



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Guidelines for the Supervision and Examination of  
Masters and Doctoral Programmes**



**Compiled by the Committee for Guidelines  
for Masters and Doctoral Programmes**

**April 2016**

**FOREWORD**

The objective of this document is to serve as the basis for a Senate Submission, which proposes implementation guidelines that will (in future) be applicable and valid for all Masters and Doctoral programmes of the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The document has been compiled by a temporary committee appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, Dr Niikondo for this purpose. The committee was headed by Dr Anicia Peters (Dean, Faculty of Computing and Informatics) and included representatives of all six Faculties of the institution: Prof. Dharm Singh Jat, Dr Thomas Christiansen, Dr Johannes Sheefeni, Prof. Rajaram Swaminatha, Prof. Omotayo Awofolu, Dr Josephine Ola Busari.

The guidelines presented here have information from various sources, including earlier draft versions of these guidelines. The proposed Guidelines for the Supervision and Examination of Masters and Doctoral Programmes refer to and are closely interlinked with the “Rules for Postgraduate Studies” in Part 1 of the NUST Yearbook and faculty-specific Doctoral programmes. The proposed guidelines must therefore be read and studied together with these complementing documents.

The committee met first on 15 October, 29 October and continued meeting weekly until December 2015. The draft paper was forwarded to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor: Academics in April 2016.

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**ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS**

BoS	Board of Studies
CTL	Centre for Teaching and Learning
FPGC	Faculty Postgraduate Committee
NUST	Namibia University of Science and Technology
PGSC	Postgraduate Studies Committee
PoN	Polytechnic of Namibia
FNRSS	Faculty of Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences
FCI	Faculty of Computing and Informatics
FoE	Faculty of Engineering
SoMS	Faculty of Management Sciences
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise (parastatal)
DVCA	Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic

## 1 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The *Guidelines for the Supervision and Examination of Masters and Doctoral Programmes* (in the following simply referred to as the “*Guidelines*”) were compiled between October 2015 and April 2016 on behalf of the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic. The objective of the document is to serve as the basis for a Senate Submission by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor that will propose regulations that are binding for the implementation of all (existing and future) Masters and Doctoral programmes at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

The document presented hereafter is closely linked to the following documents:

- On the institutional level, the organisational and institutional framework for the implementation of postgraduate programmes for Doctoral, Masters and Bachelor Honours have already been defined. The resulting institutional regulations are documented and published in the “*Rules for Postgraduate Studies*” of Part 1 of the NUST Yearbook. As a consequence, the implementation rules set forth in these *Guidelines*, have to comply with the framework defined by these *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies*.
- On the level of the six different Faculties of the institution, discipline-specific Doctoral or PhD programmes have either already been approved or are in the works. The faculty- or subject-specific Doctoral or PhD programmes have to comply with the more general rules and regulations as defined by the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies* and these *Guidelines for the Implementation of Masters and Doctoral Programmes*.

The function and objective of *Guidelines for the Implementations of Masters and Doctoral Programmes* is to fill the gap between the Doctoral programmes at faculty level and the institutional regulations in the Yearbook. The *Guidelines* interpret and complement the regulations given in the Yearbook and simultaneously set the framework for Doctoral Programmes at faculty level.

In contrast to the “*Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies*” (which include regulations for the Bachelor Honours Degrees), the *Guidelines* deal with Masters and Doctoral programmes only. The reason is that the implementation of BSc Honours programmes is managed in a decentralised way at faculty and department level, while Masters and Doctoral programmes are handled at the institutional level. The number of Bachelor Honours students would also be too big to be managed at the institutional level.

With regard to priority, the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies* defines the framework for the *Guidelines*, which themselves set the framework for individual Doctoral programmes. Hence, both, the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies* as well as the *Guidelines for the Implementations of Masters and Doctoral Programmes*, will automatically be binding for all Masters and Doctoral programmes. In this context, the *Guidelines* focus on issues that are applicable to all faculties, while Masters and Doctoral programmes are faculty-specific.

The document consists of three sections:

- Section 1 outlines the background and objectives of the Guidelines.
- Section 2 clarifies and defines the roles, duties and responsibilities of the various parties and actors involved.
- Finally, Section 3 addresses additional implementation issues that are not covered by the *Rules for Postgraduate Studies*.

The *Guidelines* do not include an appendix with templates for application, admission, registering and approving research proposals, progress reporting etc. Such templates are subject to

frequent change. The required standard forms and templates will thus have to be designed and approved separately by the PGSC.

## 2 ROLES, DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES

The Namibia University of Science and Technology offers Masters and Doctoral degrees and these programmes can either be research-only or by a combination of coursework and research. The main outcome of such Masters or Doctoral studies is in the form of a thesis or mini-thesis. A thesis refers to the written document containing the results of the research for such masters or doctoral studies. A mini-thesis refers to a thesis forming part of prescribed coursework and contributes a weight of less than less than 40% of the credits of the degree. The *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies* outlines the rules concerning the thesis versus mini-thesis and various types of degrees.

Doctoral degrees are the highest formal qualification awarded at the University. The essence of doctoral work is to make a substantial and original contribution to the body of knowledge in the chosen field, the student is expected to work independently under the guidance of a Supervisor and the work should meet international standards of scholarship.

Masters degrees are advanced academic degrees that requires the student to demonstrate mastery in a specific academic or professional field. The student is not expected to make an original contribution to knowledge and the output produced is less than that expected of a doctoral degree.

Various role players and stakeholders are involved in the planning, approval, execution and, finally, the evaluation of Masters and Doctoral projects and the respective results produced by these studies. To avoid misunderstandings and wrong expectations, it is crucial that all stakeholders are well aware of each other's tasks, duties and responsibilities. The present section will name and define the various stakeholders involved and describe in detail their respective rights, responsibilities and duties. Additional information is given in each regard in the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies*.

### 2.1 STUDENT

The *Student* forms the core component of each Master or Doctoral project. Admission will depend on the fulfilment of the formal admission requirements as well as the financial obligation. After registration for the qualification, the applicant is then referred to as a registered student. Thereafter, the applicant is required to develop and finalise his/her research proposal within the timeframe as stipulated in the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies* from the date/period of registration and submit for approval by the Faculty Postgraduate Committee (FPGC) and then to the Postgraduate Studies Committee (PGSC) for notification. Before and during application for admission to a Master or Doctoral programme, the *Applicant* has (among others) the following responsibilities:

- to familiarise him/herself with all degree requirements and procedures at the Namibia University of Sciences and Technology,
- to review and discuss (informally) potential research topics with his/her anticipated *Supervisor(s)*,
- to discuss and clarify the logistical and financial support required for the planned project,
- to ensure (in cooperation with the *Supervisor(s)*) that the envisaged topic will not duplicate previous research,
- to compile and deliver a sound and well-researched comprehensive Research Proposal within the timeframe defined by the PGSC, if applicable.

After approval of the Research Proposal, the *Student* is expected to be the main driver of the research. The *Supervisor* (see below) will advise and facilitate the research work, but the



momentum for the research activities has to come from the *Student*. The main and general duties of the *Student* are:

- to keep his/her *Supervisor(s)* well-informed (formally and informally) on work progress and any important problems faced during the studies,
- to comply strictly with the work progress reporting duties (timing, size and format) as pre-agreed with the respective *Supervisor(s)* and as prescribed by institutional regulations,
- to keep an organised record of research-related activities,
- to document carefully and systematically any formal and / or important meetings and / or all relevant communication with the *Supervisor(s)*, *Co-Supervisor(s)*, the Head of Department or the Postgraduate Studies Committee,
- to comply with institutional regulations and policy on plagiarism and institutional referencing guidelines,
- to maintain a professional attitude to and relationship with *Supervisor(s)*, the *Co-Supervisor(s)* as well as other staff and fellow-students,
- to register on time every year and to pay for all studies on time.

At the conclusion of the project, the *Student* must:

- follow the procedures defined by the institution for the preparation, submission and examination of the thesis,
- take full responsibility for a professional presentation of the research results in the form of a thesis.

## 2.2 SUPERVISOR

Next to the *Student*, the *Supervisor* forms the second most important person of a Master or Doctoral programme. The appointment of *Supervisors* (internal and external) and *Co-Supervisors* is specified in the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies*.

The Supervisor's main task is to advise the *Student* and supervise the student's work over the entire lifetime of the degree and to promote and facilitate a smooth, productive, and systematic realisation of the *Student's* research work. The Supervisor should assist the student in developing the research skills and knowledge needed for the research work and introduce the student to relevant academic and professional networks through conferences, symposia, workshops, seminars, etc.

The department shall propose a Supervisor and or Co-Supervisor as applicable to the FPGC for the supervision and implementation of students' research project. Proposed Supervisor shall then be forwarded by the FPGC to PGSC for ratification. The *Supervisor* should preferably be a senior academic within the Institution with a Doctoral degree, be research active in the discipline and experienced in research supervision at Masters and/or Doctoral level, as required. If that cannot be provided, the *Supervisor* may be an external academic from a reputable academic institution. In that case, a *Co-Supervisor* from the Namibia University of Science and Technology should be nominated.

At the start of a Master or Doctoral programme, the *Supervisor* must:

- review, discuss and evaluate potential topics with the *Applicant*,
- supervise, review and quality-check the Research Proposal before submission to the FPGC for notification,
- support and advise the student with regard to any conceptual, logistical and technical problems which may have to be solved to enable the planned research,

- support and advise the student with respect to securing financial support.

During the studies, the *Supervisor* must:

- monitor and oversee the *Student's* research activities on a regular basis,
- discuss the research progress and the research results regularly with the student and advise the student (if and where required) on the conceptual and technical level,
- advise on the organisation and style of the thesis, based on careful reviews of draft versions of text components provided by the *Student*,
- give general guidance, motivation and encouragement to the *Student* to maintain a positive and productive attitude,
- document the *Student's* progress and report progress to the FPGC and PGSC in the prescribed regular intervals and format.

At the conclusion of the project, the *Supervisor* must:

- review the research results and ensure that the final product will meet the standards required by internal and external examiners,
- advise and assist through the department, the FPGC and PGSC on the selection of examiners,
- prepare the student for the viva voce/oral examination.

### 2.3 CO-SUPERVISOR

Besides the Supervisor, the department, through the FPGC and PGSC may nominate/appoint Co-Supervisor(s), especially if the main Supervisor is an external colleague. The Co-Supervisor should preferably be a senior academic either within or external to the Institution with a degree higher than the student, i.e. in the case of a Doctoral candidate, the Co-Supervisor should possess a Doctoral degree, in the case of a Masters student, the Co-Supervisor should possess at least a Masters degree. A Co-Supervisor should be ideally research active or where the Co-Supervisor is from industry, he/she should be an expert in the field of study. Co-Supervisors support and complement the main Supervisor and have the same duties and responsibilities with regard to Student support. The reporting duties remain with the main Supervisor, unless prescribed otherwise by the PGSC.

The Supervisor and Co-Supervisor have to coordinate closely their activities and support to the Student. Particular care should be taken to avoid confusing the Student by providing deviating or even contradictory feedback. During an absence or another unavailability of the main Supervisor, the Co-Supervisor may be asked by the PGSC to take over the duties of the main *Supervisor* temporarily.

### 2.4 FACULTY POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE (FPGC)

A Faculty Postgraduate Committee coordinates Masters and Doctoral programme-related activities within each faculty and prepares and recommends any formal submissions to the PGSC. Each FPGC oversees quality control within the faculty and prepares matters to be decided formally by the PGSC.

The FPGC is a faculty-internal standing committee of senior staff members. It is not (yet) mentioned in the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies*. The composition of the FPGC will be defined by the Dean, the Associate Dean, Research and Postgraduate Studies and the Heads of Department of that Faculty. The duties and responsibilities of the FPGC include (but are not limited to) the following:

- defining areas and topics of interest of the faculty,

- reviewing and approving acceptable research topics within the faculty,
- reviewing and (pre-)approving research proposals for Masters and Doctoral projects within the faculty,
- discussing and pre-selecting potential supervisors, co-supervisors and examiners and recommending them to the PGSC,
- resolving potential conflicts between *Student / Supervisor / Co-Supervisor*, which cannot be solved by the individuals involved alone.

## 2.5 POSTGRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE (PGSC)

The duties / responsibilities of the PGSC as well as its composition and appointment modalities are defined in the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies*. The PGSC is the highest decision-making and approving authority of the Namibia University of Science and Technology with regard to all Masters and Doctoral programmes. It thus has the mandate and authority to review and decide (on a case-by-case basis) any Master and Doctoral programme-related questions and problems which are not covered by the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies*, the *Guidelines for the Implementation of Masters and Doctoral Programmes* or the respective Masters and Doctoral programmes at faculty level.

Its main responsibility is the oversight of the activities of the FPGC with respect to admission of PG students, research proposal finalisation, appointment of supervisor(s)/co-supervisors as well as examiners of students' theses. The PGSC is also responsible for the regular review of all postgraduate programme-relevant documents, in particular the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies* and the *Guidelines for the Implementation of Masters and Doctoral Programmes*. The PGSC, in cooperation with any committee mandated by the PGSC for that purpose – is finally also responsible for the selection, design, approval and regular review of all standard forms and templates to be used for the implementation and academic management of Masters and Doctoral programmes.

## 2.6 EXAMINER

The appointment of *Examiners* and the composition of the examination panel are specified in the *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies*.

The responsibility of the Examiners is to mark and evaluate the thesis which documents the results of the Masters or Doctoral Research Project and to mark and evaluate the Masters or Doctoral *Student's* performance in the viva voce/oral examination.

### **3 MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION OF MASTERS AND DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROGRAMMES**

#### **3.1 ADMISSION**

##### **3.1.1 Three Step Process**

- i. Application to Admission/ Registrar Office
- ii. Selection (Candidate FPGC to PGSC)
- iii. PGSC as per Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies

#### **3.2 REGISTRATION**

##### **3.2.1 Student Registration**

Masters and Doctoral students may register according to the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies.

#### **3.3 SUPERVISOR/CO-SUPERVISOR SELECTION**

Potential supervisors may approach students for supervision. Supervisors are encouraged to advise students to maintain records of results and processes in a manner that can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate right to enquire. Supervisors shall also provide guidance to students on the preparation of the thesis; viva voce; examinations; and propose potential examiners, both internal and external, to the Postgraduate Unit. Should the need arise, supervisors should involve postgraduate students in appropriate research or teaching activities. These activities are: conducting laboratory work and tutorials; supervising undergraduate projects; reading lectures on topics related to their work; marking assignments and examination scripts, among others.

#### **3.4 COURSEWORK**

The various Faculties offer different types of Masters and Doctoral degrees. Some degrees are research-based only and others are a combination of coursework and a thesis. Degrees with a combination of coursework can either have a thesis or mini-thesis depending on how much the thesis contributes to the overall credits. The *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies* stipulates the different requirements about theses. Where degrees are research-based only, supervisors can still require students to take optional courses. Students should consult Faculty guidelines with regard to mandatory and/or optional courses.

#### **3.5 PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL**

##### **3.5.1 Discussion and selection of topic**

The student is expected to identify, propose, formulate, report and present an original solution to the topic of choice. In the case of Masters degrees, the Supervisor, department or student may suggest the research topic. In the case of Doctoral degrees, the candidate is expected to suggest a research topic in consultation with the Supervisor, as Doctoral research should be the student's original work. It is generally an iterative process and topic selection is confirmed by the FPGC.

### 3.5.2 Proposal Development (Supervisor + Student) and Approval by FPGC

The proposal is developed by the student in consultation with the Supervisor and approved by the FPGC.

### 3.5.3 Concept Paper Approval

The concept paper will be derived from the approved proposal and recommended by FPGC to the PGSC for approval. The approved concept paper template should be used for submission to the PGSC.

### 3.5.4 Registration of Research Topic

After the proposal and concept paper have been approved, the student should register the research topic using the prescribed form. Once registered, research topics may be amended only with the approval of the relevant entities (see Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies).

The candidate is required to observe all the relevant ethical requirements and shall sign the appropriate declaration concerning ethics in research. The declaration forms are obtainable from the relevant academic department (see Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies).

The candidate may then embark upon the thesis research.

## 3.6 RESEARCH PHASE/IMPLEMENTATION/PROCESS

The processes, stages or phases of research, approach and implementation vary, based on the nature, discipline and duration of the study. Hence, an inclusive, feasible and operable implementation process and timeline for Masters and Doctoral research projects becomes vital. Phases and timelines that cater for unanticipated incidences during the course of research implementation are desirable. However, a number of research activities are 'generic' in terms of tasks and milestones that must be accomplished, irrespective of the discipline within a specified timeline. Therefore, the following research implementation phases for Masters and Doctoral research projects are proposed.

### 3.6.1 Thesis

The main outcome of such masters or doctoral studies is in the form of a thesis or mini-thesis. The term thesis refers to the written document containing the results of the research for such masters or doctoral studies. The term mini-thesis is used when the thesis formed part of prescribed coursework and contributes a weight of less than less than 40% of the credits of the degree. The *Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies* outlines the rules concerning the thesis vs. mini-thesis and various types of degrees.

The thesis should be prepared according to the thesis templates as approved by the PGSC. Each faculty shall be at liberty to prescribe the referencing style that relevant and applicable to its discipline and submit it to Senate for approval. However, for publication of the outcomes of the thesis in peer-reviewed journals, students are expected to follow the prescribed referencing format by the publishing journal.

No.	Implementation steps/tasks	Timeline/period		
		Full thesis research	Mini-thesis research	Doctoral research
1.	<b>Development and submission of research proposal and registration of research topic</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct comprehensive and thorough literature survey.</li> <li>• Compile/develop a comprehensive research proposal.</li> <li>• Submission of the research proposal and concomitant research plan for approval within six months.</li> <li>• Presentation of the proposal to departmental research committee.</li> <li>• Register the research topic following the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies.</li> </ul>	Completion and approval within the first 6 months of registration.	Within the first 6 months of registration.	Within the first 6-12 months of registration
2.	<b>Ethical approval</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students should comply with the university research ethics procedure</li> <li>• Students should obtain all necessary ethical approvals before commencement/implementation of the research project as stipulated in the Yearbook Rules for postgraduate studies.</li> </ul>	Within first 6 months of registration.	Within first 6 months of registration.	Within first 6-12 months of registration.

<b>3.</b>	<b>Implementation of approved research proposal (data collection)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning structure viz required materials</li> <li>• Fieldwork /archive research activities</li> <li>• Laboratory/workshop/fieldwork activities</li> <li>• Data collection processes etc.</li> </ul> NB: Demonstration of qualification requires independent research work for Masters and novel/contribution to knowledge for Doctoral programme.	After approval of proposal (6-18 months)	After approval of proposal (6 – 12 months)	After approval of proposal (6-24 months)
<b>4.</b>	<b>Submission of research activity milestone (progress /annual written report)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Students are expected to submit progress reports to the Supervisor as stipulated in the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies</li> </ul>	i. By end of 1st year of registration (after proposal approval) ii. 6th months of 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of registration.	i. By end of 1st year of registration (after proposal approval) ii. 6th months of 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of registration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By end of 1st year of registration (after proposal approval)</li> <li>• By end of 2<sup>nd</sup> year of registration/research work</li> <li>• By the 30<sup>th</sup> month of work or towards end of the 36<sup>th</sup> month as may be required by the supervisor.</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Data processing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Collected data are processed, presented, analysed and interpreted</li> <li>ii. Statistical analysis of data (where required)</li> </ul>	On-going (6-18 <sup>th</sup> months)	On-going (6 – 12 <sup>th</sup> months)	On-going (6 – 36 <sup>th</sup> months)
<b>6.</b>	<b>Write-up</b>	On-going (18-24 <sup>th</sup> )	On-going (12 –18 <sup>th</sup> )	On-going (24-36 <sup>th</sup> )

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of research (data collection and analysis)</li> <li>• Final write-up of thesis</li> <li>• Send Supervisor approved notice of thesis submission form to the Faculty Office</li> <li>• Submission of thesis</li> </ul>	months)	months)	months)
7.	<b>Oral defence { viva voce} i.e. oral examination</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masters and Doctoral candidates who are required to make a formal presentation of their thesis shall do so and must be passed according to rules in the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies and this Guideline.</li> </ul>	Oral presentation of research work  By end of the 24 <sup>th</sup> Month	Oral presentation of research work, if applicable.  By end of the 18 <sup>th</sup> Month	Oral presentation of research work  By end of the 36 <sup>th</sup> Month



### 3.7 SUPERVISOR/STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

The success of the supervision process as well as the relationship between the Supervisor and the student will depend largely on effective communication, tolerance, understanding and holding each other to high standards. In addition, the Postgraduate Unit, Faculties and Departments play vital roles in providing clarity and consistency of expectations that uphold academic standards, fairness and effectiveness and, when necessary, intervening to help resolve problems. These guidelines are intended therefore to help students, supervisors and other stakeholders in the postgraduate programme to fulfil their roles and to ensure that graduate supervision at NUST meets the highest quality in comparison to institutions within and outside of Namibia.

#### 3.7.1 Communication

This is a very important aspect of the supervision process. It includes work expectations, provision of structure and timelines. While these may be different from faculty to faculty and from Supervisor to Supervisor, there are however general guidelines, policies and suggestions that apply to what is considered good supervisory practice.

#### 3.7.2 Expectations Management

Supervisors provide a leadership role in making clear very early in the supervision process what the regulations are regarding graduate programmes at NUST as well as the shared set of expectations about all aspects of supervision. At the institutional level, this will include referring the students to the General Information and Regulations for Postgraduate Studies in the Year Book regarding registration of Research Topic, Ethical Requirement, Minimum and Maximum study periods for the Masters Programme and the Doctoral Degree the candidate's obligations and on reports.

On the shared set of expectations between the supervisors and the students, the supervisors should take the leadership role in providing structure and timelines in conjunction with the students taking into cognisance the institutional deadlines and requirements at every stage of the graduate programme. While acknowledging the leadership role of the supervisors at this stage, it is equally important for graduate students to maintain open channels of communication and to find out for themselves what may be needed for their academic success.

As a first step, each party needs to understand the constraints that operate on the other and the effects that these may have on supervision. The supervisors should make their expectations clear to students on issues such as the need for regular meetings, mastery of methodological skills, conference publications and conference presentations, timelines for degree completion, etc. The clear outline of such expectations makes it easier to develop a positive, productive relationship. The following are some of the suggested topics to cover in initial discussions between student and supervisor:

- Timing expectations in terms of major milestones: courses, thesis proposals, supervisory committee meetings, research objectives, paper submission, conference presentations, drafts of thesis, etc. Good practice is to plan a timeline for the total program at the beginning. The agreed milestones should be signed off by both student and supervisor(s) and reviewed periodically as necessary.
- Frequency and modes of contact. Are regular meetings required? How often? Who schedules them? Is the student expected to bring a written report, or present orally? Are regular meetings one-on-one or group meetings with other students? What about informal meetings, for example, is there an "open door" approach or does the student need to book an appointment?

- How should non-scheduled communication be handled (e.g., setting up appointments, notification of temporary absence, lateness for meeting, etc.)?
- Where and when is most of the work to be carried out? In the Postgraduate Unit? In the library, at home, or elsewhere? Where does the Supervisor normally expect to be if contact is needed? What are the expectations for “normal working hours”, weekends and holidays?
- How will the thesis topic be decided upon, and when? This varies among disciplines and graduate units, but should be understood at the beginning.
- How is feedback on progress achieved? Graduate units should require formal written reports on annual committee meetings, but what about less formal meetings? It is good practice to have a written record for any significant feedback that requires some action from the student and/or supervisor.
- What is the expected “turnaround time” on drafts of written material such as thesis sections, papers, conference presentations, grant proposals, etc.? Two to three weeks is a reasonable upper limit under normal circumstances. If there will be abnormal delays, how will this be conveyed to the student? What alternatives are there if the delay would be unreasonably long?
- If the research will be done mostly in a laboratory, what is the laboratory “etiquette”? In large laboratories, who is responsible for what? Is there necessary preparatory training, and how and when will this be done?
- What are the expectations concerning publications and conference presentations during the thesis work? How will conference expenses be paid for?
- How will Intellectual Property issues be handled?
- What opportunities will there be to meet others in the field and begin to build academic networks? How will the Supervisor assist in this, and how much is up to the student?

### 3.7.3 Meetings

Meetings should be set up in accordance with the timelines for each stage of the work. The times and dates should be set realistically bearing in mind the other commitments and constraints on the parts of students and supervisors but making sure the meetings are held well in advance of any major deadlines or report submission. This is important so that all the necessary requirements and deliberations at departmental and faculty levels can be dealt with before PGSC meetings and institutional deadlines. Both supervisors and the students should ensure they are committed to the dates of the meetings and should hold the other to high standards. The contents of the meetings, as well as the decisions arrived at, must be communicated in writing immediately by the students to the supervisors via the communication method(s) earlier agreed upon, for the Supervisor to confirm. In particular, regular meetings should be held based on the necessary frequency of contact in order to monitor and evaluate progress, to keep track of what is happening, to ensure quality work is being done and to meet deadlines for reporting to the department, FPGC and PGSC.

### 3.7.4 Documentation

The FPGC will keep a file with official documentation of each student. Supervisors and students are encouraged to keep a record of documentation of all agreements between them as well as minutes of meetings and email correspondence. In addition, the supervisors together with the students are encouraged to draw up a road map documenting the timelines that they have agreed upon, the task(s) to be accomplished for each timeline and the times that such tasks were actually achieved by the students. Each entry may be commented upon by the supervisors and be signed by both parties. The road map may be revised as necessary. Documentation will

serve as a useful reminder of what was done at every stage of the supervision process. This can help in averting problems and reducing conflict. If problems become inevitable, the documentation can become important in resolving them.

### 3.7.5 Conflict Resolution

When there is a problem, dispute or concern in the course of the supervision process between a graduate student and Supervisor, the student and Supervisor should take an early action to first resolve any difficulties amicably between themselves. If the problem remains unresolved after informal discussion, either or both can consult the Head of Department, if this fails, then the Dean should be consulted first for an amicable solution and if the problem persists, the PGSC should be contacted. In every case, it is important first to seek resolution at the lowest level possible using the informal and formal appeal processes and chains of reporting that are available, before going higher. The following are other considerations related to conflict resolution:

- All conflict is not necessarily to be avoided. Conflict can result in creative solutions and when the conflict involves ideas, it can advance knowledge.
- There is a significant power differential in the student/supervisor relationship, but the very nature of the relationship and the academic enterprise requires that ideas and assumptions may be challenged.
- Expectations should be clear and commonly understood on both sides; put them in writing, if necessary.
- Conflict should be handled early: it is easier to handle smaller issues as they arise, and sometimes options for resolution may diminish over time.
- Not all conflict can be resolved informally. If you have tried your best but you have not resolved the issue, follow the recommended route to a more formal resolution. The Supervisor may refer the student to the Dean of Students Office.

### 3.7.6 Change of Supervisor

There are three scenarios that may warrant a change of supervisor.

1. The first is when the conflict between the student and the Supervisor cannot be resolved and it is apparent that the two can no longer work together.
2. The second scenario is in the event of illness or death of the Supervisor or student that renders the Supervisor no longer able to continue with his or her duties.
3. Third is when a Supervisor leaves for another employment. He or she would be requested to continue with supervision. However, in case he or she declines the department can appoint another Supervisor from within or outside the university. In all three scenarios, the Year Book rules should be consulted.

## 3.8 EXAMINATIONS

The examination is the final stage of Masters and Doctoral Degrees. These guidelines point to the necessary sections of the General Information and Regulations Year Book that can help both supervisors and candidates to navigate this final stage of the postgraduate research process without complications and unnecessary delays.

### 3.8.1 Examination of Masters Theses

The examination of Masters theses is handled according to the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies. The structure of the examination in terms of appointment of examiners and the procedure of examination are as contained in the Yearbook. However, the assessment criteria/mark sheet, the examiner's and supervisor's reports on the candidate shall be sent to the non-examining "unattached" Chairperson through the Head of Department. This will assist in decision taking during the examination process (PG 2.7). Hence, it is recommended that the examination panel preferably shall consist of:

1. Non-examining Chairperson (usually a senior academic member in the department).
2. The external examiner and
3. The supervisor

An average of the marks awarded by the external examiner and the Supervisor shall constitute the final mark. The pass mark for the theses shall be 50 %. However if the difference between the two marks is more than 20% or there is disagreement on whether the candidate pass or fail, recommendation of PG rule 2.72 shall apply.

### 3.8.2 Oral Defence/ Viva voce of Masters Theses

This shall be implemented when outcome of the examination of the thesis is 'pass' i.e. the candidate's final mark is not less than 50% after which PG rule 2.7.3 in terms of release of final mark applies.

### 3.8.3 Examination of Doctoral Theses

The examination of doctoral theses is highlighted in this section.

### 3.8.4 Examiner Selection and Approval

The process of selecting and approving internal and external examiners should start long before the submission of the thesis. This will allow ample time for the process to be completed by the time the thesis is submitted for examination. The selection and approval of examiners for Masters degrees shall be guided by the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies. A second internal examiner may be included when a student's topic is multidisciplinary or when the primary examiner is available, but has no prior experience as an examiner.

At least three examiners shall be appointed for Doctoral degrees as follows:

1. one from outside Namibia ("Overseas External");
2. one from within Namibia but external to the University ("Namibia External"); and
3. one internal to the University ("Internal").

Normal patterns for examiners may be varied in exceptional circumstances. For instance, where no suitably qualified examiner is available to fulfil the role of "Namibia External", a further "Overseas External" will be appointed. Where no suitably qualified examiner can be found to fulfil the role of "Internal", a further "Namibia External" (or, in exceptional circumstances, an "Overseas External") will be appointed. A Supervisor, ex-supervisor or Co-Supervisor will not be appointed as an examiner.

Examiners should be suitably qualified to undertake the task. Suitably qualified examiners:

- must have a Doctoral Degree

- should be knowledgeable in the area/field/discipline of the topic of the thesis to be examined (i.e. the examiner should have the necessary background to be able to make an informed judgement about the thesis); and
- should be research active in the discipline.

Examiners' experience in examining should also be taken into consideration in the process of nomination. It is recommended that a mix of both experienced and inexperienced examiners should be nominated where a panel of three experienced examiners is not feasible. If more than one examiner is inexperienced (i.e. has not examined any doctoral thesis), a strong justification will need to be made.

A Chair will be appointed by the Dean to conduct the examination. The Chair is not an examiner of the thesis but is a person who coordinates the examiners' reports and submits a report on the recommendation of the examiners. If an oral examination is held, the Chair prepares for, and Chairs, the oral examination (viva voce). Chairs are drawn from the FPGC. A Chair is not necessarily a member of the same department as the Doctoral candidate. A Supervisor or ex-supervisor will not be appointed as Chair.

The identities of the examiners are not divulged to one another until after their reports have been submitted, nor are their identities released to the candidate until after the examination result is made known by the Postgraduate Studies Committee or during the Viva Voce.

### 3.8.5 Thesis Submission

The Supervisor shall inform the student of the closing date for submission as stipulated in the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies and the form of submission as stated in the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies. It is useful for the candidate to know that before the Supervisor can initiate the process of examination, the candidate must have spent at least the minimum study period required for the programme in which he/she has registered, as stipulated in the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies for Masters and Doctoral degrees respectively. In addition the candidate, under the guidance of the Supervisor, should be fully aware of the general provisions spelled out in the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies for theses. The Supervisor should explain to the candidate what would happen to his or her thesis once it has been submitted and discuss the viva voce, as outlined in the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies, as an integral part of the examination. The candidate must also be duly registered without any outstanding fees.

Before submitting the thesis, the candidate should discuss the thesis with the supervisor(s). Candidates are advised to submit the thesis in a soft-bound format because this is relatively inexpensive and means that any required corrections or amendments can be made before the hard binding of the final copies. Candidates must submit four soft-bound copies of the thesis. Candidates should also ensure that they have further copies of the thesis available for use by themselves and their supervisors should an oral examination be held.

Supervisors should encourage their students to prepare and submit manuscript from the completed research work to peer-reviewed journals for publication. This does not necessarily have to be at the end of research work. In addition, the candidate should submit a short plagiarism report/declaration with the thesis. This will contribute to the integrity of the thesis.

Submission of the thesis is acknowledged by the FPGC by a letter to the candidate. Doctoral enrolment formally ceases on submission, but candidates retain access to resources until submission of their hard bound theses prior to graduation. Theses are sent to the "Overseas External" and "Namibian External" examiners.

### 3.8.6 Report by the Supervisor(s)

When the thesis is submitted for examination, the supervisor(s) shall provide a brief report on the work of the candidate. The report should:

- confirm that the work has been done under their immediate supervision and outline the part played by all involved in the supervision;
- attest that the supervisors have read the thesis in its entirety in a final draft and state whether the supervisors agree that the thesis is suitable for submission;
- provide a statement about the extent to which this is the candidate's own work if parts of the thesis are based on published work under joint authorship; and
- provide any other relevant information on the candidate's work.

The report should be signed by the primary Supervisor and sent to the FPGC, who will release a copy to the Chair of the Examiners for the oral examination or viva voce. At the discretion of the Chair, the report may be released to the examiners and then only after the examiners' reports have been submitted.

### 3.8.7 Written Reports from Examiners

Each of the examiners is requested to furnish a written report on the thesis together with an assessment of its acceptability in line with the University's five-point scale:

- **Accept, or accept with minor editorial corrections**

(The corrections required are minor and can be completed in a short period of time, normally not longer than a few weeks. The Chair of Examiners will check that the corrections have been made satisfactorily.)

- **Accept after amendments have been made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners in consultation with the internal examiner**

(The amendments required can be completed within a few months, normally not longer than two or three months. The amendments will be made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners in consultation with the internal examiner.)

- **Revise and resubmit for examination**

(The thesis is not of the required Doctoral standard and requires substantial revision involving up to six months of work or possibly a little longer. The revised thesis will be resubmitted formally to all three examiners for a repeat examination.)

- **Reject with no right of resubmission**

(The thesis is not of the required Doctoral standard and there is no likelihood that revisions will bring it up to that standard).

The examiners are asked to comment on the thesis with reference to the description of the degree. Examiners are requested to respond to the following questions:

- Does the thesis comprise a coherent investigation of the chosen topic?
- Does the thesis deal with a topic of sufficient range and depth to meet the requirements of the degree?
- Does the thesis make an original contribution to knowledge in its field and contain material suitable for publication in an appropriate academic journal?
- Does the thesis meet internationally recognised standards for the conduct and presentation of research in the field?

- Does the thesis demonstrate both a thorough knowledge of the literature relevant to its subject and general field and the candidate's ability to exercise critical and analytical judgement of that literature?
- Does the thesis display mastery of appropriate methodology and/or theoretical material?

The examiners send the reports directly to the FPGC. From there, they are forwarded to the Chair of Examiners. The examiners normally retain their copies of the thesis, unless they have marked comments on it that the candidate will need to see. In this case the thesis should be returned to the FPGC.

### **3.8.8 Oral Defence /Examination (Viva Voce)**

The oral examination otherwise referred to as viva voce, is a formal academic event in which the candidate appears before the constituted panel of internal and external examiners to present his/her thesis in an appropriately laid-out room in which all the examiners are present either physically or remotely through video conferencing facilities.

Except in exceptional circumstances, the viva voce should be held on campus. The FPGC shall be responsible for recommending the examiner panel, organising the viva voce and inviting everyone. The Masters panel shall be made up of a senior faculty member with a Doctoral degree, an external examiner, an internal examiner and the supervisor. The Doctoral viva voce panel will consist of the Dean of Faculty or a full professor as Chair, another Dean from the institution, an external examiner, two internal examiners and the supervisor. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the viva voce is to be held within two months of the submission of the thesis and lasts for a minimum of one hour and a maximum of three hours; a break may be offered after two hours.

The viva voce gives the candidate the opportunity to elaborate on the central research questions and the approach taken to investigate them. During the course of the viva voce, the candidate will also have the opportunity to prove that the work is his or her own by clarifying any ambiguities in the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners.

At the discretion and invitation of the Chair, the supervisor(s) and Head of Department may contribute to the oral examination. Interested individuals may attend the oral examination and may pose questions after the presentation, but once the examination commences, all individuals except for the candidate and the examining panel shall be dismissed.

The main objectives of the oral examination are to:

- provide the candidate with an opportunity to defend the thesis;
- establish that the candidate fully understands the work and its wider implications;
- provide the candidate with an opportunity to reply to criticism or challenge;
- enable the examiners to clarify issues in the thesis which may be unclear;
- help the examiners to decide on the nature and extent of any corrections or revisions which may be required;
- allow the examiners to confirm whether the thesis should be recommended as 'exceptional'.

The format of the oral examination will vary from case to case, and will be made clear in the Oral Examination Briefing Report. Normally, it will include the following: a brief overview of the thesis by the candidate; questions from the examiners on the substantive issues communicated to the candidate beforehand; other questions and "free" discussion. Questions may also be addressed to the supervisors. Correspondence between the examiners should take place only via the Chair.

**NB:** Oral examination shall be constituted only if the final outcome of the assessment/examination of the thesis are either 'a – accepted' or 'b – accepted with amendments'. In the case of 'c – revise and resubmit', the oral examination shall take place after satisfactory revision and 'acceptance' is finally obtained.

#### ***3.8.8.1 Responsibility of the Chair of the Viva Voce panel***

- The Chair will not be an examiner and will not be required to read the thesis. However, the Chair must know the postgraduate rules and regulations, be able to advise the examiners of these rules and regulations, and has full responsibility to ensure they are implemented.
- The Chair will read the examiners' comments on the thesis before or prior to the oral examination.
- The Chair will ensure that the issues raised in the individual reports are discussed at the viva voce and mention the name of the examiner(s) who raised them.
- The Chair shall be present at the viva voce. He or she will agree with the examiners prior to the viva voce on the agenda and format of the examination and the procedures to be followed.

During the viva voce examination, the Chair should:

- introduce the examiners and the candidate and outline to the candidate the procedure for the viva voce
- act as an observer and guide the process,
- dismiss anyone who is not an evaluator prior to the start of the actual examination
- make notes on the examination for documentation purposes,
- intervene if the student misunderstands a question by asking the examiner to rephrase it,
- call for a short break if the candidate becomes unduly distressed or when the process exceeds two hours,
- ensure that the examiners briefly deliberate the verdict on in the absence of the student.

After the viva voce, the Chairperson summarises the result in a report to be submitted to the postgraduate studies committee. All panel members must sign the report of the examination. As soon as is practicable, after the viva voce examination, feedback shall be given to the candidate by the Chairperson of the viva voce panel, however, final mark/status of the thesis shall be released after approval by Senex (PG rule 2.7.3).

#### ***3.8.8.2 Responsibility of the supervisor***

- The Supervisor should prepare the candidate for the viva voce by explaining the procedure to be followed, the functions and expectations of the panel members and the assessment criteria.
- The Supervisor should be able to provide clarification when necessary on decisions that have informed certain aspect of the thesis.

#### ***3.8.8.3 Responsibility of the Doctoral candidate***

Before the examination, it is the responsibility of the candidate:



- to prepare thoroughly in advance for the examination by being familiar with every detail of his or her work,
- prepare a presentation of his or her topic as discussed beforehand with his or her Supervisor,
- should make himself or herself available for the viva voce and in the event that he or she may not be able to attend, he or she should inform the Supervisor immediately with justifications.

During the viva voce, the candidate should:

- present his or her work formally to the public audience,
- answer articulately and with confidence the questions from individual members of the panel,
- defend his/her thesis by resolving conceptual issues, ambiguities or clarifying misunderstood aspects of the research,
- show that he or she understands the relationship between his or her thesis and the wider field of knowledge.

When the oral examination of the candidate is over, he or she will be required to leave the room for the examiners to deliberate on their verdict and prepare recommendations. After the deliberation, the candidate is called in and the verdict is announced orally.

### 3.9 RESULT

The result of the examination is decided by the Postgraduate Studies Committee under delegated authority of the Senate after receipt of the examiners' recommendation from the Chair.

#### 3.9.1 Communication of the Result to the Candidate

Once the result is decided, the Postgraduate Studies Committee will officially communicate this to the candidate. This will include a covering letter written by the Chairperson, which outlines the next steps the candidate needs to follow. The candidate, primary Supervisor, the Head of Department and the Dean will also receive copies of the examiners' report at this time.

In the case of an 'a – accept' or 'b - amend' result, these reports will reveal the identity of their writers (provided the examiners have included their names on their written reports). In the case of a 'c – revise and resubmit' result, the identity of the examiners will remain anonymous, as a second examination will take place.

#### 3.9.2 After the Result is received

After the candidate has been informed of the result, he/she will follow the instructions set out in the letter from the Chair of the examination.

If the result is:

##### (i) "Accept, or accept with minor editorial corrections"

The corrected thesis should be submitted to the Chair, who will check that the corrections have been done satisfactorily.

**(ii) "Accept after amendments have been made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners in consultation with the Internal Examiner"**

The amended thesis should be submitted to the Chair, who will check that the amendments have been done satisfactorily in consultation with the Internal Examiner

**(iii) "Revise and resubmit for examination"**

The candidate should revise the thesis substantially in line with the recommendations of the examiners under the guidance of his/her supervisors. Once the revised thesis is complete, it should be resubmitted for examination as described above. The revised thesis will normally be examined by the same examiners as the original thesis. The process will be the same as for the original examination except that a revised thesis shall not be recommended for further revision and resubmission. In other words, after the candidate has resubmitted a revised thesis, the examiners have four, and not five, possible examination results to select from. In the case of a revise and resubmit result after an oral examination has been held, a further oral examination is permissible after the candidate has revised and resubmitted the thesis.

If the revised thesis is recommended for acceptance – (i) "Accept, or accept with minor editorial corrections", or (ii) "Accept after amendments have been made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners in consultation with the Internal Examiner" - minor corrections or amendments should be made in accordance with the process outlined above. If the thesis is not recommended for acceptance, the result (iv) "Reject with no right of resubmission", will be recommended.

**(iv) "Reject with no right of resubmission"**

No further action is required.

### **3.9.3 Contact with Examiners**

Under no circumstances should a candidate enter into direct contact with the examiners during the examination process (including the amending and revising process), apart from during the oral examination.

### **3.9.4 Timing of Amendments and Revisions**

If a thesis requires minor editorial corrections (i) or amendments (ii), the candidate is expected to complete this work within three months of notification of the result of the examination. If a thesis requires revision (iii), the candidate is expected to complete this work within six months of notification of the result of the examination. Note that extensions can be requested if the candidate is having difficulty meeting these timeframes, but the University reserves the right to require the candidate to re-enrol with payment of tuition fees.

### **3.9.5 Leave to Appeal**

A Doctoral candidate may seek leave to appeal the decision of the examiners under the University's Regulations Relating to Student Appeals.

## **3.10 POST EXAMINATION ACTIVITIES**

After the viva voce, the candidate should liaise with the Chair to ensure that all corrections are made according to the specifications of the examiners. The final bound copies should be submitted according to the requirements of the postgraduate regulations as stated in the Yearbook Rules for Postgraduate Studies.

#### 4. RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND INTERNET PAGES

- NAMIBIA QUALIFICATION AUTHORITY (NQA) (2015): Type of Awards: Doctoral Degrees. Information Page. <http://www.namqa.org/framework/Doctoral-Degrees/174/>
- POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA (PoN) (2015a). Yearbook 2015. Polytechnic of Namibia. Part 1: General Information and Regulations. 75 pp. Windhoek: Polytechnic of Namibia.
- POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA (PoN) (2015b). Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering. PhD Programme. Unpublished internal document compiled by the Faculty of Engineering. 8 pp. Windhoek: Polytechnic of Namibia.
- POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA (2013a). Doctor of Philosophy in Informatics. PhD Programme. Unpublished internal document compiled by the Faculty of Information Technology. (now: Faculty of Computing and Informatics). 8 pp. Windhoek: Polytechnic of Namibia.
- POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA (2013b). Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science. PhD Programme. Unpublished internal document compiled by the by the Faculty of Information Technology. (now: Faculty of Computing and Informatics). 8 pp. Windhoek: Polytechnic of Namibia.
- POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA (no year a) Guidelines for Masters and PhD Degrees at Namibia University of Science and Technology. Unpublished internal document. Windhoek: Polytechnic of Namibia: Office of the Vice-Rector Academic Affairs and Research. ('Old version'!).
- POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA (no year b). Guidelines for Masters and PhD Degrees at Polytechnic of Namibia. Unpublished internal document. Windhoek: Polytechnic of Namibia: Office of the Vice-Rector Academic Affairs and Research. (Draft of 'new version', work in progress).
- POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA (no year, c). Proposed PhD Degree Regulations. Unpublished internal document. Windhoek: Polytechnic of Namibia: Office of the Vice-Rector Academic Affairs and Research. (Draft).
- POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA (no year d). Guidelines for editors of theses and dissertations of Masters and PhD Degrees at Namibia University of Science and Technology. Unpublished internal document. Windhoek: Polytechnic of Namibia: School of Computing and Informatics.

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (UNISA) (2015). Master's and PhD. Information. 8 pp. Pretoria: UNISA. <http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/study/docs/Unisa-Masters-PhD-studies-2015.pdf>

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (UNISA) (2008). Master's and PhD Degrees: Guidelines for Registration for Postgraduate Studies. Compiled by Dr A Bartkowiak-Higgo. 70 pp. Pretoria: UNISA, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO (2016). The examination process.  
<http://www.otago.ac.nz/study/phd/handbook/otago001990.html>

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA (2013). Prospectus 2013: School of Postgraduate Studies

UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA (2016): <http://www.ub.bw/home/ac/1/fac/14/school-of-graduate-studies/>

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN (2016): <http://www.uct.ac.za/apply/criteria/postgraduates/>

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA (2016): <http://www.up.ac.za/postgraduate-students>