



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

HUMANITIES: SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



School of Education

PhD Student & Supervisor Guide

Contents

Overview	: Pg 1
Application process	: Pg 1 - 3
Registration process	: Pg 3 - 4
Proposal critical review	: Pg 5
Research ethics	Pg 6
Proposal presentation	: Pg 7
PhD candidature	: Pg 7
Submission dates	: Pg 8
Appointment of examiners	: Pg 8
Plagiarism report	: Pg 9
Thesis writing report	: Pg 10
Graduation	: Pg 11
Useful resources	: Pg 12

Overview

The purpose of this document is to inform both doctoral students and supervisors in the School of Education (SOE) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) about the PhD processes from application to graduation.

This document must be read alongside UCT's general rules and policies for postgraduate students, and the procedures for the Doctoral Degrees Board (DDB). By trying to make as explicit as possible the stages in the PhD processes, this booklet seeks to make the doctoral journey a smooth and hopefully an enjoyable one.

Application process

Pre-proposal

A prospective student wishing to study for a PhD should submit an application online and attach a pre-proposal with the application.

The purpose of a pre-proposal is two-fold:

- a) to enable the SOE to read an independent attempt by a prospective applicant at formulating a case for a doctoral research, and
- b) to assist in gauging the SOE's capacity to supervise the proposed topic.

If the applicant is familiar with staff at the SOE, s/he may, when applying, indicate a preference for a possible supervisor. The research interests of would-be supervisors are available on the SOE website (education.uct.ac.za). However, the applicant's

nomination of a potential supervisor does not guarantee the availability of that individual to supervise the applicant. If the applicant does not indicate a preference, the SOE will match the applicant's topic to available research interests. Where a supervisor-applicant match is not apparent, the application is circulated to all SOE academic staff for consideration.

The application documents are received by the UCT Admissions Office which forwards the application to [the Humanities Postgraduate Office which handles all PhD applications for the Humanities Faculty](#). Both the application and other supporting documents, including the pre-proposal, are then forwarded to the SOE's PhD Committee for departmental processing. At this point, the external application process becomes internal to the SOE.

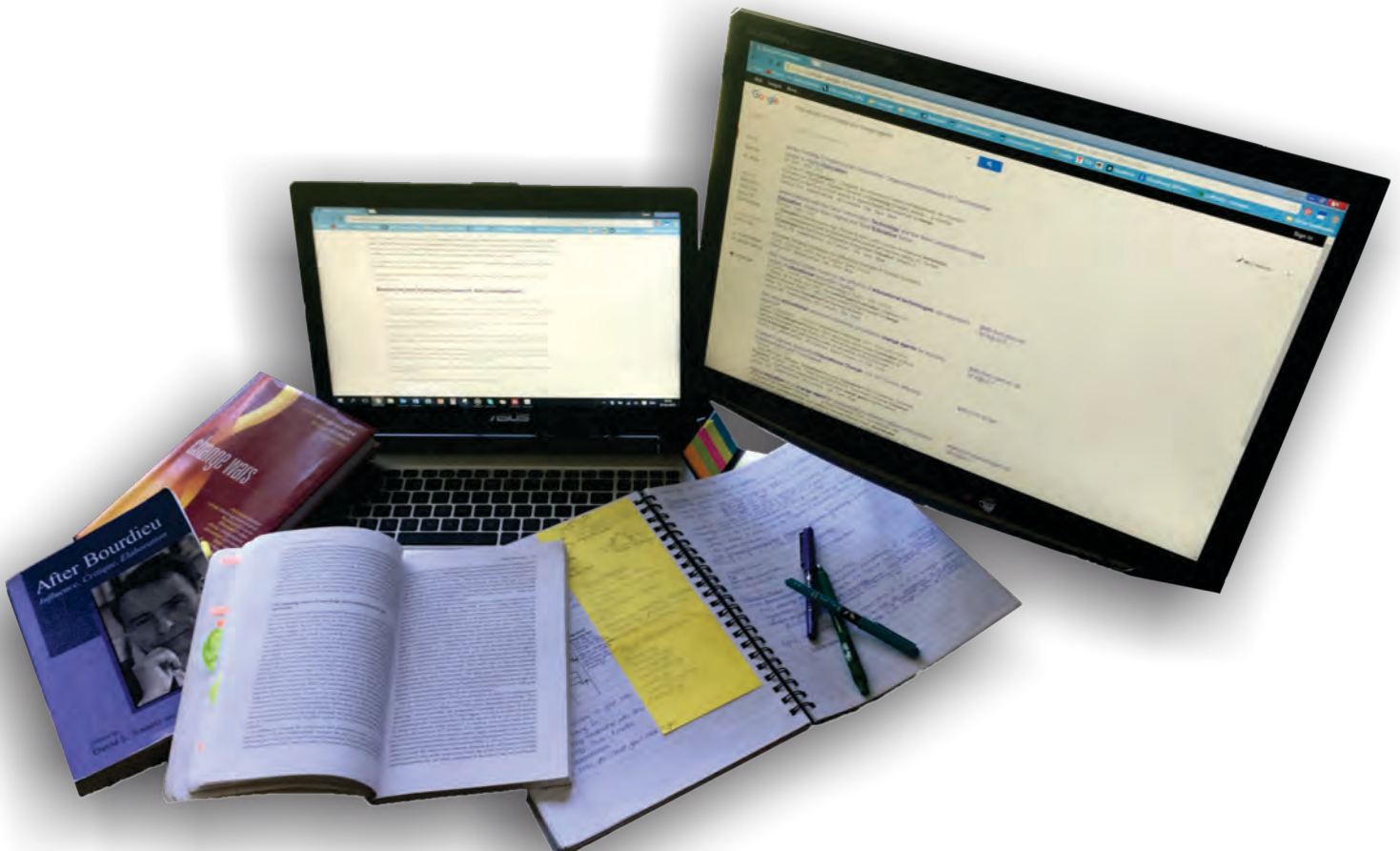
Library access during pre-proposal

Library membership to prepare the pre-proposal is granted for a period of 3 months.

The SOE completes an online Third Party card application form on the applicant's behalf so he/she can be issued a Third Party ID card by the Access Control Administration Office. This card gives access to the Libraries, to borrow materials and to print.

The SOE Head of Department completes a Letter of Introduction to UCT Libraries. The Third Party ID card and this letter must be produced at the library for the applicant to be registered on the library system.

Library materials may only be borrowed if the SOE has signed surety for them in the applicant's letter of introduction. This includes access to the electronic resources, interlibrary loans services and short loans.



Internal Evaluation

The SOE's PhD Convenor circulates the application and the pre-proposal to the PhD Committee.

In consultation with experts in the proposed specialization, the application is evaluated in relation to:

- a) entry requirements – in general applicants are expected to have had an average of 70% at Masters degree;
- b) pre-proposal: whether the proposal is well

- c) argued and conceptualised at doctoral research level;
- c) whether the applicant has the necessary background or has relevant experience to conduct the proposed research; and
- d) whether the SOE has capacity/expertise to supervise the proposed research.

specialization necessary
average conduct pre-proposal
circulates application degree
PhD capacity / expertise Masters
consultation applicant expected SOE
requirements research experience
background level proposed
experts supervise

Acceptance or rejection of application

In general, a potential candidate will need to meet with the supervisor either face-to-face or via Skype before acceptance can be confirmed.

The decision as to whether to accept or reject an applicant depends on both meeting the above criteria and other important factors that could be established through discussions with the prospective supervisor.

The evaluation of the application may take three to four weeks. The outcome of the internal application process is communicated to the Humanities Postgraduate Office, which communicates the decision to the applicant. The Postgraduate Office informs both the successful

and unsuccessful applicants about the outcome of the applications.

Applications may be rejected on the following grounds:

- a) The applicant does not meet one or all of the necessary requirements for entry into the programme.
- b) The applicant lacks disciplinary background knowledge necessary to conduct research in the proposed field of study.
- c) The SOE lacks the supervision capacity to support the proposed study: perhaps a suitable supervisor may not be available or the topic of study may fall outside the field of study of the SOE.

Registration process

If an applicant is offered a place, s/he is required to indicate acceptance or rejection of the offer in writing to the Admissions Office.

If the offer is accepted, the applicant then proceeds to register. In order to successfully register, the student and supervisor must complete the following documents:

- a) Registration form – to be completed and signed by the student;
- b) Curriculum form – to be completed and signed by the student, supervisor(s) and the PhD Convenor;
- c) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – to be completed collaboratively between the student and supervisor(s), and signed by the Head of Department. In the event that a student has more than one supervisor, all supervisors must sign the MOU.

Once this documentation has been received and

Although new PhD students may register at any time of the year, it is recommended that registration is done between 1 January – 30 April.

processed, the applicant is registered. Although new PhD students may register at any time of the year, it is recommended that registration is done between 1 January – 30 April. This is important to ensure the year of registration counts towards the minimum period of registration. This is particularly useful for applicants whose duration for the study is critical, as is the case for sponsored students.

If a new PhD student registers before 30 June, he/she will be expected to pay full annual fee and if registered after this date a 50% rebate is expected.

By six months from the date of first registration, the student, with the supervisor's support, should have completed a proposal for formal review.

The screenshot displays the Faculty of Humanities website. At the top left is the University of Cape Town logo. The main header features the text 'Faculty of Humanities' and navigation links: 'Humanities home | Contacts | Sitemap | Search'. A search bar is located on the right. Below the header is a dark navigation bar with links: 'ABOUT US | APPLY | UNDERGRADUATE | POSTGRADUATE | DEPARTMENTS | RESEARCH | ALUMNI | COLLECTIONS | NEWS | CALENDAR'. A social media bar includes icons for YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp. A 'Quick Links' dropdown menu is visible on the right. The breadcrumb trail reads: 'Home > Postgraduate > Postgraduate studies > Navigating the thesis > Getting started'. The main content area shows a 'Postgraduate studies' sidebar with 'About us' and 'Overview' links. The central content is titled 'Navigating the thesis' and includes a 'Getting started' link. A 'Download: Research Proposal Guide' button is also present.

Proposal critical review

The student's continued registration is dependent on timeous completion of an acceptable proposal.

When the proposal is submitted, the PhD Convenor approaches two Critical Readers (CRs), at the recommendation of the supervisor(s), to review the proposal. The CRs are PhD holders, based at academic institutions of learning and are active researchers in the proposed topic.

The proposal is reviewed on the basis of three critical questions:

- a) Is the proposed study conceptualized at a PhD level and of appropriate quality?
- b) Is the scope of the proposed study feasible for completion within three years?
- c) Are revisions necessary to improve the quality of the proposal?

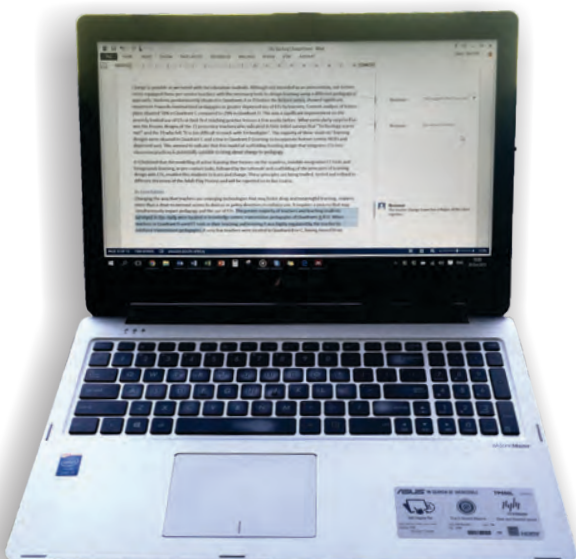
The PhD Convenor receives the reports and compiles a consolidated PhD review report with recommendations from CRs. The Convenor sends the report to both the student and the supervisor(s). If the CRs are satisfied with the

The proposal is reviewed on the basis of three critical questions:

- a) Is the proposed study conceptualized at a PhD level and of appropriate quality?
- b) Is the scope of the proposed study feasible for completion within three years?
- c) Are revisions necessary to improve the quality of the proposal?

proposal they will accept it with or without corrections. The student submits a final revised proposal, including research instruments, an ethics form and proposal approval form. In addition to these documents, students must record how they have incorporated or responded to the comments of the critical readers. Should the readers raise critical issues or serious concerns, the applicant may be given an opportunity to make changes to the proposal and re-submit for critical review.

The proposal may however be rejected or the applicant considered not to have made satisfactory progress, at which point the proposal is rejected and a student is not permitted to continue. In the event that a student fails to meet the 6-months deadline for submission of their proposal to the School, for whatever reason, the supervisor(s) through the HOD or PhD Convenor will be requested to motivate why this is the case and by when the proposal will be completed.



Research ethics

UCT takes very seriously the responsibilities associated with research, especially research involving human participants or animals.

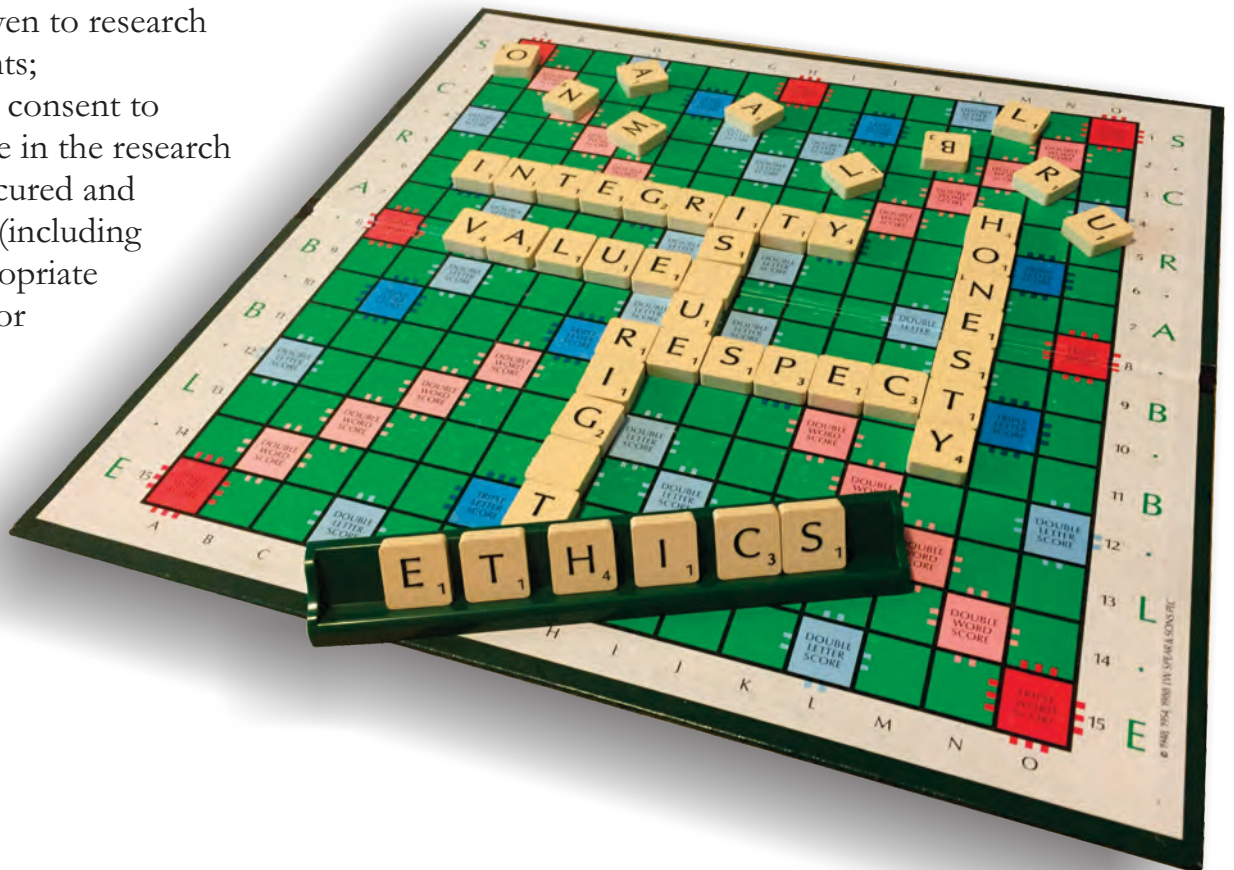
Researchers must be involved in appropriate deliberation and/or research proposals must be approved for research ethics, according to the Department and Faculty Policy. In the SOE, student researchers combine with their research supervisors to submit a joint Statement about the proposed research. The School's Research Ethics Committee reviews this Statement for approval. The Statement describes the proposed research focus and addresses questions around the following:

- what information about the research will be given to research participants;
- how their consent to participate in the research will be secured and recorded (including how appropriate consent for children's

participation as research participants will be secured);

- how participants' confidentiality and privacy will be protected where this is appropriate; and
- whether any forms of harm to participants might result from the research.

Permission to do research in schools has to be applied for from the Western Cape Education Department, which requires evidence that the proposed research already has ethics approval. After ethics approval has been given at the proposal stage it is the responsibility of the student researcher, in consultation with their research supervisor, to respond appropriately to ethical issues that arise in the course of the research.



Proposal presentation

The PhD student is expected to present his/her PhD proposal and/or work-in-progress at departmental PhD events.

The PhD events are stimulating and productive two-day events organised three or four times annually where students present their research to peers and supervisors and receive feedback in an unthreatening environment. These events

are supportive structures for both PhD students and supervisors. Attendance in person at least one departmental PhD event is compulsory. To schedule a presentation at these events, students must approach their supervisor who notifies the PhD Events Coordinator or the PhD Convenor.



PhD candidature

When the department approves the proposal, it is forwarded to the Postgraduate Office for Faculty approval.

The Humanities Faculty Board approves the proposals through a Dean's Circular. Once the Faculty Board has approved the proposal, it is

then sent to the Doctoral Degrees Board (DDB). The candidate and supervisors receive acknowledgement of receipt of the proposal from the DDB.

The duration of the process from departmental approval of the proposal, to the Faculty Board's approval through the Dean's circular could take approximately 4-8 weeks as these depend on scheduled meeting dates.

Submission dates

Important Dates (estimated)

Intention to submit

9 January / 20 June

Thesis submission

16 February / 15 August

When a thesis is nearing the point of completion, the candidate notifies the DDB of his/her intention to submit by completing a Notice of Intention to Submit a PhD Thesis.

Once the Intention to Submit form has been received by the DDB, the DDB contacts both the candidate and supervisor/s regarding the next steps in the process including appointment of examiners.

PhD candidates must submit electronic versions of theses online using PeopleSoft Student Administration Self-service functionality.

Although deadlines for submission vary marginally annually, a candidate informs the DDB about their intention to submit a thesis for examination by no later than the following dates:

- 9 January for candidates hoping to graduate in June
- 20 June for candidates hoping to graduate in December

Deadlines for submission of theses are also dependent on the targeted graduation:

- 16 February for candidates hoping to graduate in June
- 15 August for candidates hoping to graduate in December

Appointment of examiners

The DDB requests supervisor(s) to nominate examiners.

The supervisor nominates five (5) potential examiners (in order of preference) who are non-UCT based and must be holders of PhDs themselves. The supervisor may contact these nominees to ensure their availability and willingness to examine the dissertation. These nominations are sent to the DDB which formally appoints three examiners from the

nominees. The supervisor may not contact the examiners during the examination processes until the outcome has been concluded.

The Committee of Assessors (COA) is appointed for each candidate, to consider examiners' reports and make final recommendations to the DDB. The COA is a sub-committee of the Humanities Faculty Board. The mandate of the COA is to oversee the implementation of policy and procedures as they pertain to the award of doctoral degrees.

Plagiarism report

Prior to submission for examination, candidates are advised to submit their thesis to a plagiarism checking system, Turnitin using Vula.

The School has created a Vula Site (EDN7000W) where a PhD candidate can submit and obtain a Turnitin report of a draft thesis. The Assignment Tool in Vula has been setup to accept as many draft submissions as possible without it comparing previously submitted copies. Please note that submission to Turnitin, if not done on the same Vula site, may compare copies submitted elsewhere and show plagiarism from one's own work. It is the candidate's responsibility to address all concerns arising from the Turnitin Report before

The length of a PhD thesis may not be more than 80,000 words, unless with permission of the Dean (acting in consultation with the supervisor) upon request to exceed the normal length.

submission. Depending on the degree of similarity index in the report, addressing this may be time consuming and therefore candidates should allow for sufficient time to revise the thesis.

The Turnitin Summary page, signed by the Supervisor, is submitted with the thesis.

English

Create Account | Log In

turnitin Why Turnitin What We Offer Resources Support Community Turnitin Global Innovation Awards Press [Contact Sales](#)

Revolutionizing the Experience of Writing to Learn

[Learn More](#)

Supporting over 15,000 institutions, 1.6 million instructors, and 26 million students.

[for Secondary Education](#) [for Higher Education](#)

Thesis writing support

It is critical that PhD students work consistently and early on the written aspect of the research process. UCT provides a number of routes through which students can access support for their writing development.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Shut up and write sessions in the SOE. See <https://thulawrite.wordpress.com/> for more information. The Shut up & Write is open to both students and supervisors. During these sessions, students meet to only write.
- Various writing circles hosted across the university. Check with your supervisor for more information or contact Lucia Thesen in CHED.
- Consultants will work individually with students on sections of their text with the specific goal of improving student writing skills rather than simply correcting the text. Regular and consistent visits with a consultant from as early as possible in the proposal process are most likely to yield good results.
- The Postgraduate centre runs a number of wrapped MOOCs. Postgraduates can sign up for online courses offered by universities across the globe, many of which are designed to improve research and writing among postgraduate students. The PG Centre “wraps” these MOOCs by offering weekly meetings and a local facilitator.

Research Work Space and Research / Reference Assistance

The Research Commons:

(<http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/lib/research-commons>) and the Postgraduate Computer Lab in the Neville Alexander Building are research work spaces for PhD students. The Research Commons, for example, is a scholarly common room with modern facilities which include study desks with 2- and 3-pin power sockets and fast wireless internet access; high-end PCs housed in carousel workstations; laptops for loan in the Commons, high-speed internet connectivity; photocopying, printing, and scanning facilities; consultation rooms and a seminar room.

Research and reference assistance is available from UCT Libraries. The libraries provide access to a range of print and electronic research materials that are available on and off-campus. The Education subject librarian, Ingrid Thomson (ingrid.thomson@uct.ac.za) is available for consultation by appointment.



Every Friday from 09:00 - 11:00 Postgraduate students and staff join the Thula Ubhala / Shut up and Write sessions. In these sessions everyone works individually on their own writing projects in a shared work-space devoid of distractions.

Graduation

The PhD is awarded at the University congregation held at dates and times set by council. Once a graduate has been admitted to a degree at a graduation ceremony or in absentia, then the privileges conferred by the degree including a prefix of 'Dr' to their names can immediately be enjoyed.



Useful Resources

Scholarships and financial assistance

Once a student has been accepted, there are competitive scholarships available that he/she can apply for at any stage of doctoral research. Please ensure that the application meets the requirements and is within the deadline.

Important links

- www.education.uct.ac.za

Important Forms (e.g. MOU, Intention to Submit, etc.):

- www.uct.ac.za/apply/applications/forms/
- www.uct.ac.za/students/candidates/downloads/

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Post Graduate Applications:

- www.humanities.uct.ac.za/hum/apply/pgfaq
- www.uct.ac.za/apply/handbooks/
- www.education.uct.ac.za/edu/resources
- www.uct.ac.za/students/candidates/downloads/
- www.uct.ac.za/students/candidates/thesis/
-

Fees and payment methods:

- www.uct.ac.za/apply/fees
- www.uct.ac.za/apply/fees/structure/methods

Funding:

- <http://www.uct.ac.za/apply/funding/postgraduate/applications/>

Important contact persons:

- PhD Convenor: www.education.uct.ac.za/edu/staff/academic/ngambi
- PhD Event Coordinator: www.education.uct.ac.za/edu/staff/academic/cmckinney

Author

A/Prof Dick Ng'ambi - PhD Convenor - Chair PhD Committee - School of Education

Last Updated: 19 October 2015