The PhD Programme

PhD by research: (REL6000W)

All students are required to complete a dissertation (80 000 words)

The PhD is by dissertation only, and involves original research. The thesis should be in the region of 80,000 words and takes at least 3 years to complete.

Seminars

- ✓ The Department offers lunch-time seminars that take place on Wednesdays from 1-2pm.
- ✓ These PG seminars are presented by various experts in the field of Religions and takes place every alternate Wednesday. All seminars require the compulsory attendance of our PG students.
- ✓ Seminar will be offered either in-person in the Study of Religions Seminar Room (LS5.67) or online via MS Teams. We will confirm the platform when communicating the seminar details.

Registration

- For PhD you will register for your Dissertation component (REL6000W)
- You must submit your thesis proposal 6 months from the date of your first registration.
- Registration takes place online via the UCT PeopleSoft system.

Supervision

At the heart of the postgraduate experience is a more intensive relationship with a researcher who is your appointed supervisor, whether for your Masters dissertation, or the capstone PhD work. You are entitled to expect a steady level of support from your supervisor; s/he in turn is entitled to expect a specific level of application from you. These expectations are recorded in a Memorandum of Understanding or an annual supplement between the student and supervisor.

As postgraduate work becomes more independent, and the onus falls more and more on the researcher, the Department is committed to ensuring that your relationship with your supervisor and the department is as productive as possible.

Students should consult with prospective supervisors who have expertise in their proposed topic. Your programme convenor (Prof Sa'diyya Shaikh / Sadiyya.Shaikh@uct.ac.za / room LS 5.37) will be able to advise you on who best to approach.

Finding a Supervisor:

Choosing a supervisor for your postgraduate research is probably not the most important decision you will make in your life. Choosing a supervisor, however, is no light-weight matter. Even though such choice may be constrained by your research interests or by the people available in a particular department to work with, it is critical to spend some time dreaming and planning. In your ideal world, with whom would you like to work as a young researcher and writer? In this ideal world, what kind of relationship would suit you best? What does your own experience, to date, tell you about the kinds of evaluation, support, and feedback from teachers that work well for you?

Broadly speaking, there are three main areas in which it is useful to try and assess someone's skills if you want to work with them as a postgraduate research student.

- Do they have a solid sense of the academic conventions and guidelines through which a research project can be transformed into a "Masters" or "Doctoral" dissertation?
- Do they have intellectual standing as researchers and writers within the specific discipline, and research field, in which you want to work?
- Does their communicative and pedagogic style suit you?

The way to find some answers to these questions is to engage in some research of your own.

- Use the internet, or other sources, to find and read material authored by people you might want to work with.
- Speak with other young researchers about their experiences of working with particular supervisors (each person is different, so you will need to take such information on board with care).
- Attend a prospective supervisor's seminars, or lectures; while this does not say everything about their communicative style, it will give you a hint of their approach to pedagogy (do they appear to respect their students? is there evidence that they prepare inputs with thought? do they use contemporary research to support arguments made in lecture space? are they flexible when it comes to hearing others' ideas?).
- Arrange to meet a prospective supervisor, and talk with them about your ideas, experiences, and hopes. Ask them about their own supervision style.
- Read dissertations written by students with whom they have worked.
- Find out how accessible they are (do they have a reputation for missing appointments, being extremely busy, not handing back marked material timeously?)

In other words, take the choice seriously and simultaneously allow for the reality that even with careful planning, the real potential of a good supervisory relationship cannot always be predicted.

Good supervisory relationships can last into a lifetime of collegial friendship, and support; poor ones cause sleepless nights and confused days. We do our best to support you in the process of making a choice that will work for you.

- Students should consult with a prospective advisor with expertise in their proposed research topic/area.

- Your programme convenor (Prof Sa'diyya Shaikh / Sadiyya.Shaikh@uct.ac.za / room LS 5.37) will be able to advise you on who best to approach.

- PhD students should secure an advisor as early as possible (we recommend that your topic and supervisor be finalised at least 1 month from date of registration).

- Once your supervisor is confirmed, you need to send an email to the PG Administrator (Mrs Tasneem Wise Tasneem.Wise@uct.ac.za) to confirm your advisors details and provisional research title.

<u>What to expect from your Supervisor:</u>

What can you expect of your supervisor?

1. Your supervisor will meet you regularly to discuss your progress with your research project and to comment on the material you have submitted.
2. Your supervisor will provide you with support and advice, drawn from the supervisor's experience and expertise.
3. Research projects are lengthy and demanding commitment, and you will need the general support of your supervisor (and your friends and family).
4. Your supervisor will provide timeous feedback on your written submissions, with constructive criticism.
5. In addition, your supervisor will provide regular contact, guidance, encouragement and feedback

What your Supervisor expects from you:

What can your supervisor expect of you?

**The supervisor will expect: regular contact, hard work and commitment as well as responsiveness and openness to advice from you.*

- It is very important to note that it is YOUR ROLE as the student to initiate contact with your advisor and to request the necessary meetings you require in order to meet the obligations for your Master's thesis
- Maintain regular contact with your supervisor. You need to take the initiative in seeking regular contact with your supervisor. Your obligation is to keep closely in touch.
- You should have a clear programme of action. Together with your advisor you should set and agree on necessary deadlines that need to be met throughout the year
- You should provide regular delivery of work based on the programme of action agreed upon
- You need to work hard and remain committed to the research project
- Be responsive and remain open to taking advice from your academic advisor. You need to respond positively to the constructive criticism of your supervisor, and incorporate this into your work.

  For more information, see guidelines for the appointment of supervisors of Doctoral candidates and responsibilities of supervisors of Masters and Doctoral candidates.

  Guidelines:
  http://www.humanities.uct.ac.za/downloads/humanities/postgrad/gradschool/navthesis/supervise/mou.pdf)

  Responsibilities:
  http://www.humanities.uct.ac.za/downloads/humanities/postgrad/gradschool/navthesis/supervise/responsibilities.pdf

Research Ethics
If your research involves interaction with other human beings as part of the research process (including interviews, filling out of questionnaires or focus groups with "human subjects") it is important that you get ethics clearance.

For Ethics Clearance please contact Tasneem Wise (Tasneem.Wise@uct.ac.za) with subject "Ethics Clearance" to obtain details on the required application process.

Proposal Presentations
Masters and PhD students are required to make formal presentations of their research as they progress. All students need to present proposals before they start with the research, Subsequently, presentations could be structured as per stages of one's research to assist students to develop their work over the year. Presentations are held in **May** and **October**, during which staff will be present to give feedback. These are vital feedback sessions that must be attended, as well as supported by fellow students. These are co-ordinated by Dr Louis Blond / Prof Asonzeh Ukah and Tasneem Wise. Further details regarding these sessions and its requirements will be sent out via email closer to the time

Objective of the PG Presentation

- On this day all post-graduate students (Masters by coursework, research Masters and PhDs) are required to present a piece of their work to a wider audience as a means of tracking progress.
- This is an opportunity to share ideas with colleagues and faculty staff and to receive feedback on aspects of your work from staff members and fellow PG students.
- Presenting at this event provides an exceptionally useful opportunity for:
  - training oneself in presentation skills;

- re-thinking aspects of one's work based on constructive comments received;
- gaining new insights and inspiration from listening to the presentation of fellow students who are working on topics that are often only apparently distant to one's own.

Obligations of PG students:

- All Masters, Research Masters and PhD students MUST present at one of the sessions each year.
- Students who are already in the process of writing their theses can either present a draft chapter of the thesis OR some reflections on theoretical and methodological issues they have been thinking upon during their work
- Students who have just started should present their research proposals.
- Non-research students (Masters by Coursework) are also warmly encouraged to grab this opportunity to present their research in the form of a Poster (including title, research questions and a few lines about the theoretical framework) which will be exposed in the Department. This would be an excellent way to showcase your work in the Department and receive feedback from senior students and staff.
- Research Masters and PhD's to present each year as a way to keep track of their progress
- Students should share copies of presentations or papers prior to the day that will be circulated among staff and fellow students

Presenting at this event:

- You will be allocated at least 25minutes (15 mins + 10 mins feedback/discussion)
- A laptop and speakers will be set up for you to utilise, so please bring your presentations along on a flash OR you may bring your own laptop along
- Please remember to send a copy of your presentation or paper at least 5 days prior to the event so that this can be circulated to all staff and fellow students

Submission and Examination Procedures for the PhD Dissertation

SUBMISSION OF a PhD thesis to the DDB OFFICE

It is expected that a PhD is completed in 4 years. After 5 years, PhD students may have a 50% late surcharge penalty applied.

All PhD dissertations are examined by the Humanities Faculty Office in conjunction with the Doctoral Degrees Board (DDB) and not by the Department.

For details on submission procedure please contact the Faculty Admin Officers as follows:

- Kerewin Parfitt Kerewin.Parfitt@uct.ac.za
- DOCTORAL DEGREES BOARD ddb@uct.ac.za
- CC - Humanities Postgrad hum-postgrad@uct.ac.za

PhD Student Examination Guide

CHECKLIST FOR DISSERTATION/THESIS SUBMISSIONS
PhD Thesis
Deadline dates PhD candidates must upload their notice of intention to submit theses for examination on PeopleSoft at least 6 – 8 weeks before submission of their theses for examination.

PhD candidates must upload their theses for examination on PeopleSoft at least 5 months before the upcoming graduation ceremony to allow time for the examination process to run its course.

2026 Graduation Ceremonies are scheduled for March and September 2026

Please refer to the below link for further details about PhD thesis submission rules and requirements:
http://www.uct.ac.za/students/candidates/thesis/

SUBMISSION OF A PHD THESIS TO DDB OFFICE

- A PhD Candidate can submit at any time subject to being registered for **2 years**.
- While the DDB will not insist on the supervisor's approval before accepting a PhD thesis, it is recommended that candidates submit with the approval of their supervisors.
- At the conclusion of your research, you will be able to complete and upload your intention to submit form on PeopleSoft, followed by the upload of your thesis for examination. All communication from UCT regarding the examination process will occur via your UCT e-mail account.

Please refer to the below link for the FULL GUIDE to submitting your PhD thesis:
http://www.uct.ac.za/usr/current_students/postgrad/PhD_Students_Examination_Guide.pdf

Checklist of Documents Required:

- Thesis/Dissertation (i.e. ***Thesis.pdf***)
- Thesis/dissertation ***Abstract-open.pdf***
- Thesis/dissertation ***Abstract-Restricted.pdf*** (**if applicable**)
- Open UCT suppression form **(if applicable)**
- Word count form
- Submission declaration form
- Turnitin Originality report
- Signed plagiarism declaration
- **Dissertation/Thesis cover page containing the compulsory declaration**
  - (Faculty office will provide this once you send them your intention to submit)
- **Declaration form**
  - (Faculty office will provide this once you send them your intention to submit)
- **Supervisor Approval form**
  - (Faculty office will provide this once you send them your intention to submit)

NOTE: ALSO REFER TO STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES ON THE REL6000W AMATHUBA SITE
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