages 73 and 74) for more information.
- Abstract(s): An abstract in the language of the thesis (maximum of 500 words) is required. Additional abstracts in other languages of no more than 500 words each can be included if necessary. Where a thesis does not contain abstracts in either English, Afrikaans or isiXhosa, the Language Centre will provide the translated abstract(s) to SUNScholar for upload alongside the existing abstract(s) before or after graduation.
- Acknowledgements
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures
- List of Tables
- Content (e.g. Chapter 1, Chapter 2, etc.)
- Bibliography
- Addenda (e.g. Addendum A, Addendum B, etc.)

The University also prescribes compulsory information for the first four pages of all doctoral dissertations. These include: (1) the title page, (2) the declaration and copyright, (3) English abstract, and (4) Afrikaans *opsomming*. Doctoral students should follow the instructions as set out in the **SU Calendar / Yearbook 2025** (section 6.10 on pages 74 to 76) meticulously.

The requirements for typesetting doctoral dissertations are as follows:

- Font: Cambria or Calibri,
- Type size: Not less than 10 font and not more than 12 font,
- Line spacing: Double spacing or one-and-one-half spacing or single spacing,
- Page size: A4,
- Include a blank border of not less than 2 cm in width around the whole of the typewritten portion.

3.1.1.3. PLAGIARISM CHECK AND REQUIREMENTS

Stellenbosch University has a strict no-tolerance policy towards plagiarism and ignorance of referencing rules will not constitute an excuse. For more information, please see the **Policy on Plagiarism (in support of academic integrity)** and **SU Procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism**.

All doctoral dissertations must be submitted to Turnitin before the work may be submitted for examination. Doctoral students should please *exclude* "quoted text" and "bibliography" when submitting the dissertation to Turnitin. A copy of the Turnitin summary page must be included as part of the supporting documentation when submitting a doctoral dissertation for examination. In addition, the supervisor must ensure, and confirm in their **Supervisor Declaration**, that the results summary of the plagiarism check on the dissertation from Turnitin is satisfactory.

The **Draft interim SU guidelines on allowable AI use and academic integrity in assessment** outlines Stellenbosch University's approach to the responsible use of AI tools. Please note that, given the rapid pace at which the AI landscape is developing, these guidelines, which are subject to the overarching SU-suggested principles, will be reviewed regularly. More institutional information on the issue **here**. It remains the responsibility of students to familiarise themselves with the notion of academic integrity and to uphold ethical research practices throughout the course of their studies.

3.2. SUBMISSION PROTOCOLS

The following section provides an overview of the requirements and protocols relating to the submission of a doctoral dissertation for examination. The doctoral examination process is coordinated by the Faculty's Postgraduate Examinations Office.

3.2.1. Notice of intention to submit

The submission of a doctoral dissertation is preceded by the submission of a **Notice of Intention to Submit form** by a doctoral student directly to the Postgraduate Examinations Office (PEO) (fasspeo@sun.ac.za with a CC to supervisors) via email before the relevant deadline date in their final year of study. See the Submission deadlines below for the relevant dates or the **Important PhD Dates and Deadlines (2025) document.**

The purpose of the Notice of Intention to Submit form is for the Postgraduate Examinations Office to prepare for the examination of all doctoral dissertations. The form also prompts supervisors to nominate and appoint suitable examiners for each doctoral study. No doctoral dissertation may be sent out for examination if the nomination of examiners has not been approved.

Due to the administrative purpose of the Notice of Intention to Submit form, doctoral students are only required to submit the form once, in their final year of study. If a doctoral student fails to submit their dissertation at the date indicated on their form, they will not be penalized. However, if a student fails to submit their dissertation for examination in their intended final year and is required to register for an additional (final) year, then a new Notice of Intention to Submit form must be completed and sent to the Postgraduate Examinations Office (PEO) (fasspeo@sun.ac.za with a CC to supervisors) via email.

3.2.2. Submission deadlines for 2025 academic year

Doctoral students must submit their dissertation and supporting documentation directly to the Postgraduate Examinations Office before or on the deadline date in order to be eligible for a particular graduation cycle.

Deadline dates for intended December 2025 graduation:
Notice of intention to submit: **3 March 2025**
Submission for examination: **25 July 2025**
Oral examinations: **5 to 18 September 2025**

Deadline dates for intended March/April 2026 graduation:
Notice of intention to submit: **12 May 2025**
Submission for examination: **10 October 2025**
Oral examinations: **24 November to 12 December 2025**

These deadline dates are strictly adhered to. In other words, dissertations (and supporting documentation) submitted after the relevant deadline date will be held over for the following submission cycle, even if this requires a student to register for an additional year.

3.2.3. Permission to submit

Supervisors are required to consent to the submission of a doctoral dissertation for examination. The **Supervisor Declaration form** confirms the supervisor's support for a given dissertation to be submitted. Supervisors must also confirm the word count of the dissertation, and that they have reviewed the Turnitin report and are satisfied that the dissertation may be examined in its current form.

The Postgraduate Examinations Office may not send a dissertation out for examination without the consent

of the supervisor. If the supervisor does not give permission for the dissertation to be submitted for examination, but the candidate nevertheless wishes to proceed, they may appeal to the Dean. The Dean may, after consulting the supervisor and/or the chair of the department, recommend to the Higher Degrees and Research Committee that the candidate should be allowed to submit the work for examination.

3.2.4. What is required upon submission?

A doctoral dissertation is ready to be submitted for examination once the final draft has been approved by the supervisor(s) AND undergone language editing AND formatted according to the prescribed technical requirements.

The student must send the dissertation and supporting documentation to the Postgraduate Examinations Office electronically. All required documents must be packaged in a folder using the student's name and student number as the folder name, for example: Adam Smith (12345678). It can be shared with the Postgraduate Examinations Office (fasspeo@sun.ac.za) via email, via an institutional OneDrive link, or via file sharing systems such as WeTransfer. The dissertation may only be sent for examination once the Postgraduate Examinations Office has received all documents required.

Doctoral students need to submit the following documentation for examination:

(1) A pdf version of the full and collated work, including front matter (title page, declaration and copyright, abstract(s), word count, etc.), bibliography, and appendices;

(2) A copy of the Turnitin summary report page indicating the similarity score (not the full similarity report);

(3) Ethical clearance information: A copy of the approval from the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee if ethical clearance was required **OR** a copy of the **Ethics Exemption Declaration** if

ethical clearance was not required; and

(4) The **declaration by the supervisor** in which they confirm the word count, that they have reviewed the Turnitin report, and agree that the dissertation may be submitted for examination.

It is the responsibility of the doctoral student to ensure that the correct version of the dissertation and all supporting documentation is submitted to the Postgraduate Examinations Office in time. The examination process formally commences once the dissertation has been sent to examiners. Under no circumstances may revised versions of dissertations or additional documentation be sent to examiners once the examination process has commenced.

The Postgraduate Examinations Office will confirm receipt of each submission. Please note that the PEO will be inundated with submissions on the deadline date and thus confirmation of receipt may take two to three working days.

3.3.   THE DOCTORAL EXAMINATION PROCESS

The following section provides an overview of the examination process for all doctoral dissertations as well as a description of the role and responsibilities of supervisors, departments, non-examining chairs, and examiners in the process.

3.3.1. Selection and appointment of examiners

The steps below outline the appointment process for examiners of doctoral studies.

- Supervisor(s) approach suitable examiners;
- Supervisors submit a nomination form to the Faculty Administrator (fasscomm@sun.ac.za) before the deadline to be included on the agenda for the Higher Degrees and Research Committee (HDRC) (see 3.1.1.2 for specific dates);
- The HDRC reviews and recommends the appointment to the Faculty Board.
- The Faculty Board approves the appointment and

makes the necessary recommendation to Senate.

3.3.1.1. WHO MAY EXAMINE DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS?
A doctoral dissertation must be examined by three examiners, all of whom are unconnected to the study.

All three examiners must each have a doctoral degree. In exceptional cases (and usually with reference to practice-led studies), an examiner that does not hold a doctorate may be appointed if they are proven experts/practitioners in a given field and the supervisor provides a strong motivation in support of such an appointment.

The independent internal examiner must be appointed at Stellenbosch University. Extraordinary lecturers or professors as well as current teaching and/or research fellows at SU are considered internal examiners.

One independent external examiner should be appointed at any other university or research institution in South Africa. In both cases, their professional affiliation must be stated.

One independent external examiner should be appointed at any other university or research institution outside South Africa. In both cases, their professional affiliation must be stated.

A person who was previously associated with or appointed at SU must have not been in service of this University for a period of at least three years before that person can be appointed as an external examiner.

3.3.1.2. HOW TO APPOINT DOCTORAL EXAMINERS
Early in the final year of study, the supervisor approaches examiners to find out if they are prepared to undertake the examination of a doctoral dissertation. Supervisors should provide prospective examiners with the title of the study and inform them of the following: (1) approximate date which they should expect to receive the dissertation (early August or mid-October); (2) they will be given 6 weeks to examine the dissertation and submit their report; (3) they will be required to participate in an oral examination and supervisors must provide the dates for oral examinations; (4) they will only receive an electronic copy of the dissertation from the Postgraduate Examinations Office; and (5) external examiners will be remunerated for their service upon completion and finalization of the study.

Once they have secured suitably qualified examiners who have agreed to examine the dissertation, supervisors must complete the **Nomination of PhD examiners form**. The nomination form must be undersigned by the chair of the department and reach the Faculty Administrator electronically (fasscomm@sun.ac.za) before the deadline date.

For the examination to be completed in time for a particular graduation ceremony, it is vital that the prescribed deadlines for the appointment of the examiners be met; missing the deadline will result in the graduation being delayed to the next graduation event.

Deadline dates for the nomination of PhD examiners

- 25 March 2025 (for December 2025 graduation)
- 8 July 2025 (for March/April 2026 graduation)

These fixed dates coincide with the closing dates for the agendas of the Faculty's standing committee system and with the **deadlines of University Administration**. The nomination of PhD examiners will serve at the Faculty's Higher Degrees and Research Committee, who refers the nominations to the Faculty Board for approval by Senate. Once Senate has approved the nomination, the Postgraduate Examinations Office sends an appointment letter to the external examiners for their written acceptance.

It is important to note that the nomination of PhD examiners and the results of a PhD examination MAY NOT be approved at the same Senate meeting. It is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure that examiners for doctoral studies are nominated and appointed well in advance.

3.3.1.3. HOW TO CHANGE APPROVED PHD EXAMINERS

In cases where an approved (internal or external) examiner must withdraw their service, supervisors must find a suitable alternative that meets the requirements set out above and complete the **Amendment of PhD examiners form**. The nomination form must be undersigned by the chair of the department and reach the Faculty Administrator electronically (fasscomm@sun.ac.za) before the closing date of the HDRC agenda. The approval of the nomination will follow the same process as outlined above.

3.3.2. Appointment and duties of non-examining chair

The supervisor, in consultation with the chair of the department, decides on a suitable person to act as non-examining chair of the doctoral examination committee for a doctoral candidate, and approaches this colleague.

The non-examining chair must be a senior colleague (at the professorial level) within the Faculty but from a department other than the one in which the candidate is registered as a doctoral student. The nomination of the non-examining chair takes place at the same time as the nomination of PhD examiners by means of the **Nomination of PhD examiners form**.

The Postgraduate Examinations Office (PEO), in consultation with the non-examining chair of the examination committee and the examiners, will decide on a suitable date and time for the oral examination. The PEO will provide the following documents to the non-examining chair at least 24 hours before the oral examination:

- the reports of the examiners,
- the completed standard report forms for examiners,
- the standard report form for non-examining chairs, and
- the regulations for non-examining chairs of doctoral examination committees.

The duties and powers of the non-examining chair during the examination session and after the close of the oral examination are clearly outlined in the regulations for non-examining chairs of doctoral examination committees, which will be provided by the PEO.
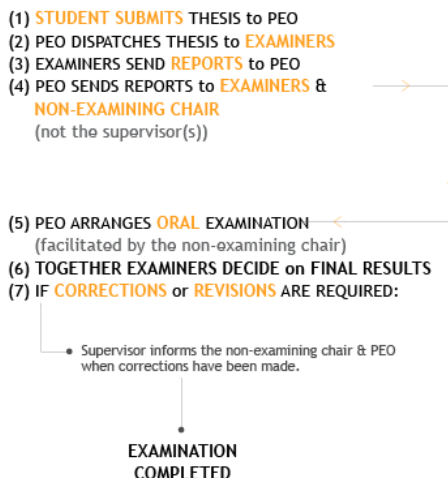
3.3.3. The examination process

The examination process is coordinated by the Postgraduate Examinations Office. The PEO is

responsible for sending doctoral dissertations to examiners for examination; communicating with examiners, the non-examining chair, and supervisor(s); arranging the doctoral oral examination; collating the examiners' reports before circulating the relevant documentation to the non-examining chair, the three examiners and the supervisor(s) before the oral examination; and remunerating external examiners and independent assessors (where necessary).

Once a dissertation is ready for examination, the student must send the dissertation and supporting documentation to the PEO electronically. All required documents must be packaged in a folder using the student's name and student number as the folder name, for example: Adam Smith (12345678). It can be shared with the PEO (fasspeo@sun.ac.za) via email, via an institutional OneDrive link, or via file sharing systems such as WeTransfer. The PEO may only send the dissertation out for examination if examiners have been appointed for the study AND all required documents have been received AND the dissertation and supporting documentation were received on or before a given deadline date.

The figure below illustrates the examination process for doctoral studies.

PhD EXAMINATION PROCEDURE

(1) STUDENT SUBMITS THESIS to PEO
(2) PEO DISPATCHES THESIS to EXAMINERS
(3) EXAMINERS SEND REPORTS to PEO
(4) PEO SENDS REPORTS to EXAMINERS &
    NON-EXAMINING CHAIR
    (not the supervisor(s))

(5) PEO ARRANGES ORAL EXAMINATION
    (facilitated by the non-examining chair)
(6) TOGETHER EXAMINERS DECIDE on FINAL RESULTS
(7) IF CORRECTIONS or REVISIONS ARE REQUIRED:

- Supervisor informs the non-examining chair & PEO
  when corrections have been made.

EXAMINATION COMPLETED

3.3.3.1. COMMUNICATION WITH EXAMINERS

Doctoral students should not be informed who their examiners are, nor may they communicate with the examiners about the exam in the period between submitting the work for examination and the announcement of the final result. In the interest of a fair and unbiased evaluation, the supervisor should likewise not have contact with the examiners (and vice versa) regarding the examination until such time as the doctoral examination panel has reached consensus and informed the student of the final result at the doctoral oral examination.

3.3.3.2. SUPERVISOR REPORT

Unlike Master's studies, supervisors of doctoral dissertations are **not** required to submit a report on the supervision of the dissertation.

3.3.3.3. COMPOSITION AND ROLE OF THE DOCTORAL EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

The three examiners, chaired by the non-examining chair, constitute the doctoral examination committee. The primary function of the examination committee is to reach consensus as to whether the dissertation meets the requirements of a doctorate.

3.3.4. The Doctoral examination

The examination of doctoral dissertations comprises two complementary processes: (1) the independent assessment of the dissertation by each examiner in the form of a written report, and (2) an oral examination where the doctoral examination committee and the doctoral candidate engage in a conversation about the dissertation.

3.3.4.1. EXAMINATION CRITERIA FOR DOCTORAL STUDIES

In addition to the electronic version of the dissertation, the ethical clearance approval or **ethics exemption declaration** and Turnitin summary report, all examiners receive a standard set of instructions for the assessment of doctoral dissertations.

Examiners are required to assess a doctoral dissertation in terms of the following general criteria:

- Delimitation and conceptualisation of the field and subject of research;
- Command of the relevant research method;
- Familiarity with the relevant literature;
- Clear and systematic presentation of the material and logical exposition of the argument;
- Proper documentation and support of the results of independent research;
- Whether the study conforms to recognised ethical standards;
- Acceptable linguistic and stylistic presentation; and
- The original contribution made by the dissertation to knowledge in its field.

3.3.4.2. EXAMINERS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Examiners are required to submit a written report which is an independent evaluation of the dissertation in accordance with the set of general assessment criteria outlined above. The expectation is that examiners will stay within the criteria, give a clear statement of how the candidate meets each of the criteria and elucidate these statements with examples from the dissertation. Each examiner is also required to comment on the suitability of all or parts of the dissertation for publication. The examiners may also

comment on any aspect of the dissertation which is not covered by the criteria.

The written reports of the examiners remain the primary evaluation instruments in the sense that they determine whether the candidate passes or not. Examiners must also indicate whether or not (parts of) their reports may be made available to the candidate. The acceptable length of a report on a doctoral dissertation, in accordance with the criteria above, is 1 200 to 1 500 words or 3 to 5 pages long. The Postgraduate Examinations Office may return reports that do not fulfil these requirements.

In addition to the written report, each examiner is also required to select one of the following recommendations on the Standard Report Form for PhD studies:

(a) The degree be awarded to the candidate.
(b) The degree may be conferred upon the candidate, provided that the revision, in accordance with the recommendations of the examiners, is completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor (i.e., the examiners do not receive the dissertation again).
(c) The degree may be conferred upon the candidate, provided that a material revision is completed to the satisfaction of the examiners, as agreed upon by the examination panel (i.e., the examiners must approve the revisions).
(d) The degree may not be conferred on the dissertation in its current form — the candidate must revise and resubmit the dissertation.
(e) The degree may not be conferred upon the candidate and the work may not be resubmitted for examination.

Examiners are given six weeks in which to examine the dissertation. The written report and the Standard Report Form with the recommendation must be submitted electronically to the Postgraduate Examinations Office (fasspeo@sun.ac.za). The examiners' reports are then circulated by the PEO to the examiners, the non-examining chair, and supervisor(s) prior to the oral examination.

Doctoral candidates may only see the reports once the oral examination has been completed and if such permission has been granted by the examiners. The written reports of the examiners are to be treated confidentially and their names disclosed with the reports only with their express

permission. The Standard Report Forms may never be disclosed to the candidate. Only those parts of the reports, unless the examiner has given express permission for the whole to be passed on, which are relevant for the candidate to make the required changes may be passed on to the candidate. After the oral examination, it is the supervisor's responsibility to make the necessary digest of the report.

3.3.4.3. THE DOCTORAL ORAL EXAMINATION

An oral examination is required for a doctoral degree. The oral examination provides the opportunity for the examiners to clarify issues discussed in their written reports or other issues which might arise during the oral. The oral examination is a secondary evaluation instrument and may deal with any aspect of the doctoral dissertation and the broader field related to the dissertation.

The oral examination is coordinated and managed by the Postgraduate Examinations Office. All oral examinations take place virtually via Microsoft Teams. Only in exceptional cases will a physical meeting (with the assistance of teleconferencing facilities) be considered and approved by the Faculty's Higher Degrees and Research Committee. All doctoral oral examinations will be recorded for record purposes and stored by the PEO. The recording will only be utilised in the case of a dispute or complaint by an examiner or doctoral student about the examination process. Under no circumstances will the recording be available to doctoral candidates.

All members of the doctoral examination committee (non-examining chair and three examiners) as well as the doctoral student participate in the doctoral oral examination. The supervisor(s) is invited to attend the oral examination as an observer but takes no part in the discussion unless requested by the chair. Similarly, the doctoral candidate may not see the reports, nor may they be given insight into their content before the oral examination.

The Postgraduate Examinations Office will provide the non-examining chair, examiners, doctoral candidate, and supervisor(s) with thorough instructions for the virtual doctoral oral. The general proceedings of the doctoral oral examination can be summarised as follows:

- First, the non-examining chair provides an overview of the process and procedure relating to the doctoral oral examination and gives the

examiners the opportunity to discuss their written reports with each other.
- Second, the doctoral student joins the meeting and answers several rounds of questions posed by the examiners.
- Third, the doctoral student is excused, and the examiners deliberate on a final result based on their original recommendations and the student's performance during the oral examination. The examiners must reach consensus (not majority decision) on the final result.
- Fourth, the doctoral student is invited to re-join the meeting and the non-examining chair delivers the recommendation.

In exceptional cases, a doctoral oral examination may take place with only two of the examiners. However, under these circumstances, the procedure delineated below will be followed:

- First, the examiner unable to participate must submit in advance their questions for the candidate to address during the oral examination.
- These questions will be put to the candidate by the non-examining chair, on behalf of the examiner, during the oral examination.
- Third, after the doctoral oral examination, no outcome may be communicated to the candidate as the non-examining chair must first inform the examiner about the discussion during the oral and the provisional recommendation agreed upon by the other examiners.
- Fourth, the examiner that could not participate must confirm (in writing via email) that they accept or reject the provisional recommendation of the other examiners.
- Fifth, only once an outcome (consensus or dispute) is reached may the non-examining chair notify the candidate, the supervisor(s), and the rest of the doctoral examination committee of the final recommendation in writing.

If an examiner loses connectivity or reception during the oral examination and is unable to re-join the meeting, the non-examining chair should continue proceedings with the remaining committee members. However, after the doctoral

oral examination, no outcome may be communicated to the candidate as the non-examining chair must first inform the examiner about the discussion during the oral and the provisional recommendation agreed upon by the other examiners. The examiner that could not participate must confirm (in writing via email) that they accept or reject the provisional recommendation of the other examiners. Only once an outcome (consensus or dispute) is reached may the non-examining chair notify the candidate, the supervisor(s), and the rest of the doctoral examination committee of the final recommendation in writing.

If the doctoral candidate loses connectivity or reception during the oral examination and is unable to re-join the meeting, the non-examining chair adjourns the meeting, and a new doctoral oral examination date must be arranged by the Postgraduate Examinations Office. The delay from rescheduling (and completing) a doctoral oral examination may also delay the candidate's eligibility for graduation at the next graduation ceremony.

It is the responsibility of the non-examining chair to inform the doctoral candidate that the recommendation communicated at the oral examination is provisional until ratified by the Faculty Board and Senate. The official result will be communicated to the doctoral candidate by the Faculty Administrator a week or two after the following Senate meeting.

3.3.4.4. UNDERSTANDING THE VARIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS
RECOMMENDATION (A) OR (B)
If the examiners unanimously recommend options (A) or (B) during the deliberations at the oral examination, doctoral students will be required to complete the revisions in accordance with the examiners' recommendations to the satisfaction of their supervisor. If the revisions are completed and the dissertation is **uploaded on SUNScholar** by the given deadline date, then they will be able to graduate at the following graduation ceremony.

In other words, if a doctoral student submits their dissertation for examination in August (for December graduation) and the examiners recommend options (A) or (B), then the student must complete the revisions to the satisfaction of their supervisor and the dissertation must be uploaded on SUNScholar by the given deadline (usually end November) in order to be eligible for December graduation.

Similarly, if a doctoral student submits their dissertation for examination in October (for March/April graduation) and the examiners recommend options (A) or (B), then the student must complete the revisions to the satisfaction of their supervisor and the dissertation must be uploaded on SUNScholar by the given deadline (usually mid-February) in order to be eligible for March/April graduation.

IMPORTANT: There is a one-year time limit for revisions to be completed. In other words, in cases where the examination panel agrees to outcomes (A) or (B), students must revise their dissertation in line with the recommendations by the examiners (to the satisfaction of their supervisor) and the final version must be uploaded on SUNScholar within the same or following academic year in order to graduate. Registration beyond the one-year time limit for revisions will not be permitted.

RECOMMENDATION (C)
If the examiners unanimously recommend option (C) during the deliberations at the oral examination, doctoral students will be required to complete the revisions in accordance with the examiners' recommendations. Students must highlight the revisions throughout the revised dissertation and also complete the **Schedule of Revisions template** for examiners in which they explain how each revision was addressed and make reference to the page number of each specific revision in their revised dissertation.

IMPORTANT: There is a one-year time limit for revisions to be completed. In other words, in cases where the examination panel agrees to outcome (C), students must revise their dissertation in line with the recommendations of the examiners and resubmit their dissertation by the submission deadlines within the same or following academic year so that the revisions may be approved by the respective examiners and the examination concluded. Registration beyond the one-year time limit for revisions will not be permitted.

Once the supervisor is satisfied with the revised dissertation, the student must resubmit (1) the revised dissertation, and (2) the completed schedule of revisions form electronically to the Postgraduate Examinations Office (fasspeo@sun.ac.za). The PEO will send the documents back to the same examiners, who will review the revisions and select one of the following options on the Standard Report Form for the Resubmission of

a PhD dissertation:

(a) The candidate has satisfactorily revised the dissertation in accordance with the recommendations of the examiners during the first round of examination. The degree may now be conferred.
(b) The candidate has not satisfactorily revised the dissertation in accordance with the recommendations of the examiners during the first round of examination. The degree may not be conferred.

If all examiners select option (a) during the second round of examination, then the student must finalise their dissertation and **the final version must be uploaded on SUNScholar**. Since the dissertation has undergone two rounds of examination, it will not be possible for the student to graduate at their intended graduation ceremony. In other words, if a doctoral student submits their dissertation for examination in August (for December graduation) and the examiners recommend option (C), then the student will only be eligible for graduation at the March/April ceremony, at the earliest. Similarly, if a doctoral student submits their dissertation for examination in October (for March/April graduation) and the examiners recommend option (C), then the student will only be eligible for graduation at the next December ceremony. While this would require an additional year of registration, the faculty will grant the student a tuition fee waiver by means of a request from the supervisor via the departmental chairperson in which the student is registered to the Dean.

If all three examiners select option (B) during the second round of examination, then the student will not have another opportunity to resubmit their dissertation and they will not pass their degree. If the examiners are unable to reach consensus during the second round of examination, then a dispute will be called [see section 3.3.5.2 below for more information].

Examiners are given four weeks in which to review the revised dissertation. The written report and the Standard Report Form for the Resubmission of a PhD Dissertation with the recommendation are submitted electronically to the Postgraduate Examinations Office (fasspeo@sun.ac.za) for further processing.

RECOMMENDATION (D)

If the examiners recommend option (D), then they are of the opinion that the dissertation cannot pass in its current form and that the candidate must make substantial revisions before they resubmit their dissertation for examination. In such cases, at least one additional year of registration is required in order to revise the dissertation accordingly. Once the supervisor is satisfied with the revised dissertation, the student must resubmit their dissertation and all supporting documentation to the Postgraduate Examinations Office as required during the first submission.

The dissertation will be examined by the same three examiners as the first round. If all examiners pass the study during the second round of examination (recommendation (A), (B) or (C)) then the student will have an opportunity to attend to any revisions required by the examination committee and **the dissertation must be uploaded on SUNScholar** in time for the next graduation date. If the examiners do not pass the study during the second round of examination, then the student will not pass their degree. If the examiners are unable to reach consensus during the second round of examination, then a dispute will be called [see section 3.3.5.2 below for more information].

RECOMMENDATION (E)
If the examiners recommend option (E) then they are of the opinion that no amount of revision would enable the study to meet the minimum requirements and thus the work may not be resubmitted for examination. The student will not pass their degree.

3.3.5. Management of PhD examination results

The examiners' written reports and Standard Report forms are submitted directly to the Postgraduate Examinations Office. The reports must be received on or before the date provided by the PEO, which is prior to the oral examination. Once all the reports are received and collated, the PEO sends the reports to the non-examining chair, all three examiners, and the supervisor(s) electronically in preparation for the oral examination. The oral examination cannot take place if any of the written reports or Standard Report forms are outstanding.

The oral examination must culminate in a joint

recommendation about the final result. Only two outcomes are possible: (1) consensus is reached amongst the examiners regarding the final result or (2) no consensus can be reached by the examiners; in which case the non-examining chair declares a dispute.

3.3.5.1. CONSENSUS AMONGST EXAMINERS

The doctoral examination panel will consider the examination reports and performance of the doctoral candidate during the oral examination to make a joint recommendation. Where consensus (not majority) can be reached, the non-examining chair must inform the doctoral candidate and complete the Standard Report Form for Non-Examining Chairs (provided by the Postgraduate Examinations Office). It is important that the original recommendation of each examiner be reported, followed by a description of how the joint recommendation was reached. The non-examining chair must also address any discrepancies in examiners' reports and explain the considerations and consultative process which eventually led to consensus.

3.3.5.2. NO CONSENSUS CAN BE REACHED

At no time should pressure be placed on examiners to change their views. Where no consensus can be reached, the non-examining chair must inform the student and oversee the appointment of two independent assessors.

Appointment of independent assessors
Independent assessors must be senior academics from other institutions in the discipline in question and be experts in the specific area/field/topic raised by the dissertation.

Independent assessors are appointed by the non-examining chair of the examination committee in consultation with the supervisor on an ad hoc basis for each dispute case. A written justification for the appointment of the specific assessor (i.e., the completed Standard Report Form for Non-Examining Chairs) as well as a **Nomination of PhD assessors form** must be submitted to the Faculty Administrator (fasscomm@sun.ac.za) as part of the documentation for the assessors' nomination and appointment. These documents must also be sent to the Postgraduate Examinations Office (fasspeo@sun.ac.za).

The nomination of all independent assessors must be approved by the Faculty's Higher Degrees and Research Committee, Faculty Board and Senate. Independent assessors are paid 1.5 times the remuneration of an external examiner and payment is arranged by the Postgraduate Examinations Office upon finalisation of the examination process.

Role of independent assessors

The instruction to independent assessors is, in all cases, to take into account the anonymous reports of the examiners, the Standard Report Form of Non-Examining Chairs and the dissertation itself in their evaluation, and to come to a decision with regard to the specific dispute.

The Postgraduate Examinations Office (PEO) is responsible for sending the copy of the dissertation, copies of the examiners' and non-examining chair's reports and necessary documentation to the independent assessors electronically.

The assessors have six weeks to assess the dissertation and documentation and are required to submit a written report to the PEO substantiating their decision. The PEO then sends the assessors reports to the non-examining chair of the doctoral examination committee. The decision of the independent assessors is binding and final. In other words, should the independent assessors fail the dissertation, the student will fail and is not permitted to resubmit that study for examination. There is no further appeals process.

3.3.5.3. FINALISATION OF PHD EXAMINATION RESULTS

After the completion of the oral examination, the non-examining chair must complete the Standard Report Form of Non-Examining Chairs. This form captures the final recommendation agreed upon by the examiners during the oral examination and also describes how consensus was reached. All three examiners are required to sign the Standard Report Form of Non-Examining Chairs, however, the non-examining chair may sign the form on behalf of examiners, with their express permission, as the oral is conducted virtually.

The non-examining chair must submit the completed and signed copy of the Standard Report Form of Non-Examining Chairs to the Postgraduate Examinations Office electronically before the deadlines for the Higher Degrees and Research Committee. The PEO is responsible for

collating and sending all the examination reports (written reports by examiners, examiners' Standard Report forms for PhD Studies, and the Standard Report Form of Non-Examining Chairs) to the Faculty Administrator. The reports of examiners do not serve before the Faculty Board. Members of the Faculty Board do, however, have the right to inspect them.

3.3.6. Finalisation of Doctoral study

Once the doctoral oral examination is complete, it is the supervisor's responsibility to inform the candidate of the requirements of the examiners and examination panel (and possibly assessors) either for finalising the thesis for reproduction or revising the work for further examination.

3.3.6.1. COMMUNICATION WITH THE STUDENT

It is the responsibility of the non-examining chair to inform the doctoral candidate that the result communicated at the oral examination is provisional until ratified by the Faculty Board and Senate. The official result will be communicated to the doctoral candidate by the Faculty Administrator a week or two after the following Senate meeting.

Under no circumstances may the Standard Report forms of the examiners be disclosed to a doctoral student. Students may receive the examiners' written reports, or parts thereof, if such permission was expressly granted by the examiners. The reports of the examiners are to be treated confidentially and their names disclosed only with their express permission. Only those parts of the reports (unless the examiner has given express permission for the whole to be passed on) which are relevant for the candidate to make the required changes may be passed on to the candidate. It is the supervisor's responsibility to make the necessary digest of the report.

3.3.6.2. COMPLETION OF REVISIONS AND FINAL UPLOAD

Once the revisions have been completed, supervisors should inform the Postgraduate Examinations Office electronically (fasspeo@sun.ac.za). This process must take place before supervisors sign off on the work to be **uploaded onto SUNScholar**.

3.3.6.3. PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The University encourages higher degree students to publish their research as accredited articles, and to present the results of their research at academic fora. Students must mention their association with the University explicitly in these publications, otherwise the University forfeits its claim to subsidy on them.

Supervisors and doctoral students should refer to the **Agreement between supervisors and higher degree students** and **SU Calendar / Yearbook 2025** (section 6.12 on page 77) with regards to co-publication of work that stems from doctoral research.

4. JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMMES IN THE FASS

Given the increasing internationalization of higher education at Stellenbosch University (SU), this section provides specific guidelines for the management of joint degree candidates in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at SU. These guidelines are supported by the following institutional resources:

- **The SU Policy on Joint and Double Degrees at Master's and Doctoral Level with Foreign Universities**; and
- **SU Calendar Part 1** (Postgraduate qualifications Sections 5 and 6 respectively deal with the degrees of Master and Doctor).

4.1. GENERAL

A student may enrol for a joint degree under an existing partnership agreement where such an agreement has already been established. In such cases, there would usually be a set of agreements as follows:

(a) an institutional **Memorandum of Understanding** in place with the partner university;

(b) a **General Framework Agreement** which governs the award of joint degrees between the partners, usually across all Faculties, but which is non-specific to any individual student; and

(c) a **Candidate Agreement** template which is customisable to an individual student and specifies how the different elements of the general framework agreement will apply to the individual's project and case.

Where there is a need to explore a new partnership agreement that makes provision for joint degrees, the request must be initiated by an academic staff member who may have one or more prospective PhD candidates available for the envisaged collaboration. Entering into a new joint degree agreement on behalf of a single candidate as a once-off arrangement is not possible.

When partners for joint degrees are being considered, the following six requirements must be met in a substantial manner:

- It must fit in within the vision and mission of Stellenbosch University and contribute to attaining the goals of Stellenbosch University;
- Stellenbosch University must benefit from the complementarity of the particular foreign university;
- The foreign university must have the appropriate expertise in the research area in which the joint degree can be awarded;
- Stellenbosch University must have the appropriate expertise in the research area in which the joint degree can be awarded;
- There must be reasonable prospects of student movement to and from Stellenbosch University and the foreign university;
- The number of agreements for the awarding of joint and double degrees are strictly limited to agreements which have reasonable prospects of sustainability and active functioning based on a proven track record of collaboration between the institutions.

The same set of agreements mentioned above must be established.

4.2.   ADMISSION

4.2.1. The standard admission process as outlined in the HDRC Guidelines for Doctoral Research (PART 1) must be followed.

4.2.2 In addition to the minimum required four members of the Doctoral Admissions Committee as outlined in the FASS Guidelines for Doctoral Research, the admissions committee for a joint doctoral degree should include the following:

- o The supervisor/s from the partner institution; and/or
- o An additional member from the relevant department of the partner institution.

4.2.3. When submitting the PhD proposal to the FASS HDRC for approval, the formal bilateral agreements (see 4.1.b and 4.1.c) should be included.

4.3.   SUPERVISION

4.3.1. At least one supervisor from each of the partner institutions is required.

4.3.2   Individual supervisory roles are determined by the formal agreement between the two partner institutions and the specific candidate in question (see 4.1.c above).

4.4.   EXAMINATION PANEL

In the case of joint degree programmes presented in collaboration with foreign universities, the identification and appointment of the panel of examiners is done jointly by the supervisors.

The joint examination panel's constitution must be directed by the bilateral agreements between SU and the relevant partner institution, but must also adhere to the minimum requirements of *both* institutions in respect of the number of examiners involved. SU requires at least three unattached examiners of a doctoral dissertation, of which at least two should be external examiners. The examination panel of joint degree candidates often include more than three examiners.

At SU, the supervisor, and co-supervisor(s) where applicable, do not play an active role in the examination process, attending the oral examination only in an observational capacity. As such, they are not considered members of the unattached examination panel which has decision-making powers. However, there are foreign universities that require that the supervisor be a member of the joint examination panel. In such cases, an exception must be formally registered as part of the agreements with foreign universities. Such formal documentation is a requirement for allowing SU supervisors and SU co-supervisors to be part of joint examination panels.

SU supervisor/s must formally nominate the members of the examination panel by completing a **Nomination of examiners for a doctoral candidate form** and submitting it to the HDRC. This nomination must include supervisors if required as per the formal bilateral agreements (see 4.2.3. above). This must be done timeously so that the nomination can serve before Faculty Board and Senate **before** the examination will take place. **PLEASE NOTE:** The appointment of the joint examination panel **cannot** be approved at the same Senate meeting where examination results will serve. (See relevant dates and deadlines here: https://arts.sun.ac.za/hdrc.)

Due to differences in timing, it is possible that the approval of a joint examination panel takes place at one of the partners ahead of the opportunity for such approval at the other. In such cases, SU may recognise the partner's approval of the joint assessment panel and report the same via SU's structures in the usual manner.

4.5. EXAMINATION PROCESS

4.5.1. The details of the examination process are dependent on the relevant bilateral agreements and usually follow the standard process of the partner institution that takes responsibility for the oral examination, unless a combined procedure has been agreed as for Coventry University in the United Kingdom.

4.5.2. If SU takes this responsibility, the procedure as set out in the FASS Guidelines for Doctoral Research (PART 3) applies.

4.5.3. If the international partner institution takes this responsibility, the examination process as set out in the relevant bilateral agreement and the partner institution's postgraduate guidelines must be adhered to. The SU supervisor/s must then ensure that the following documentation is sent to the PEO (fasspeo@sun.ac.za) and HDRC (fasscomm@sun.ac.za) after the examination process has been completed:

- The two relevant bilateral agreement documents (4.1.b and 4.1.c);
- The relevant postgraduate degree guidelines from *both* partner institutions (e.g. in our case the FASS Guidelines for Doctoral Research);
- A report from the examination panel that summarizes the examination process and outcome. This report is usually completed by the non-examining chair of the examination panel (or similarly designated person) and must be signed by the non-examining chair AND all the appointed examiners (if the chair signs on behalf of the examiners, their consent for him/her to do so must be explicitly noted in the report);
- The individual examination reports of all appointed examiners (unless this is in contravention of the terms of the bilateral agreements); and
- Any other documentation relevant to the examination process as set out in the relevant bilateral agreements.

Joint degrees present a significant administrative challenge and the processes for establishing such degrees are still being refined. It is crucial that supervisor/s take responsibility to ensure that the individual candidate agreement (4.1.c) reflects all details in terms of how the two institutions' processes have been productively negotiated.

5. COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH IN THE FASS

When embarking on collaborative research, it is important to understand the difference between the following terms:

- **Multidisciplinarity** refers to studying a single issue from multiple different disciplinary perspectives at the same time, thus creating a broader understanding of the subject.
- When working in **interdisciplinary** ways, one collaborates with other disciplinary experts to integrate insights from different perspectives in one's research approach.
- **Transdisciplinarity** involves multiple stakeholders in research work, e.g. co-creation between academics and society, thus bringing together knowledge from theory and practice.

From the perspective of the FASS, **collaboration, mutual support** and **acting in good faith** are key to collaborative research processes. We consequently propose the following to guide collaborative research in the Faculty.

5.1. POSSIBLE STRUCTURE of COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH in the FASS

- Between different Departments and/or Centers in the FASS
- Across different Faculties at Stellenbosch University (SU)
- Between SU and other institutions/organisations, either nationally or internationally.

5.2. INITIATING COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

Central to navigating collaborative research, irrespective of the structure thereof, is **comprehensive consultation** with all relevant stakeholders and determining the terms of collaboration in a **formal, written agreement**. We recommend at least **2-3 consultation sessions** leading up to formal documentation of the collaboration.

Initial consultation should include at least the following:

- Chairs of all involved academic Departments, Centers and/or institutions/organisations,
- All involved Vice Deans,
- Chairs of the FASS Higher Degrees and Research Committee (HDRC) and Academic Offering Committee (AOC)
- Representatives of any other relevant institution, faculty, department or centre's Research and Academic offering leadership structures.

The **formal agreement** can take the form of a **memorandum of understanding** stipulating at least the following:

- Where ethical clearance should be applied for.
- The division of subsidy (in the case of publications and/or postgraduate qualifications) needs to be negotiated and included in the formal agreement. Please note that, in the case of collaborative research between different departments within the FASS, subsidy is usually divided proportionally based on supervision provided. In the case of collaborative research between different SU faculties, subsidy cannot be shared. It is thus not in the best interest of the FASS to enroll students in degree programmes housed in our faculty if supervision is provided by other faculties. In the case of collaborative research between SU and other international institutions (e.g. in the case of joint degree programmes), we do receive full subsidy.
- How supervision will be shared (in the case of postgraduate qualifications), and
- The structure that examination will take (in the case of postgraduate qualifications).

Important contact details and resources

Postgraduate Examinations Office
Thukela Bekwa: fasspeo@sun.ac.za

Faculty Administrator (Registrar's Division)
Cheryl Richardson: fasscomm@sun.ac.za

HDRC documentation: Faculty policy documents and forms (for higher degree students and supervisors).

Ethical clearance: Information, documentation, meeting dates and online application.

SUNScholar: Information relating to the formatting and final submission of examined doctoral dissertations.

Postgraduate skills development: Information about a range of workshops and support to help postgraduate students hone their research and academic writing skills free of charge.

Institutional research-related policy documents: Guidelines for responsible research conduct and plagiarism regulations.

Institutional postgraduate support and services: Overview of important topics relating to the practicalities of postgraduate studies and research at SU.

Referencing guidelines of SU: Overview of Harvard, APA and other referencing styles are available here as well as information regarding Mendeley reference management.