PROCEDURES FOR MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL DEGREES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

GENERAL

1.1 These procedures are based on the Policy for Master's and Doctoral Degrees and the Processes for master's and doctoral degrees and relate to the research proposal and dissertation or thesis components of master's and doctoral degrees. They should be read in conjunction with the following other Unisa policies:

Admission Policy
Assessment Policy
Research and Innovation Policy
Tuition Policy

1.2 The requirements for ethical conduct and approval are set out in paragraph 3 of the Policy for Master's and Doctoral Degrees. The Policy on Research Ethics, Policy on Academic Integrity, the Policy on involving Unisa employees, students, alumni, data and non-human harvesting of data and the Research Data Management Policy must also be adhered to. Intellectual property rights are regulated by the Intellectual Property Policy. Candidates must also comply with the guidelines of the specific college in which they intend to register or are currently registered for their master's or doctoral degree.

1.3 The procedures for postgraduate studies are divided into different phases:

Master's and doctoral information prior to registration
Application and admission
Registration
Research proposal
Mini-dissertation, dissertation or thesis (supervision, assessment and *viva voce*)
Archiving
Graduation and reporting
These phases will be dealt with in the same order in the chapters below.
The Executive Deans of colleges or delegated persons with the appointed Heads of the Offices of Graduate Studies and Research are responsible for the implementation of the Policy and Procedures for Master's and Doctoral Degrees.

1.4 All information and study material in respect of master's and doctoral degrees are available online. General information is verified annually by the Directorate Student Admissions and Registration (DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration division and is posted on the Unisa website prior to the opening date for applications and registrations; departmental websites regarding matters regulated by Unisa policies and procedures must first be approved by Senate. All enquiries related to master's and doctoral applications and registrations must be directed to the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division via email to mandd@unisa.ac.za. SBL students must contact the SBL directly on SBLMBA@unisa.ac.za), SBLMBL@unisa.ac.za or SBLDBL@unisa.ac.za as contact is online only. No application and registration self-help stations are available at campuses or regional offices for master's and doctoral students.

DEFINITIONS/TERMINOLOGY

Artificial Intelligence (AI)	in research refers to the application of machine-based systems capable of simulating human cognitive functions like learning, problem-solving, and decision-making to perform (research) tasks. This involves using technologies that can analyze vast amounts of data, identify patterns, generate predictions, and even interpret complex information, thereby assisting and accelerating various stages of the research process. AI integration in research, teaching, and learning refers to the ethical incorporation of artificial intelligence technologies, such as machine learning, natural language processing, and intelligent tutoring systems into academic environments to enhance knowledge production, pedagogical practice, and student engagement. (e.g. ChatGPT, CoPilot, etc.).
Candidate	refers to a student who has been formally accepted (registered) into a master's or doctoral programme at Unisa
Catalytic Niche areas	refer to Unisa's identified research focus areas to be operationalised within colleges
CGS	refers to the College of Graduate Studies
CGS SIRGS	refers to the School of Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Studies, which is in the College of Graduate Studies

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CGS STRGS	refers to the School of Trans-Disciplinary Research and Graduate Studies, which is in the College of Graduate Studies
Creative output portfolio	refers to evidence of a body of work that potentially can receive 1 or 2 units for research output, as defined by the DHeT in the Government Gazette: Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations produced by Public Higher Education Institutions (2017). The creative output portfolio should include an application letter directed to the curator/manager of the venue (which should be a recognised museum/gallery/performance venue). It should also include a clear annotation of 500-700 words describing the overview, problems and key questions addressed and the primary aim of the creative work. It should explain the creative methodology, conceptual and scholarly framework in which the work resides and propose the contribution to new knowledge. The portfolio must include a declaration of originality, include links to verifiable evidence of the creative output, which includes one or more of the following forms, and may not exceed 100 MB: an e-catalogue/relevant internet Uniform Resource Locator (URL)/published work in the case of literary arts/PDF of musical scores and the venue(s) or platforms on which the output was exhibited/performed
Data Management Plan	A formal document that outlines how data will be handled both during the research project and after the project is completed.
Data Repository	An online archive for collecting, preserving and disseminating digital objects of the research data of UNISA.
Deferment	refers to a temporary postponement of a student's registration for an acceptable reason
Delegated person	refers to the person, or committee, to whom, or which, a specific function has been delegated
Dissertation	refers to the written research project required in a master's degree by dissertation only as described in the *Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework* (2013) (HEQSF)
DSAR	refers to the Directorate of Student Admissions and Registrations who administers applications and registrations of master's and doctoral students

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External Supervisor	Refers to an academic or professional expert who is not in the employment of Unisa, this will exclude academic associates
Graduate attributes	refer to the three specific areas to which doctoral programmes contribute, i.e., knowledge production, development of researchers, and societal contributions to meet immediate problems. These attributes are assessed through means such as examiners' reports, analysis of these reports, pass rates, analysis of the extent to which extensive corrections/resubmissions of these are required, institutional research into the kinds of learning and other challenges faced by students and the extent to which these are addressed, tracer studies and analysis of employer/workplace comments on graduate quality
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee (ICPGSC)	refers to the sub-committee of the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee and is authorised by the Executive Management to approve all policies and procedures related to master's and doctoral studies
International examiner	refers to a scholar with an excellent master's and doctoral supervision record who is employed at a reputable university outside the borders of South Africa. Scholars who emigrated from South Africa and are currently employed at a reputable international university are included if they have supervised master's or doctoral candidates to completion
International scholar	refers to a researcher/recognised intellectual who is internationally recognised by his/her peers as a leader in the field based on the quality and impact of his/her research publications. This person is a researcher who holds the highest level of postgraduate qualification or its recognised equivalent, with a solid publication record, creative innovations, contributions, or equivalence, invited to present at conferences and is active in collaborative research projects
Internship module	refers to a non-credit bearing module that forms part of a coursework master's degree where the curriculum comprises modules, a mini-dissertation and an internship as required by the HPCSA
Joint degrees	refers to a qualification where students register with Unisa and another University in order to obtain a single qualification

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Mini-dissertation	refers to the dissertation required in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a master's by coursework and mini-dissertation as described in the HEQSF
NDP	refers to Non degree purposes
NEC	refers to the non-examining chairperson
Novice supervisor	A person who has never supervised master's or doctoral studies
Open Science	The movement to make scientific research and data accessible to all, for public good. It includes practices such as publishing open scientific research, campaigning for open access and generally making it easier to publish and communicate scientific knowledge. Additionally, it includes other ways to make science more transparent and accessible during the research process. This includes open notebook science, citizen science and aspects of open-source software and crowdfunded research projects.
Originality detection system	refers to a system that is used to check document content against a database for similarities to ensure that content is original and correctly cited, supporting academic integrity and guarding against real/inadvertent plagiarism
PhD by Monograph	refers to the conventional doctorate structured in various chapters with an introduction and a conclusion, and the PhD candidate is the sole author
PhD by Publication	Refers to a doctoral degree that is composed of several peer-reviewed publications written as an introduction, discussion and conclusion that has been put together as separate chapters, contributing to a unified research theme within a specified field
Prospective student	refers to a person who has not yet been formally accepted as a master's or doctoral student at Unisa
Research component	refers to the mini-dissertation, dissertation or thesis
Research Data	refers to factual records (numerical scores, textual records, images and sounds) that are used as primary sources for scientific research and that are commonly accepted in the scientific community as necessary to validate research findings.
RPL	refers to Recognition of Prior Learning
Research-based project	refers to an academic endeavor where a group of students engage in systematic investigation to establish facts, principles, or generate new knowledge within a specific field of study. It requires students to actively contribute to the body of knowledge through original research. (paragraph 5.77)

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Research focus areas	Catalytic niche areas are the research areas of expertise as identified by Unisa to be prioritised in its operations. The DHeT niche areas are the research areas as identified by the Department of Higher Education and Training
SAQA	refers to the South African Qualifications Authority
Thesis	refers to the written research product required to be submitted for examination in fulfilment of the requirements for the completion of a doctoral degree as described in the HEQSF
Unisa	refers to the University of South Africa
UnisaIR	refers to the Unisa Institutional Repository
Viva Voce	refers to the oral component of the doctoral examination.



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CHAPTER 2

PHASE 1: MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL INFORMATION PRIOR TO REGISTRATION

2.1 Details of formal admission requirements for individual qualifications are available on the Unisa website www.unisa.ac.za/qualificationsmd/. All pre-registration requirements must be met before a prospective student will be allowed to register. Colleges may have specific language admission requirements.

2.2 Prospective students who have not previously studied for a formal qualification at Unisa must first apply for a student number, thereafter, apply for admission and upload supporting documents during the prescribed application dates (except where permission from Senate has been granted to deviate from these dates) for master's and doctoral qualifications. The application fee for a student number is non-refundable.

2.3 The application process and selection criteria set by Unisa and approved by Senate are made available on the websites prior to the commencement date for application for master's and doctoral studies. Each college/department may provide additional selection criteria. Such information includes specific focus areas or research projects identified by departments and/or colleges and the number of new master's and doctoral students that can be accommodated in a particular academic year and is aligned with sections 37(3) and (4)(b) of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997.

2.4 **From 2020**, first-time doctoral students (PhD by monograph) are required to submit two manuscripts for publication to a peer-reviewed accredited journal as part of the thesis phase, unless otherwise approved by Senate. Proof of submission to the accredited journals must be submitted during phase 3 of the assessment process (par 7.18), "Approval and release of the examination results and post-assessment submission of copies", of this procedure. Alternatively, a creative output portfolio must be submitted to an approved forum (such as a professional gallery or museum). Colleges should notify prospective students of this requirement prior to registration. Supervisors must confirm the submission of the manuscripts on the prescribed form. The submitted manuscripts or creative portfolios should be based on the research undertaken during doctoral studies and should be deemed acceptable to the supervisor. Results will not be released until proof of acknowledgement by the journal editor or institutional curator is submitted by the supervisor.

2.5 It is the candidate's responsibility to draft the manuscripts, and should play a major role in formulating the arguments and the research results, and in writing the manuscripts or creative portfolios for publication. When co-authored with a supervisor, the candidate should be the first author.

2.6 Starting with candidates admitted in 2022 and completing no earlier than 2024, doctoral candidates must deliver an oral examination (*viva voce*) of their theses as a compulsory part of the examination process. The oral examination (viva voce) will be conducted online through a video link. Face-to-face oral examinations can be

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arranged under exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the Executive Dean or delegated person of the college concerned. The same examiners are appointed to assess the thesis and adjudicate its oral examination. Refer to the Standard Operating Procedures for Doctoral Oral Examination (*Viva Voce*).

2.7 **Starting from 2024**, candidates may request to do the PhD by Publication. Each academic college must compile their own criteria for considering such requests. The candidate must from the onset and at the point of initial registration as a doctoral candidate discuss this option with their supervisor.

2.8 The HEQSF allows a master's candidate's candidature (master's by full research) to be upgraded to a doctoral programme, provided the candidate's research meets the description of doctoral-level research provided in the HEQSF (2013, p36): *"The defining characteristic of [a doctoral degree] is that the candidate is required to demonstrate a high level of research capability and to make a significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline of field" This will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where the scope and impact of research initially registered for a research master's degree exceeds the initial expectation and the research is expected to make a novel contribution to the body of knowledge in the subject discipline.*" Since the minimum requirement for admission to a doctoral programme is an appropriate master's degree, the quality of the candidate's work on which the upgrade is considered must be at the level of a completed master's degree. The upgrading request must be recommended by the supervisor to the Executive Dean or delegated person, supported by the College Executive Committee, approved at ICPGSC and must take place during the thesis or dissertation phase prior to submission for examination. The upgrade must be recommended based on the Standard Operating Procedures for the Upgrade of a master's degree to a doctoral degree. Academic colleges may stipulate additional criteria. The upgrade will be captured on the academic record as "Upgraded to doctoral qualification".



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CHAPTER 3
PHASE 2: APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

3.1 The minimum qualifications for admission to master's and doctoral studies are set out in the Admissions Policy and are informed by the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (2013). Unisa is not, however, obliged to accept any prospective student who meets the minimum requirement as there may be other factors on the basis of which the prospective student cannot be accepted.

If an academic gap is identified between a previously obtained qualification and the next higher qualification, the college must submit guidelines on how to deal with such gaps, for approval by the ICPGSC. Students who have completed a Postgraduate Diploma may be required to complete one or more research modules for non-degree purposes (NDP) before being considered for a master's degree.

Factors that will be considered before admitting the prospective student to register include, but are not limited to, the following: the prospective student's academic record, the topic he/she wishes to research, the quality of the research outline submitted as part of the application, the capacity and expertise to supervise the prospective student and possible limitations imposed by enrolment planning. Such factors will be indicated on the college websites. Students who completed a master's or doctoral qualification in a discipline/field may not apply or register for a qualification on the same level, in the same discipline/field.

3.2 A student whose application for admission to a coursework qualification has been declined due to the department reaching its full capacity for the academic year will not be granted approval to take the coursework modules for non-degree purposes (NDP).

3.3 A student may not register for a research proposal module, a mini-dissertation, dissertation or thesis for NDP.

3.4 The recognition of prior learning (RPL) process allows for alternative access to a programme when the student does not have the prerequisite degree or without the prescribed average. Colleges may choose not to allow the RPL process for admission to certain qualifications. Students should consider their previous work experience, relevant prior learning, and research experience in the field when they consider applying via RPL.

3.5 Students seeking direct admission to a master's or doctoral degree based on recognition of prior learning (RRL) should apply online for their chosen qualification during the formal application period. If the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administrative Division or the relevant college determines that the student does not meet the minimum requirements; the student will receive a decline letter stating this reason. Upon receipt of the letter the student may apply to the RPL office for direct admission to the chosen qualification. Students should take note that the RPL process is not available for all master's and doctoral qualifications.

3.6 Master's and Doctoral applicants should familiarise themselves with college-specific RPL rules regarding age and years of experience, as they differ depending on the

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qualifications the student is applying for. For more information on RPL criteria visit: www.unisa.ac.za/rpl

3.7 Applications for admission must be submitted online to the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division within the prescribed application periods. However, Colleges/Departments may designate specific qualifications to remain open until 30 June or to follow alternative application closing dates. The DSAR will administer the opening and closing of these qualifications, including approved selection-based degrees, i.e. the MA in Clinical Psychology and the coursework MCom in Industrial and Organisational Psychology which have specific application periods determined by the relevant department or college. Qualifications approved for extended admissions will remain open until the end of June of the following year. Applications approved after this date will, in consultation with the department and the student, either be processed for the current academic year or students will be assisted to register from 1 September for the next academic year, subject to payment of the current year's fees. Should a student fail to register and pay before the fee schedule for the next academic year comes into effect, the student will be liable for the increased fees applicable to that academic year.

The prospective students must indicate their preferred research focus area. Students must develop the research outline in alignment with one of the department's research focus areas based on the *Guideline* to prospective master's and doctoral student to prepare a research outline. Some colleges allow prospective students to suggest an alternate title or focus area if their interest is not covered in the list provided by the college. The research outline must also include a declaration that it is the student's own work and that all sources used, including AI tools, have been acknowledged and declared. Some colleges allow prospective students to suggest an alternate title or focus area if their interest is not covered in the list provided by the college.

3.8 The DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division receives the online applications and verifies compliance with the formal requirements as communicated on the website. Students who obtained qualifications outside of the borders of South Africa must submit a SAQA certificate of evaluation as part of their application or proof that they applied at SAQA. The complete application is referred to the academic department concerned for selection. The academic department must consider all referred applications, the prospective student's academic record, his/her academic background, language competence, factors set out in supervisory capacity and other relevant matters and, in accordance with the provisions of sections 37(3) and (4)(b) of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, recommends approval or rejection to the Executive Dean or delegated person before 28 February, except for those qualifications where applications are open until 30 June. Students approved after this date may select to register for the current academic year or for the next academic year from 1 September. The Chair of Department or delegated person conveys, in writing to the Executive Dean or delegated person, the reasons for the non-acceptance of an application in cases where a prospective student complies with the minimum requirements but is unacceptable to the academic department for academic or other reasons as set out in this paragraph. The college notifies the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division, via the University approved platform, of the outcome of the application for admission. The DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division informs the prospective student of the department's decision and, where the application is declined, provides the reasons on which the decision was based.

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3.9 A student may appeal against non-admission decision based on academic grounds within 10 days of receiving the University's communication. The appeal must be submitted to the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division, which will evaluate its validity and, if deemed valid, refer it to the department for reconsideration. Late appeals will not be considered.

- Non-admission based on the following does not constitute a valid ground for appeal: lack of supervisory capacity,
- A department having reached its enrolment capacity,
- The submitted research outline not aligning with the departmental research focus areas,
- The department lacking expertise in the proposed field of research,
- The research outline not meeting departmental requirements,
- The proposed research area not making a unique contribution to the body of knowledge or
- Applying for the wrong qualification.

If the appeal is declined, the reason for the decision must be substantiated and submitted to the College Higher Degrees Committee for consideration. The Committee will consider the matter and informs the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division of its outcome. The division will then communicate the outcome to the applicant.

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CHAPTER 4
PHASE 3: REGISTRATION

4.1 A student whose application for a master's or doctoral degree has been approved must register online within the prescribed registration period. However, research master's and doctoral candidates who receive notification of admission outcomes after the closing date may register online and will be advised when their registration must be finalised. Students admitted after 1 July will be assisted manually to register for the current academic year. Alternatively, students may elect to register from 1 September for the following academic year.

4.2 A student who has been admitted without submitting a SAQA certificate of evaluation (CoE) may register for the academic year. Upon receipt of the SAQA CoE the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division will verify whether the qualification's NQF level meets the required admission level.

Where the NQF level meets the required level, the division will inform the students and the supervisor accordingly.

Where the qualification has not been evaluated on the required NQF level the DSAR: Master's and doctoral administration division will forward form CGS10 to the supervisor for a recommendation to the Chair of Department for reconsideration of the candidate's admission. The Chair of Department must consider the student's academic credentials, including the syllabi where applicable as well as any research work submitted to the supervisor to date

The Executive Dean or delegated person will determine whether the student may continue with their studies or whether the student's registration must be administratively cancelled.

Should the student's application be approved through RPL the candidate's registration will be reinstated (also see par 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6)

4.3 In the case of a master's degree by coursework and mini-dissertation, a candidate whose application for registration is accepted must pass at least two modules before they may register for the research proposal module, unless otherwise approved at Senate. Colleges may make recommendations in respect of the order in which students should register for the modules in the programme.

4.4 A student who is registered for a master's degree by coursework who intends to register for the research proposal module in the next academic year must submit a one-to-two-page research outline to the Chair of Department no later than 30 September, in order to have the working title approved and a supervisor appointed. The College Graduate and Research office must submit the CGS 2 form (available on the CGS intranet under important documents and events) to the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division before 30 November of the current academic year.

4.5 A candidate's registration is not finalised before all the admission and registration processes and minimum payment on registration of the fees prescribed for the

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relevant module(s) has been received.

4.6 A letter is issued to the candidate as soon as his/her registration is finalised. In the case of a candidate who has registered for a research proposal module (coursework master's degrees) or dissertation or thesis, the letter includes the working title and the name and contact details of the candidate's supervisor/contact person. Copies of this letter are forwarded to the designated contact person in the department and/or the supervisor and co-supervisor (if applicable).

4.7 The supervisor(s) will guide the candidate for the duration of his/her studies. It is the responsibility of the supervisor(s) to ensure that the student is registered for the academic year before commencing with supervision. The supervisor, co-supervisor and the student must make use of the University approved platform for documenting student progress.

4.8 A candidate should establish contact with his/her supervisor as soon as possible, either personally (should be arranged beforehand) or by e-mail if a face-to-face meeting is not possible. Upon registration, a personal librarian will contact the candidate. The manager of DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division provides the library monthly with a list of registered students.

4.9 Students who are registered for a master's or doctoral degree may, if they comply with the prescribed admission requirements for those modules or papers, also register in the same academic year for two undergraduate modules or for one honours or master's paper or the corresponding number of modules on the same level for non-degree purposes (NDP). Departments may use their own discretion when considering applications for NDP directly from students (see par 3.2 and 3.3)

4.10 An application for concurrent registration must reach the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division at least three weeks before the closing date for registration for the NDP paper/module(s).

4.11 Students must annually reregister online and pay the fees for the academic year by the date published on the Unisa website.

4.12 Re-registration depends on satisfactory progress by the candidate as determined in the Admission Policy and on approval by the supervisor. Given the high demand for admission to master's and doctoral degrees at Unisa, a candidate who has been admitted to such studies should demonstrate satisfactory progress for the duration of his/her studies towards the postgraduate qualification. The supervisor approves re-registration annually by capturing the candidate's academic activities on the University approved platform and indicating that the candidate may reregister. Candidates and supervisors must be cognisant of the prescribed maximum duration allowed for a qualification (refer paragraph 4.14 and paragraph 5.15).

The academic department monitors the progress of the candidate. Colleges may require a six-monthly or annual progress review. The supervisor should, at least three months prior to re-registration, alert a candidate to the fact that he/she is not making sufficient progress in terms of the Admission Policy. Should a candidate still not make satisfactory progress, the supervisor indicates unsatisfactory progress on the

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University approved platform, thus blocking automatic re-registration, and the candidate is sent a warning letter by the supervisor. The Executive Dean of the College of Graduate Studies or delegated person, the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division and the Graduate Office of the college where the candidate is registered are copied in this letter. The relevant committee may recommend to the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division that the candidate be excluded for a period of two years for academic reasons and that he/she, therefore, will not be allowed to reregister for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same college. The CGS: Master's and Doctoral Administration Support Division must receive a copy of the recommendation and a completed CGS 2 form. The candidate will, accordingly, be informed in writing by the CGS: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division.

4.13 A candidate may, within thirty days of receipt of written notification of such exclusion, address an appeal against his/her exclusion to the Executive Dean of the relevant college or delegated person. If the appeal is rejected, such rejection must be substantiated and submitted to the College Higher Degrees Committee for consideration. The committee considers the matter and informs the CGS: PGAD of the outcome. This division communicates the outcome to the candidate, the Executive Dean or delegated person, and the academic department.

4.14 In terms of the Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a master's qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on the recommendation of the Executive Dean or delegated person, a candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a coursework master's degree, a student must pass at least two modules after two years of study to be able to continue to the next academic year. For a doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the Executive Dean or delegated person, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.

4.15 A doctoral degree requires a minimum of two years of study. A candidate registered for a doctoral degree must have been registered for at least two academic years before the thesis may be submitted for examination. If a candidate registered for a master's degree and has been upgraded to a doctoral programme (see paragraph 2.8), the period registered for the master's degree is considered when calculating the candidate's period of registration.

4.16 Students who wish to defer their studies must, before the closing date for re-registration for a particular year, submit a substantiated application to their supervisor. However, in exceptional circumstances, a supervisor may consider late applications. Students may not defer their studies in the first year of registration. The deferment must be recommended by the supervisor, Chair of Department or delegated person, and Executive Dean of the college or delegated person. If granted, the deferment will be granted for a period of one year only, after which a new application must be submitted should a further extension be required. A deferment will not be granted more than twice, except in exceptional circumstances as determined by the Executive Dean of the college or delegated person. Periods during which a candidate was permitted to defer his/her studies are excluded when calculating the candidate's period of registration. The deferment of studies will be captured by the DSAR:

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Master's and Doctoral Administration Division and will reflect on a student's academic record. A candidate may not be supervised or receive study guidance or library services during the period for which he/she has deferred his/her studies.

The approved title for his/her dissertation or thesis will be reserved during the period of deferment. Supervisors must ensure that they only supervise students who are registered for the current academic year. A student who is already registered for the academic year may not defer their studies, but such a request will be treated as a request for cancellation of studies.

4.17 If a candidate does not register for a particular year and does not obtain prior permission to defer his/her studies, the approved title of his/her projected research component will not necessarily be reserved for him/her and the year of interruption will count as one of the years allowed to complete the qualification in terms of the Admission Policy. The candidate must re-apply online for admission to the qualification. However. a supervisor may recommend, in exceptional cases, that a candidate may reregistration without having to apply for admission.

4.18 The normal rules regarding the cancellation or reduction of study units apply subject to any rules applicable to the specific degree.

4.19 In exceptional cases, a waiver of fees/cancellation with a refund may be approved by the Executive Dean of the relevant college, or delegated person based on these guidelines.

4.20 A transfer from one qualification to another is only allowed in the case where transitional arrangements have been approved at Senate, which allow for a student to elect to transfer to the new qualification. The student must complete the form, "Request to transfer to another qualification" and submit it to the office of Executive Dean/ Head, Office of Graduate studies for consideration. The college will solicit the supervisor's availability as part of their assessment process. A request to transfer to another qualification for other reasons will be considered in exceptional circumstances. The request should be submitted before 30 June of the academic year. The DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division will inform the candidate and the supervisor(s) of the change. Once a student has submitted their research component for examination, a graduation date has been issued, or the student has already graduated, a transfer to another qualification will not be allowed.

4.21 If a candidate wants to change from one qualification to another, he/she is required to apply for admission for the qualification during the approved application period.



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CHAPTER 5
GENERAL PROVISIONS
Titles

5.1 Students who apply for admission to a doctoral degree or a master's degree by dissertation must submit a working title with their admission applications. Students who apply for a master's degree by coursework and mini-dissertation may be required to submit a working title for the mini-dissertation with the application for admission.

5.2 The working title is captured by the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division when the applicant is admitted. The working title remains on the student system until such time that the research proposal is approved. Titles should be in sentence case and should, as far as possible, not contain any abbreviations/acronyms. The supervisor should, on approval of the research proposal or the research proposal module (in the case of a coursework master's degree, capture the relevant M&D activities, complete the CGS 2 form and submit it for approval according to college requirements. The form must be submitted by the college to the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division for capturing.

5.3 The CGS 2 form is used to confirm whether a doctoral degree will be done by publication, a research proposal has been approved/not approved, approval of the research title and supervisor(s), indicate the relevant DHeT niche areas and whether the research aligns with one or more of the catalytic niche areas.

5.4 Titles should not be changed throughout the duration of the mini-dissertation, dissertation or thesis phase. However, if the title/supervisor(s) should be amended the CGS 2 form (available on the CGS intranet under important documents and events) must be used to inform the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division. When a candidate is nearing completion of the research component, the supervisor and candidate should assess the working title and, if necessary, apply to the relevant College Committee for a title under which the research component will be submitted for examination. Colleges must address the quality of titles, including possible submission of proposed titles to language editors before submission to the College Board or the College Executive for recommendation to the ICPGSC for approval. Such title changes must be communicated to the CGS: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division per individual candidate for capturing. The supervisor and candidate must consider the January, June and November submission dates (see paragraph 7.20 and 7.21) to ensure that the title is approved before final submission for examination. Titles should be in sentence case and should, as far as possible, not contain any abbreviations/acronyms.

5.5 Titles are maintained by the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division. This section will provide the Head: Research and Studies of each college with a list of approved titles on request for recommendation to the College Board or the College Executive for recommendation to the ICPGSC meeting for approval.

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5.6 Examiners may recommend changes to the registered title of a candidate's research component. In this instance, the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department is requested to amend the title when the final result is submitted and before the results are released to the candidate. The supervisor should ensure that the candidate submits the post-assessment electronic copy under the amended title.

SUPERVISOR AND CO-SUPERVISOR

General

5.7 As stipulated in the Assessment Procedures Manual, supervisors of candidates doing master's dissertations must hold at least an equivalent (master's) qualification, and must have a research record that is deemed acceptable by the college for the appointment. In the absence of a college guideline on the research record, departments may determine their own guideline regarding acceptability. The Chair of Department may deviate from par 5.9 to 5.12 by submitting a motivation for approval to the Executive Dean or delegated person. The Chair of Department must ensure adequate support for both novice supervisors and their students, taking all reasonable measures to prevent neglect of the supervisory relationship.

5.8 A novice supervisor may not be appointed as a sole supervisor for a master's or doctoral student.

5.9 A novice supervisor must co-supervise with an experienced supervisor.

5.10 A novice supervisor (who holds a master's degree) may be appointed the sole supervisor for a master's student after the successful completion of at least one student. After the first student's proposal is approved by the department, a novice supervisor may be allocated another student (incremental)

5.11 A novice supervisor (who holds a doctoral degree) may be appointed as sole supervisor after the successful completion of at least one student per level. After the first student's proposal is approved by the department, a novice supervisor may be allocated another student. (incremental)

5.12 Supervisors and co-supervisors of doctoral candidates must hold a doctorate and have a research record deemed acceptable by the college for the appointment. In exceptional circumstances, the Executive Dean or delegated person may request the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee to approve the appointment of a supervisor with specific expertise, but who does not have the stipulated academic qualification or research record.

5.13 All novice masters and doctoral supervisors must attend compulsory supervisor training offered by CGS. CGS: Research Support Services will submit proof of completion thereof to the supervisor and the Chair of Department, or delegated person. The novice supervisor may only be appointed as supervisors/co-supervisors if the training has been completed.

5.14 Immediately after registration has been finalised, the candidate and his/her supervisor sign a supervision agreement setting out their respective roles regarding the proposed research. Colleges, schools, or departments may draw up their own agreements. The supervisor must upload the signed agreement on the M&D Student Dashboard within 60 days from

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the date of registration. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Department or delegated person to ensure that the agreement is signed and uploaded.

5.15 To increase supervision capacity, supervisors external to Unisa may be appointed. Their remuneration and conditions of employment are determined from time to time by the relevant Unisa structures.

External (co-)supervisors are appointed as independent task-based contractors by the academic department hosting the particular qualification if there is no capacity or expertise available in the department. This department recommends the appointment of an external (co-) supervisor to the Executive Dean or delegated person substantiated by a curriculum vitae that should include any supervisory experience. The remuneration of external supervisors is funded from Unisa's Academic Human Resource Allocation Model (ACHRAM) (departmental discretionary funds).

5.16 The following criteria are considered when appointing external supervisors: academic qualification, expertise in the field and supervisory experience at the level of the qualification they will be required to supervise.

5.17 A co-supervisor or panel of co-supervisors may be appointed.

5.18 The co-supervisor(s) should be experts in an aspect of the field of the proposed research component. They may provide academic support and expertise in cooperation with the supervisor.

5.19 The members of a panel of co-supervisors should be experts in an aspect of the field of the proposed research component. They may provide academic support and expertise in cooperation with the supervisor.

5.20 Supervisors and co-supervisors are strongly encouraged to attend at least one internal training initiative for supervisors on an annual basis. The CGS: Research Support Services will submit proof of attendance thereof to the supervisor and the Chair of Department, or delegated person.

5.21 A supervisor or candidate may address a duly motivated request to the Executive Dean or delegated person for the appointment of a co-supervisor, or for the replacement of the supervisor by another supervisor.

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The role of the supervisor

5.22 The supervisor must be mindful of the relevant policies and associated documents governing postgraduate supervision at Unisa as well as the stipulations of the compulsory supervision agreement entered into between the supervisor (and co-supervisor where applicable) and the candidate.

5.23 The supervisor must guide the student in the responsible, ethical, and transparent use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools throughout the research process, in line with the University guidelines, including the Academic Integrity and Research Ethics policies, and the norms of the discipline. At the start of the supervisory relationship, and again at key stages of the study (proposal development, ethics review, data collection and analysis, writing, and submission for examination), the supervisor and student should agree in writing on the AI tools that may be used, their purpose and the limits on their use. The supervisor must make it clear that the student remains fully accountable for the originality, accuracy and integrity of the work, and that AI tools may not be credited as authors. The supervisor must further advise the student not to enter personal information, confidential or unpublished data, or third-party intellectual property into AI platforms that do not ensure adequate data protection, in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPIA).

5.24 The supervisor should initiate a discussion with the candidate on a research plan, potential alignment with Unisa's catalytic niche areas, requirements in respect of ethics approval for the research, appropriate deadlines and timetables and other relevant matters concerning the research to complete the research successfully.

5.25 The supervisor should initiate discussions with the candidate on the management of research data and ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for the collection, storage, protection, retention and preservation of research data in accordance with Unisa Research Data Policy, ethical and funder requirements.

5.26 The supervisor should confirm that research data management has been adequately addressed in the research proposal

5.27 The supervisor must provide timely feedback on work submitted by the candidate and indicate such feedback on the University approved platform (see paragraph 5.31). The supervisor must provide appropriate guidance by alerting the candidate to helpful scholarly sources and guidance regarding the structure and content of the research component. However, it remains the candidate's responsibility to conduct independent research. It should be pointed out to the candidate that it is his/her duty, and not that of the supervisor, to trace sources.

5.28 The supervisor should draw the candidate's attention to linguistic errors, inadequately substantiated or poorly formulated statements and incorrect referencing, but it is the candidate's duty to improve them.

5.29 The supervisor must treat the candidate with courtesy and fairness and should suggest appropriate developmental goals and assistance towards those goals by directing the

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candidate to workshops or lectures designed for this purpose, including training in the use of databases and research software for which Unisa has site licences.

5.30 The supervisor should not rewrite parts of the candidate's work but must merely point out deficiencies to the candidate. The candidate should also be provided with feedback on his/her technical presentation and methodology.

5.31 Before the research component is presented for examination, it must be submitted in its final form to the supervisor. The supervisor should ensure that it meets the requirements set out in paragraph 7.12 and should advise the candidate on the need for language editing. The candidate is responsible for the arrangement of and payment for editing services. Various external and Unisa funding options may be available and will be published on the Unisa website.

5.32 A research component may not be submitted for examination without the supervisor's consent. The rule may be waived only with the approval of the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person. (see paragraph 7.28).

5.33 The supervisor must advise the candidate on the academic standard of the research component. If the thesis entails statistical processing, an expert should be consulted at the outset when the research instruments, e.g., questionnaires, are being developed.

5.34 The supervisor must capture information on the progress of master's and doctoral students on the University approved platform. All activities must be captured before the end of February of the following year. The supervisor must further provide information on the candidate's progress as requested by College Management (see paragraph 4.12).

5.35 The supervisor should inform the candidate of his/her non-availability to provide guidance in the case of, for example, conference attendance.

5.36 A supervisor remains responsible for the supervision of master's and doctoral students during his/her research development leave and during any other periods of approved research leave, such as fellowships and academic qualification improvement initiatives

5.37 Supervisors must test the integrity of research conducted by interpreting the results after the candidate has submitted the research to an appropriate originality detection system endorsed by Unisa. A copy of the complete (all-inclusive) originality report must be kept by the supervisor as it may be requested by the NEC or Executive Dean or delegated person. The results must be accurately recorded and interpreted. Supervisors should be trained to use the relevant system. CGS provides training in respect of the software which it officially supports.

5.38 Originality detection systems are primarily intended to be educative, to inform and assist researchers, and not punitive. Research should, therefore, be submitted to such a system on receipt (e.g. of a chapter) and not only shortly before submission for examination. This allows the supervisor the opportunity to advise the candidate if unacceptable results are obtained during the initial phases of the research, including the research proposal phase,

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and to provide the candidate with the opportunity to improve the submission. The candidate must again submit a copy of the final research component to an appropriate originality detection system endorsed by Unisa before submission for examination

5.39 If the infringement of academic integrity is of such a serious nature or is detected during advanced stages of the research and the supervisor is convinced that the matter may warrant disciplinary action, it must be referred by the supervisor to the Chair of the College Academic Integrity Committee, for investigation. The process is set out in the Standard Operating Procedure for Managing and reporting of alleged research integrity transgressions.

Co-supervision

5.40 If a co-supervisor has been appointed, he/she is expected to play an active role in the candidate's supervision. The co-supervisor should be mindful of the stipulations of any Memorandum of Understanding entered into between the supervisor and co-supervisor and the candidate.

5.41 The supervisor and co-supervisor must liaise regularly about the candidate's work.

5.42 The supervisor and co-supervisor should agree on their respective roles and responsibilities and the mode of communication with the candidate. This arrangement should be communicated to the candidate at the commencement of the research and be set out in the supervision agreement. In the case of a panel of supervisors, the respective roles of the panel members should be very carefully delineated.

5.43 It is advisable that the supervisor take responsibility for all communication with the candidate, including feedback and commentary provided by the co-supervisor. The supervisor remains the main contact person between the candidate and co- supervisor and takes final responsibility for the communication, feedback and administrative issues related to the candidate. The supervisor should also do regular checks to determine if all information regarding the co-supervision, title of the research component and any other relevant information is captured on the system. If any changes are required, the supervisor completes the CGS 2 form and submit it for approval according to college requirements. The approved form must be submitted by the college to the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division for capturing. Supervisors and co-supervisors should agree on their respective roles. The co- supervisor must co-sign the non-evaluative report.

The role of the candidate

5.44 The candidate takes primary responsibility for all aspects and phases of his/her own research from application to graduation. If the candidate uses external expertise (e.g., editing, statistical support), the costs incurred are for the candidate's own account.

5.45 As soon as the candidate's registration has been finalised, he/she must claim the free myLife email and activate his/her myUnisa account. This account should be maintained as it is the primary (official) channel of communication between Unisa and master's and doctoral

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students. Students must make use of their myLife email address when corresponding with the University.

5.46 The candidate must register on the University approved platform as soon as possible after registration.

5.47 Research master's and doctoral students must register for the compulsory online African Academic Student Support Programme. All sessions are recorded and will be made available to registered students. The programme will accelerate postgraduate students' progress through their studies, by offering an array of online resources, training and support.

5.48 The candidate must be familiar with and adhere to Unisa's policies and associated documents regarding postgraduate study.

5.49 The candidate must ensure that his/her registration is current until graduation. The candidate, supervisor and co-supervisor (if applicable) must ensure that the qualification is completed within the prescribed timeframes for completion of the qualification, that is, within three years for a master's and six years for a doctoral degree (see paragraph 4.14 and par 4.15).

5.50 The candidate must use artificial intelligence (AI) tools responsibly and transparently, in accordance with the University's guidelines, including the Academic Integrity and Research Ethics policies, and the norms of the discipline and the agreement reached with the supervisor. The candidate remains fully accountable for the originality, accuracy and integrity of the work. For this reason, the candidate must critically verify all AI-generated content, including references, and may not present such content as their own intellectual contribution or credit an AI tool as an author. The candidate must not enter personal, confidential or unpublished data into AI platforms that do not ensure adequate data protection, in compliance with POPIA. The candidate must disclose all substantive AI use in the research component, stating the tool, its purpose, and the stage of the research at which it was used. Undisclosed or inappropriate use of AI may amount to research misconduct.

5.51 The candidate must record and regularly update the research plan and target dates and submit work as agreed with the supervisor on the University approved platform. He/she must, to the extent possible, keep to timetables and target dates and plan and submit work on a regular basis. (see paragraphs 4.6 - 4.8, 4.14 and 4.15)

5.52 The candidate must treat the supervisor with courtesy and fairness and must communicate with the supervisor about any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their postgraduate study.

5.53 The candidate must undertake research with commitment, develop initiative and independence and keep thorough records of all data, research findings, relevant research meetings/discussions and adherence to ethical requirements.

5.54 The candidate must keep copies of submitted work and comments by the supervisor and must keep backups of all electronic data and documents.

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5.55 The candidate must critically engage with all relevant information as pointed out by the supervisor.

5.56 The candidate must adhere to the principle of academic integrity and ethics standards in research.

5.57 Before the research component is submitted for examination, it must be approved by the supervisor. It remains the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the correct electronic version is uploaded for examination.

5.58 The candidate should discuss his/her intention to submit the research component for examination with the supervisor prior to giving such notice (see paragraph 7.19).

5.59 The candidate should investigate and attend relevant Unisa workshops or lectures facilitated by CGS (DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division, SIRGS, STRGS), including training in the use of databases and research software which Unisa has site licences. The candidate must familiarise himself/herself with the appropriate originality detection system endorsed by Unisa. The supervisor must also advise the candidate in this regard.

5.60 The candidate must manage research data in accordance with Unisa Research Data Policy, ethical requirements and applicable legislation and must keep accurate records of research data generated, collected or used during the study.

5.61 The candidate must ensure that research data are stored securely and protected against loss, unauthorised access or disclosure for the duration of the study

5.62 Any issues that may arise during the research that cannot be resolved between the candidate, and the supervisor should be communicated to the Chair of the Department, and if these remain unresolved should be escalated to the Executive Dean.

5.63 In terms of the Policy on Master's and Doctoral Degrees, all master's and doctoral students have the right to appeal against unfair practice in supervision or examination. A candidate who wishes to appeal on these grounds should notify the Executive Dean or delegated person. The reasons for the appeal must be set out in the notification. The appeal is referred to the College Head of Research and Graduate Studies who will inform the Executive Dean or delegated person of the outcome of the investigation within thirty days of the date of referral. If the appeal could not be satisfactorily concluded at College level, the appeal is referred to the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee who monitors and resolve appeals.

Academic standards

5.64 According to the HEQSF:
"Master's degree graduates, in general, must be able to reflect critically on theory and its application. They must be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, design and critically appraise research, make sound judgments using data and information at their disposal and communicate their conclusions clearly to

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specialist and non-specialist audiences, demonstrate self- direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks with a theoretical underpinning and continue to advance their knowledge, understanding and skills.

The research component or components of a general master's degree should be commensurate with the characteristics of the discipline and field as well as the purpose of the programme …

The doctorate provides training for an academic career. It requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis…

The defining characteristic of this qualification is that the candidate is required to demonstrate high-level research capability and to make a significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline or field. The work must be of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication. The degree may be earned through pure discipline-based or multidisciplinary research or applied research."

5.65 The research component must be written in a language that complies with the Unisa Language Policy, as well as with the accepted standards for the presentation of research and knowledge in the discipline(s) of the candidate. It must also comply with the referencing style prescribed for the discipline(s) by the college(s). In the case of a research component undertaken within the domain of multi-, inter- or transdisciplinary research, the candidate must comply with the referencing style agreed on with the supervisor. The layout must conform to Unisa research component guidelines. The supervisor has an advisory role in this regard, but it is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the research component meets the required standards. Refer to paragraph 7.13 for further information.

5.66 The Unisa Language Policy provides that postgraduate research students are allowed to write their proposals, theses or dissertations in:

a) the language of the subject in which the proposal, dissertation or thesis is offered, or
b) any of South Africa's official languages, or

c) any other language as approved by the relevant College Research and Innovation Postgraduate Committee/College Higher Degrees Committee, provided that there is sufficient supervisory and examination capacity available for the estimated duration of the study.

The candidate's choice of language must be negotiated and agreed formally at the start of the study. Supervision in all official languages will be encouraged.

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Intellectual property

5.67 Unisa is, in terms of the Intellectual Property Policy, the owner of all intellectual property created by students during their postgraduate studies.

5.68 Should the possibility arise to file for the protection of any intellectual property rights (excluding copyrights) emanating from the research undertaken by a postgraduate candidate registered at Unisa, the Directorate for Innovation and Technology Transfer must immediately be informed of such a possibility prior to any public announcements or publication of such intellectual property in any form. This must take place irrespective of whether Unisa has a claim to any share in the intellectual property. Filing for patents or any other actions related to the assertion of intellectual property must be undertaken in collaboration with the Directorate for Innovation and Technology Transfer in accordance with the Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act 51 of 2008.

5.69 Although copyright of the final research component is vested with the candidate after successful completion of the degree, the intellectual property rights related to established research projects joined by candidates for the purpose of postgraduate studies will be determined by the contracts governing these projects and established intellectual property rights to these projects.

5.70 A candidate must grant Unisa a non-exclusive copyright licence to reproduce, in any manner or form, and disseminate for archival, teaching and research purposes a research component submitted to Unisa in fulfilment or part fulfilment of a master's or doctoral degree. In exceptional circumstances, a candidate may apply to be exempted from granting this copyright licence. Such an application must be fully substantiated.

5.71 The value of publication of parts (e.g. chapters) of the thesis by a candidate, or co-publication by a supervisor to receive peer-reviewed feedback on original research is recognised. It is also recognised that there is a strong tradition of publication of research work by postgraduate candidates to build and enhance their academic standing in their respective research communities. It is therefore recommended that supervisors (internal and external) and candidates come to a prior agreement on the number and types of publications to emanate from the candidate's research component, and whether supervisors will co-author such publication, within the normal academic traditions of the discipline in which the candidate is enrolled. In such instances of publication, if the publication is to be co-published by the candidate and supervisor(s), the candidate must be the main author, followed by the supervisors' names according to the conventions of the particular discipline. The candidate and all supervisors, including contracted external supervisors, should indicate their affiliation with Unisa when they publish from the work emanating from the candidate's research component, both before and after graduation of the candidate.

5.72 Unisa subscribes to an open policy regarding the creation and dissemination of knowledge. However, the University accepts that in some exceptional cases the research work undertaken by a candidate may involve proprietary or classified information. In such an instance, it is the responsibility of the candidate to inform the relevant academic department of the situation as soon after registration as possible and to seek formal permission to base

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a research component on such proprietary or classified information. Permission must be formally granted by the Executive Dean or delegated person. The candidate must also, when submitting the intention to submit the research component for examination, formally notify the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department of the confidential nature of the research component to allow the section to make appropriate arrangements.

5.73 Although the University will, for governance reasons, include the dissertation or thesis in its normal institutional repositories, an embargo will be placed on the content for an initial period of two years after archiving, renewable on request by the candidate. Renewal of embargo requests should be submitted to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person.

Academic integrity and honesty

5.74 Unisa is committed to research that is conducted, produced and disseminated in an ethical and responsible manner.

5.75 It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the entire content of a research component is his/her own original work. Originality-checking software is applied by Unisa as a teaching tool and is to be used for the duration of the study/research period. Although candidates are responsible for their own work, analysis of the originality report is the supervisor's responsibility. Students may make use of AI for support, but its use must be ethical, transparent and consistent with academic integrity and University policies. A declaration to this effect must be included in the submission documentation (see paragraph 7.17).

5.76 A candidate may under no circumstances commit plagiarism, and the supervisor or other authorised parties may use any means at their disposal (including originality detection systems) to detect instances of infringement of academic integrity.

5.77 A candidate may under no circumstances falsify or fabricate data. All records of studies, sources, experiments, data, etc. must be accessible to and verifiable on request by the Executive Dean or delegated person of the respective college.

5.78 A candidate may not submit a research component for examination or evaluation at Unisa if it was previously submitted for examination at another institution. A declaration to this effect must be included in the submission documentation (see paragraph 7.17).

Authorship

5.79 Authorship of a publication is warranted if a person makes a significant contribution for a work in, for example, at least one of the following ways" (i) conception and design of research, (ii) analysis and interpretation of data, or (iii) drafting the publication or revising it for substantive intellectual content.

5.80 The following is not sufficient on its own to justify attribution of authorship: (i) participating solely in the acquisition of funding, (ii) routing collection of data or (iii) general supervision or oversight of a research group or individual.

5.81 Special consideration must be given when co-authors are candidates. Any work from a candidate as part of a qualification is the final responsibility of the candidate, and the

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candidate must be the author of their thesis or for their manuscripts. (see paragraphs 2.5 and 5.66)

5.82 In the case of research-based projects where academics and students work collaboratively on a publication it is recommended that recognition of co-authorship by a supervisor be dependent upon the nature of the contribution and the convention of the particular discipline.

5.83 Normally the supervisor will be the author who corresponds with the publisher.

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CHAPTER 6
PHASE 4: RESEARCH PROPOSAL

6.1 From 2023 the curriculum for a full research master's and doctoral qualification comprises a dissertation or thesis only. The research proposal is incorporated into the research component. Candidates and supervisors must take note of the maximum duration allowed for the qualification (See paragraph 4.14 and paragraph 4.15). Research master's and doctoral candidates will be expected to work with the supervisor to have a research proposal approved during the first year of study of the dissertation or thesis. An additional period may be allowed with approval from the Executive Dean or delegated person.

6.2 Candidates should be guided in submitting drafts of the research proposal to their supervisors and be given the opportunity to rework drafts after feedback from the supervisor. Colleges, schools or departments should draw up guidelines for supervisors and students that stipulate the submission of draft work and the dates and manner of the final adjudication of the research proposals in each department. Ethics approval should be considered during the research proposal phase (see chapter 7). The candidates must defend/present their final proposal by 30 November, unless otherwise agreed with the supervisor and the department/college.

6.3 As part of the research proposal process candidates must include a Data Management Plan indicating how research data associated with the study will be collected, managed, stored, protected, retained and, where appropriate, shared.

6.4 In the case of a coursework master's qualification, the outcome of the compulsory research proposal module is the submission of an acceptable research proposal within one year (and in exceptional cases, two years) after registering for the module, as stipulated in the Admission Policy. The module is non-credit bearing. No mark is awarded for the research proposal.

6.5 Should a candidate fail to complete the research proposal within the prescribed period, he/she will be excluded from studies for a period of two years in the same college. The supervisor must submit the CGS 2 form to the Departmental Higher Degrees Committee for approval. The form must be submitted by the college to the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division.

6.6 When the supervisor is satisfied with the research proposal, the proposal will be evaluated in accordance with college guidelines. Colleges should have appropriate assessment criteria and procedures in place to evaluate the research proposal.

6.7 If the research proposal or research proposal module (in the cases of a coursework master's) is accepted, the CGS 2 form must be completed by the supervisor and submitted to the Chair of Department for a recommendation to the Executive Dean or delegated person for approval. The Executive Dean or delegated person must forward the form to the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division. This division captures the results (where applicable), ensures that activities have been recorded on the University approved platform and captures the relevant information on the student system. Coursework qualification students must wait for the official release of the result

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before attempting to register for the mini-dissertation. The candidate may request that the mini-dissertation be added to the current year's registration or alternatively register for the mini-dissertation for the next academic year. If the candidate selects to register for the next academic year the candidate will still have access to the University approved platform and the library until the registration is activated. The registration is activated upon payment of the minimum registration fees. Under no circumstances may the result be conveyed to the candidate by any other party. The CGS 2 form is confidential and may not be disclosed or provided to students.

6.8 If the research proposal is not accepted, or the candidate has not submitted a research proposal by the due date as prescribed by each college, the completed CGS 2 form is submitted by the supervisor or other authorised person to the Executive Dean or delegated person. A substantiated recommendation in respect of re-registration for the research proposal module or exclusion of the candidate must be included.

6.9 If the recommendation is that the candidate must be excluded, the student may not reregister for a qualification in the same college for a period of two years. Should he/she re-apply after this period, the application will be dealt with as a new one and will be subject to college admission procedures.

6.10 The supervisor must see that all activities have been recorded on the University approved platform: M&D activities. It must also be indicated whether the candidate may reregister for the following year. In the case of an external supervisor, it is the responsibility of the Chair of Department or delegated person to ensure that activities are captured.

6.11 For quality assurance purposes, records should be kept by the Executive Dean or delegated person. They should include at least the signed supervisor agreement, research proposal, assessment rubric and result, and confirmation of ethics approval if available at this stage. The relevant department's master's and doctoral administrators upload these documents on the University approved platform.

6.12 Students' results for the research proposal module (coursework) will be captured on their academic records as either "Failed" or "Comply with requirements" or "Did not comply but may reregister for the proposal module".

6.13 A candidate who is dissatisfied with the result of his/her research proposal may appeal the decision in writing to the Executive Dean of the College or delegated person offering that module within thirty days of receiving the written confirmation of their results. The Executive Dean or delegated person will refer the matter to the College Head of Research and Graduate Studies, who will inform the Executive Dean or delegated person of the outcome of the investigation within thirty days of the date of referral. The matter may be referred to an external academic. The Executive Dean or delegated person notifies the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division of the outcome within ten days of its receipt. This section then informs the candidate.



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CHAPTER 7
PHASE 5: MINI-DISSERTATION, DISSERTATION OR THESIS

Ethics approval for research

7.1 In terms of the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics, all research involving human participants, data, animals, or other living or genetically modified organisms must have approval from an appropriate research ethics committee before it may commence. The ethics approval of conceptual and secondary data research must be expedited by the relevant research ethics committee. If the research involves Unisa employees, students or data, permission to conduct the research must be obtained from the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee, in terms of the Policy on Conducting Research Involving Unisa employees, students, Alumni, Data and non-human harvesting of data.

7.2 The ethical implications of the proposed research must be considered when the student is developing the research proposal. Ethics approval should be obtained before the commencement of the data-gathering process. The candidate will be guided by the college Research Ethics Committee concerned in this regard in accordance with the procedures and processes set out by the relevant College Research Ethics Committee.

7.3 Applications for ethics approval must indicate how research data will be collected, stored, protected, retained and disposed of where applicable.

7.4 Where research involves personal, confidential or sensitive research data, candidates must ensure compliance with applicable legislation, institutional policies and ethical requirements relating to the management and protection of such research data

7.5 Ethics approval will not be granted retrospectively.

7.6 Candidates must include a valid ethics approval certificate when submitting a research component for examination purposes.

7.7 Candidates must ensure that the research title on the ethics approval certificate is the same as upon examination submission.

7.8 If a candidate has already obtained ethics approval and the title of the research changes, the candidate must promptly inform the Research Ethics Committee by completing an amendment form. This must be done before a candidate submits the Intention to Submit online.

7.9 Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances, regarding the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee by submitting a progress and amendment form.

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7.10 Candidates **must** complete research ethics and integrity training as prescribed by the college concerned and or the Directorate of Research Support.

Formal/technical requirements of the dissertation or thesis

7.11 The length of a dissertation and a thesis will vary according to the particular study and/or discipline. The number of pages does not determine the academic quality of the research. As a rough estimate, the mini-dissertation in a master's degree by coursework will be approximately 10,000 – 15,000 words; the dissertation in a master's degree by full research will be about 25,000 – 45,000 words and a doctoral thesis about 40,000 – 100,000 words (excluding the bibliography and other annexures).

7.12 Guidelines in respect of the formal requirements for dissertations and theses are posted on the websites of the departments, schools, or colleges. Links to these websites are provided on the Unisa website.

7.13 The University will not accept a research component that has previously been submitted for a degree at another university (see paragraph 7.17). However, a candidate may include material from any of his/her existing publications in the research component, provided that they are clearly indicated as such.

7.14 The research component must be in A4 format, using at least one and a half spacing (except footnotes and quotations, which may be in single spacing) and leaving a left margin of at least 2 cm. The recommended font size for text is size 12 and for footnotes size 10.

7.15 A summary of not more than 350 words for doctoral theses, or 150 words for master's dissertations, in the language in which the dissertation or thesis is written, must form part of the final examination copy of the research component, between the title page and the table of contents. If the research component is not in English, each copy must also contain a summary in English, which must be in the front of the final copy of the research component, between the title page and the table of contents.

The summaries must be in at least three official South African languages, one of which must be English, and also in the language in which the research component is written, if not an official South African language. The summaries must be included in the front of the post-examination electronic copy of the research component, between the title page and the table of contents. After the examination has been completed and the candidate's research component has been approved, the supervisor may contact Language Services (edit@unisa.ac.za) to provide translations of the English summary in the additional official South African languages if the candidate has not already provided such summaries. The candidate does not incur any costs in this regard, and their graduation should not be delayed if the translations are not obtained in good time.

7.16 In order to assist the library with the retrieval of information, candidates must give approximately ten key terms which describe the topic of the research component at the end of the summary of the research component. If the research component is not written in English, the key terms must be given in English at the end of the English summary.

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7.17 The final research component must be uploaded to a link that will be provided to the candidate by the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department **after** approval to submit and the panel of examiners have been appointed.

7.18 The title of the research component and the name of the candidate must appear on the front page of the copy for examination.

7.19 The electronic examination copy must be accompanied by the following: The following statement by the candidate:

"I declare that..... (title of thesis/dissertation) is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that any use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been fully disclosed.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis/dissertation to the appropriate originality detection system which is endorsed by Unisa and that it falls within the University's accepted originality requirements

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution."

I further declare that where Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have been used (generative or non-generative) in the preparation of this thesis/dissertation, their use has been limited to ethical permissible support, to enhance clarity and efficiency while maintaining academic integrity and author accountability and has been fully disclosed, and does not replace my own original research, my independent critical thinking and analysis, or authorship responsibilities.

I understand that failure to disclose AI use, plagiarism and/or lack of academic integrity may constitute academic misconduct under Unisa's policies.

(The research component will not be examined unless this statement has been included.)

- The supervisor's declaration that the research component is of an acceptable standard of content originality **and** the all-inclusive Turnitin report
- Certificate from a professional editor/proof-reader, if applicable. Colleges may select to make the certification from a professional editor/proof-reader mandatory for their respective qualifications.
- Ethics approval certificate.

The supervisor should make the formal requirements available to the candidate when the candidate commences with the research.

7.20 The research dataset(s) supporting the dissertation or thesis must be prepared for deposit

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in the Unisa Research Data Repository in accordance with the Research Data Management Policy. The research dataset(s) must be de-identified, organised and accompanied by sufficient descriptive information and supporting documentation to enable interpretation, preservation and reuse of the data.

Assessment process

7.21 The assessment process of dissertations or theses comprises three phases:

Phase 1: Notice of intention to submit for examination and the appointment of the panel of examiners

Phase 2: Submission of examination copy, distribution to examiners, examining and *viva voce (if applicable)*

Phase 3: Approval and release of the examination result and post-assessment submission of copies

All role players (Chair of Department, administrators involved in the assessment process, the non-examining chairperson, CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department, Head: Graduate Studies and Research) in the assessment process need to annually sign the confidentiality agreement is recorded in the academic department/college/unit.

Phase 1: Notice of intention to submit for examination and the appointment of the panel of examiners

Notice of intention to submit

7.22 When a candidate's research component is nearing completion, the candidate must, after consultation with the supervisor, submit an online intention to submit via the University approved platform. The online platform acknowledges receipt of the submission to the candidate. The intention to submit is only valid for the current academic year in which it is submitted.

7.23 Candidates who submit their thesis, dissertation or mini dissertation by 15 November may qualify for the autumn graduation ceremony of the following year and by 15 June for the spring graduation ceremony of the current year, provided that the results are finalised in time.

7.24 A candidate must be registered for the current academic year to have his/her research component examined. If the examination copy is uploaded after 15 November, but before the end of February of the following year, the candidate will only graduate at the following spring graduation ceremonies but need not reregister and pay registration fees for the latter year. Should the submission take place after the end of February, the candidate must formally reregister online and pay the study fees before the closure of registration. Where applicable, an administrative registration will be performed at no cost to the candidate.

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7.25 The supervisor considers the candidate's request and give consent or do not give consent, with reasons for the refusal, to submit for examination. If consent is given the department appoints the panel of examiners and the College Head of Research and Graduate Studies approves the recommendation by the department. The online University approved platform makes provision for the supervisor's consent to, or refusal of, submission for examination, the approval of the panel of examiners, the confirmation or amendment of the title, selecting of the DHeT Niche area and the relevant Catalytic Niche areas, if applicable.

7.26 The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department refers the submission to the supervisor within five (5) working days via the online University approved platform and requests formal permission for submission of the research component. After consulting with the co-supervisor (if applicable), the supervisor gives permission for the candidate to submit or not submit the research component. In order to expedite the process, the University approved platform will automatically send reminders to the supervisor to sign off on the submission. If consent is not given the application is automatically returned to the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department. The department informs the candidate on the outcome of the submission and the reason for the refusal.

7.27 The panel of examiners must be appointed within 3 months of receipt by the department. If the panel is not finalised within the 3-month period, the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department will inform the supervisor and department that the submission has lapsed, and the candidate is informed that they do not have permission to submit for examination. The candidate must reregister and pay the fees for the next academic year. To expedite the process, reminders will be sent to the Chair of Department to facilitate the timely sign off of the submission.

7.28 If the candidate does not submit the research component within three months after having received the link to submit, the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department informs the Executive Dean or delegated person accordingly. If the candidate submits the research component more than three months after having received the link to submit, the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department requests confirmation from the academic department of the continued availability of any previously appointed panel of examiners. If the candidate does not submit within six months of receiving the link to upload the candidate is informed by the CGS: M&D Research Examination Department to submit a new online intention to submit via the University approved platform when the research component is nearing completion. The candidate must ensure that he/she is registered for the current academic year.

7.29 The online notice of Intention to submit the research component for examination must reflect the finalised title as agreed between the candidate and the supervisor (see also paragraph. 5.5). The post-examination electronic copy must be submitted with the approved title as reflected in the Statement of Completion.

7.30 A supervisor's permission that a candidate may submit his/her research component for examination only implies that the supervisor considers the research component to be ready for examination, but does not guarantee a successful result

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7.31 A candidate wishing to submit his/her research component without the supervisor's permission must submit a fully motivated application to the Executive Dean, who refers it to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee with his/her recommendation. The committee considers the application and makes a recommendation to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation for final approval. The final outcome is conveyed to the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department who communicates the outcome to the candidate, the Executive Dean and the academic department.

Appointment of the panel of examiners

7.32 Once permission has been granted for a candidate to submit his/her research component for assessment, the Chair of Department or delegated person recommends the panel of examiners on the online University approved platform. Within each academic department, the Chair of Department or delegated person is tasked with setting up a database of examiners linked to the research focus areas, which needs to be maintained and updated annually. Potential examiners should be approved through the College Higher Degrees Committee in consultation with the Chair of Department in terms of subject and methodology expertise and postgraduate supervision experience. The Chair of Department or delegated person should consult the supervisor and other senior members of the academic department regarding the appointment of examiners from the database. The Chair of Department or delegated person should also consult the non-examining chairperson regarding his/her availability. The Chair of Department or delegated person must require an abbreviated curriculum vitae and/or other evidence, indicating his/her expertise to assess a research component on the particular topic from the examiner. The College Head of Research and Graduate Studies must ensure that such records are maintained. The names of the recommended examiners are forwarded to the Executive Dean or delegated person for approval via the online University approved platform. The candidate and the supervisor must recuse themselves from the examination process until it is totally completed. The information and identities of appointed examiners are confidential and may not be disclosed to the student during the examination process. However, where a *viva voce* examination is required, the identities of the examiners may become available to the student and other members of the *viva voce* panel solely for the purpose of conducting the *viva voce* examination.

7.33 Candidates or supervisors may not engage with the examiners, but supervisors must engage with the appointed non-examining chairperson (NEC) and candidates must engage with the supervisor. Candidates may also contact the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department for enquiries during the examination period via resexcoord@unisa.ac.za.

7.34 For quality assurance purposes the Chair of Department or the delegated person must keep a record of external examiners and the frequency of their appointments. As many external examiners should be considered for appointment as is possible in the discipline, care should be taken that the same external examiner is not appointed too regularly for the same supervisor.

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7.35 The Chair of Department or delegated person must consult examiners about their availability to examine the research component before their names are submitted for approval and must confirm their contact details and their email addresses. Examiners need to complete the Declaration of Interest form in terms of working relationship, personal relationship, legal relationship and/or professional relationship with either the supervisor/co-supervisor or candidate. It is the responsibility of the Chair of Department or delegated person to determine whether there is any conflict of interest. Guidelines will be provided for departments. Such declaration of interest needs to accompany the appointment of the panel of examiners.

Criteria for examiners

7.36 Examiners must

i. not have served as an examiner for a Unisa research degree more than three times in the previous year, unless motivated by the Chair of Department or delegated person

ii. not examine more than one student from each supervisor per year have not published with any of the supervisors in the preceding three years

iii. not have acted previously as the candidate's supervisor (e.g. master's degree supervision)

iv. be proficient in the language of the research component to be examined

v. have sufficient knowledge of the field of study to judge the suitability of the methods adopted and to appreciate the context of the work and the significance of the outcome (have acknowledged expertise in the candidate's field of study – curriculum vitae)

vi. have publications in peer-reviewed credible journals, or have creative outputs in recognised forums and have presented in conferences in the relevant field (have made a significant contribution to knowledge in the candidate's field)

vii. have successfully supervised a candidate to completion at the corresponding research degree level

viii. have previous experience of examining (externally or internally) at the corresponding research degree level sign a confidentiality agreement

ix. attend the *viva voce* (if it forms part of the doctoral candidate's curriculum)

x. declare any conflict of interest regarding examination of the candidate (e.g., emotional or family relationship) or the research topic (e.g., commercial interest in a related project where the topic applies)

7.37 Provision is, however, made for cases where the examiner does not meet the requirement(s) set out in par 7.33. Such nominations need to be substantiated and approved by the Executive Dean or delegated person.

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7.38 The candidate and supervisor(s) may not be informed of the names of the approved examiners.

7.39 The **panel of examiners** must consist of the following members:

a) A **non-examining chairperson** (NEC), usually an experienced permanent senior member of the department, and/or the Chair of Department in the college or school other than the department that hosts the qualification, or the Director of the school, Deputy Executive Dean or the Executive Dean of the college.

AND

b) **Two examiners** for a master's degree, at least one of whom is external to Unisa,

OR

c) **three examiners** for a doctoral degree with two being external (to Unisa) and from multiple institutions and at least one being an international scholar. However, provision is made for cases where the expertise of an internal specialist scholar or for not appointing an international scholar can be motivated. Such nominations need to be substantiated and approved by the Executive Dean or delegated person.

Examination panels for master's and doctoral candidates where the supervisor is a member of college management, **no examiner internal** to the college is to be appointed as a cautionary measure against potential conflicting interests.

7.40 The supervisor may not be a member of the examining panel and has no decision-making powers during the *viva voce (if applicable)*. The supervisor must submit a non-evaluative report to the non-examining chairperson after the research component has been submitted for examination. This report is not made available to the candidate, nor to the examiners. The co-supervisor must co-sign the non-evaluative report.

7.41 External examiners are appointed on the University approved platform by the relevant academic department in accordance with the approved abbreviated process by designated officers in the college where the candidate is registered. External examiners are remunerated by the relevant academic department upon submission of their examination reports and claim forms to the non-examining chairperson (see paragraph 7.46 – 7.70 for the minimum requirements for examiners' reports and paragraph. 7.71 for the submission of the claim forms).

7.42 The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department communicates with the candidate and the supervisor regarding permission to submit the dissertation, the link to upload the final electronic examination copy and the relevant deadlines. The link to upload is only provided to a candidate after the panel of examiners have been officially appointed.

7.43 The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department communicates with the examiners, provides guidelines and the due date for the submission of their report.

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Phase 2 Submission of examination copy, distribution to examiners, examining and *viva voce*

Submission of examination copy

7.44 The candidate uploads an electronic copy of the research component in both PDF and the MSWord format by means of a link emailed to the student by CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination once permission to submit has been obtained and the panel of examiners has been appointed. On receipt of the link, the candidate applies for access and once access is granted, the candidate uploads the research component in both PDF and the MSWord format and other related documents. i.e. signed declaration form, supervisor declaration that the research component is of an acceptable standard of content originality, the all-inclusive Turnitin report, certificate of a professional editor/proofreader, if applicable, and Ethics approval certificate.

7.45 Candidates who submit their thesis, dissertation or mini-dissertation by 15 November may qualify for the autumn graduation ceremony of the following year and by 15 June for the spring graduation ceremony of the current year, provided that the results are finalised in time (see paragraph. 7.20).

Distribution to the examiners

7.46 The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department distributes the electronic copy of the research component to examiners together with a letter explaining the University's policy regarding the examination. This Department also sends a letter to the non-examining chairperson, the supervisor(s) and the candidate.

7.47 Guidelines for examination are provided to all examiners by the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department

7.48 The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department also provides guidelines to the supervisor on the non-evaluative report to be submitted to the NEC, as well as guidelines to the NEC. Both guidelines are available on the CGS intranet under important documents and events)

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Examining

7.49 Examiners for a master's degree are allowed four weeks and examiners for a doctoral degree have six weeks to examine the thesis and to deliver a comprehensive report and their recommendation regarding the result to the NEC.

7.50 Examiners must compile their reports according to the CGS requirements, but their reports should include comments on the following, considering the requirements of the HEQSF set out in paragraph 5.58:

a) Scientific and academic standard of research

i. research procedures and techniques
ii. methodology
iii. demarcation and scope of research
iv. theoretical substantiation
v. exploration of the literature
vi. grasp of the field of research
vii. footnotes and bibliography or reference list

b) Scientific and academic quality of processing and presentation

i. processing
ii. presentation and analysis of data
iii. structure and logical development/arrangement of content (internal coherence and classification)
iv. critical findings

c) Recommendations

d) Language and editing

e) Technical presentation and layout

f) Examiners should also indicate whether they regard parts and/or the substance of the research component as publishable.

7.51 According to the HEQSF, a master's dissertation should demonstrate the candidate's ability to work independently and to reflect critically on theory and its application. The dissertation must demonstrate the candidate's ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, to design and critically appraise research, make sound judgements and communicate their conclusions clearly.

7.52 According to the HEQSF, a doctoral thesis must demonstrate high-level research capability and make a significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline or field. The work must be of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication.

7.53 Examiners of mini-dissertations should be provided with clear guidelines which may deviate from the above-mentioned list, depending on discipline-specific requirements.

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They should be made aware of the limited scope of the mini- dissertation and its relative weighting in relation to the other modules towards the particular degree.

7.54 In the case of a mini-dissertation/dissertation or a thesis (written thesis only), examiners should clearly indicate on the result form (V51) whether the research component is:

Accepted unamended (1.1)

Accepted only after minor improvements (1.2) (as specifically requested) have been made to the satisfaction of the supervisor in the post-examination electronic copy. For this recommendation to be made, it should be possible to attend to the required improvements within two months after receiving the anonymised examiners' reports. This option will typically be used where minor improvements are required (e.g., editorial improvements, corrections of citations and minor revisions of content). The Executive Dean of the college or his/her delegate may, in consultation with the supervisor, recommend a further two months for the finalisation of the required improvements. If the student cannot complete the required improvements within the two months or extended period, the student needs to reregister and pay for the academic year. The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department will inform the student accordingly.

Accepted only after major improvements (1.3) (as specifically requested) have been made to the satisfaction of the supervisor in the post-examination electronic copy. For this recommendation to be made, it should be possible to attend to the required improvements within four months after receiving the anonymised examiners' reports. This option will typically be used where major improvements are required (e.g., editorial improvements, corrections of citations and major revisions of content). An updated originality report must be submitted with the revised version. The Executive Dean of the college or his/her delegate may, in consultation with the supervisor, recommend a further two months for the finalisation of the required improvements. If the student cannot complete the required improvements within the four months or extended period, the student needs to reregister and pay for the academic year. The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department will inform the student accordingly.

Referred for revision and resubmission for examination (1.4). This option should be used if the recommended changes require extensive and substantial revision of content and/or structure. A student has one year to revise and resubmit the research component for examination. The candidate must reregister and pay the study fees for the academic year.

Rejected (1.5)

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Viva Voce

7.55 Refer to the Standard Operating Procedures for the doctoral oral examination (*viva voce*).

7.56 In the case of the examination of a doctoral thesis **where a** *viva voce* **forms part of the curriculum of the doctoral degree**, examiners should (in the first round of the examination: the examination of the thesis) clearly indicate the provisional result on the V51 form:

Thesis is defensible (unamended) (1.1)

Thesis will be defensible only after minor improvements (1.2) (as specifically requested) have been made to the satisfaction of the supervisor in the post-examination electronic copy. For this recommendation to be made, it should be possible to attend to the required improvements **within two months** after receiving the anonymised examiners' reports. This option will typically be used where minor improvements are required (e.g., editorial improvements, corrections of citations and minor revisions of content). The Executive Dean of the college or his/her delegate may, in consultation with the supervisor, recommend a further two months for the finalisation of the required improvements. If the student cannot complete the required improvements within the additional two-months period, the student needs to reregister and pay for the academic year. The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department will inform the student accordingly.

Thesis will be defensible only after major improvements (1.3) (as specifically requested) have been made to the satisfaction of the supervisor in the post-examination electronic copy For this recommendation to be made, it should be possible to attend to the required improvements **within four months** after receiving the anonymised examiners' reports. This option will typically be used where major improvements are required (e.g., editorial improvements, corrections of citations and major revisions of content). An updated originality report must be submitted with the revised version. The Executive Dean of the college or his/her delegate may, in consultation with the supervisor, recommend a further two months for the finalisation of the required improvements. If the student cannot complete the required improvements within the extended four months period, the student needs to reregister and pay for the academic year. The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department will inform the student accordingly.

Referred for revision and resubmission for examination (1.4). This option should be used if the recommended changes require extensive and substantial revision of content and/or structure. Where a doctoral thesis is examined after it was referred for revision and resubmission for examination, the examiner(s) should indicate the result on the result form (V51).

Rejected (1.5)

7.57 If all examiners find the thesis to be defensible (1.1, 1.2 or 1.3), the NEC provides the supervisor with the anonymised reports to provide it to the candidate who must engage with the recommended amendments. The supervisor must submit a declaration to the

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NEC confirming that the amendments have been made to his/her satisfaction.

7.58 Within one month from receipt of the supervisor's confirmation that the improvements have been attended to by the candidate, the NEC arranges the *viva voce.* Once the *viva voce* (2nd round of the examination) has been completed, examiners should clearly indicate their final result on the V51(DV2) form:

Pass – qualification can be awarded (1.1)

or

Fail (1.5) qualification cannot be awarded and must provide the reason(s) why the qualification should not be awarded to the candidate.

7.59 In the event of a non-unanimous *viva voce* outcome, the NEC must compile and submit a final report, together with all relevant documentation, including the examiners' reports, the *viva voce* recording(s), and any supporting evidence, to the CMC for consideration. The CMC must review the evidence and recommend a final outcome regarding the awarding of the qualification. Where the CMC is unable to make a recommendation based on the available evidence, or where additional independent assessment is required, it may appoint an arbitrator to review the matter and provide a recommendation before a final decision is taken.

7.60 The arbitrator will be sent an electronic copy of the thesis to examine. The arbitrator will have six weeks to examine and submit his/her provisional report. On receipt of the provisional report, the NEC provides the arbitrator with the anonymised reports of the original examiners and the anonymised *viva voce* transcript, but may request the recordings. The arbitrator uses all the available information to compile his/her final report. The arbitrator's decision is final.

The arbitrator's final report is forwarded to the Executive Dean or delegated person (which may be a College Examinations Committee established for this purpose) or the College Executive Committee for recommendation via the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person for approval.

7.61 The oral examination (viva voce) should include, with due regard to multilingualism and linguistic and contextual diversity, specific reference to graduate attributes.

7.62 Where a doctoral thesis (where the *viva voce* does form part of the examination process) is examined after it was referred for revision and resubmission for examination, par 7.46 to par 7.51 apply.

7.63 Examiners should complete the result form and submit it with their reports directly to the NEC of the panel of examiners. The recommendation on the completed form must correspond with that in the written report. Nevertheless, the completed form is regarded as the examiner's final recommendation. In the case where the curriculum for the doctoral

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qualification also comprises a *viva voce*, the examiners' recommendation on the V51(DV2) form after the *viva voce* took place will be regarded as the examiner's final recommendation.

Examining General

7.64 Where a doctoral thesis (where the *viva voce* does not form part of the curriculum) is examined after it was referred for revision and resubmission for examination, the examiner(s) should only indicate whether the result is a pass or fail.

7.65 Doctoral degrees are not awarded with distinction and consequently no percentage mark is awarded to doctoral theses. Percentage marks are awarded only to master's dissertations. The pass mark is 50% and above, and the distinction mark is 75%.

7.66 If an examiner finds that a research component is unacceptable in its current form, the examiner must provide the NEC with an indication of suggested improvements. The NEC must (irrespective of the result) make the anonymised examiners' reports available to the supervisor to provide to the student.

7.67 The supervisor must ensure that the candidate makes the necessary amendments and provide the NEC with a declaration confirming that all amendments have been attended to his/her satisfaction

7.68 Where a master's dissertation is examined after it was referred for revision and resubmission for examination, the examiners should also indicate a percentage.

7.69 Examiners of master's dissertations should clearly indicate in their reports whether a distinction should be awarded.

7.70 Examiners must arrive at their findings and compile their reports independently from one another.

7.71 When a research component is referred for revision, the examiners' anonymised reports will be made available to the supervisor who must provide it to the candidate.

7.72 If possible, the revised research component should be examined by the same panel. The revised copy is only distributed to the examiner(s) who gave a failed or "revise and resubmit" result. The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department will inform the external examiners (who passed the research component) on the process. No research component may be revised and resubmitted for examination more than once without special permission of the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person.

7.73 Such requests must be made by the College Graduate and Research Studies office to the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department who will submit the recommendation to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person for approval. Should a candidate decide not to continue with the studies/revision, he/she must inform the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department accordingly, within six months of the release of the result.

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7.74 When the outcome of the examination of a research component is an outright fail, the candidate is excluded from studying in the same college for a period of two years. The student may apply for admission for the same qualification but must provide a different focus area or working title.

7.75 Examiners may recommend changes to the registered title of a candidate's dissertation or thesis. In this instance the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department is requested to amend the title when the final results are submitted by the college and before the results are released to the candidate. If different titles are suggested by examiners, the NEC, in consultation with the supervisor, recommends the amended title. The candidate will be required to submit the electronic post-assessment copy under the amended title.

7.76 External examiners should complete the claim form and submit it to the NEC upon submission of their final examination report. The NEC must submit the claim forms received from the examiners to the department's administrative person as soon as they are received and not wait until the result is finalised or until he/she has all the claim forms. In the case where the curriculum comprises a thesis and a *viva voce*, the claim form is only submitted to the department's administration person after the *viva voce* has taken place and the final examiner's V51(DV2) form is received.

7.77 A student may appeal the decision of the result within 10 days of receipt of the communication from the University. A comprehensive justification should be directed to the Executive Dean of the college or delegated person, who must, in consultation with the NEC and the supervisor, provide a written response to the section CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department. This department will submit the outcome to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person for approval. The section will communicate

7.78 with the student on the outcome of the appeal. The Executive Dean of the College of Graduate Studies must be copied in the submission to the college and the final outcome of the appeal.

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The Non-examining Chairperson (NEC)

7.79 The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department provides clear and comprehensive guidelines to the NEC.

7.80 The NEC must not have a qualification lower than that being considered for examination, and the NEC must either have supervised at least one at the same level to completion or have examined at least one at the same level. Departments should create opportunities to mentor inexperienced NECs. Before appointment, the NEC must attend the prescribed NEC training workshop. Prior to finalising the appointment, the CoD must verify that the NEC has completed the required training. Upon accepting the appointment, the NEC must accept the responsibilities associated with the appointment and sign the confidentiality agreement and declaration of interest.

7.81 As soon as the NEC receives the letter of appointment, the NEC must ascertain whether the examiners have received the electronic examination copy.

7.82 The NEC does not examine the research component. His/her recommendations are based on a judicious consideration of the examiner's reports.

7.83 The NEC must follow up on progress by examiners and endeavour to ensure that results and reports are received by the due dates. The NEC is allowed to extend the due date in consultation with the Chair of Department if it does not influence the graduation period. The College Graduate and Research office must inform the supervisor and the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department of such an extension. The supervisor must inform the candidate of the potential delay in the release of the examination outcome.

7.84 The NEC receives all the examiners' reports and the supervisor's non-evaluative report (see paragraph 7.37) and after having critically considered them, compiles a comprehensive report in which he/she justifies the final recommendation based on all the reports received. Pending finalisation of the recommendation or result, the NEC should not discuss any aspect thereof with the supervisor unless the discussion is to clarify any aspect of the supervisor's report and/or research title with the candidate. Examiners' reports should not be made available to the candidate or supervisor before all reports have been received and the NEC recommendation or report has been finalised. The names and addresses of the original examiners must be deleted from the copies of the reports. If the NEC needs any assistance regarding the finalisation of his/her report, this should be discussed with the office of the Executive Dean: College of Graduate Studies and may be referred to the Executive Dean or delegated person. In the case of a doctoral student who must also do the *viva voce*, the NEC receives the reports based on the 1st round of examinations. If the examiners' reports indicate that the thesis is defensible, the anonymised examiners' reports should be made available to the candidate and the supervisor. On receipt of confirmation from the supervisor that amendments have been made to his/her satisfaction or if the reports indicated that the thesis is defensible unamended, the NEC must commence with the scheduling of the *viva voce* in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures for the doctoral oral examination (viva voce).

7.85 A unanimous result is preferable in the context of agreement between the examiners to:

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i) a pass (disagreement about an outright pass, minor/major corrections first to be made still constitutes agreement about a pass)

ii) a distinction mark in respect of a master's degree

iii) failure with the concession of revision within one year (in which case the research component must be resubmitted and examined again), and the candidate must reregister online for the next academic year and pay the fees. Candidates have one year only to revise and resubmit for examination. Permission from the Executive Dean or delegated person is required for an extension to the resubmission. Failure to resubmit within the stipulated time will result in academic exclusion. The NEC, in consultation with the Executive Dean or delegated person and the supervisor, should recommend that the result of the qualification be amended to an outright fail

iv) an outright fail

7.86 If the result is unanimous, the NEC submits his/her report and final recommendation, the examiners' reports and the supervisor's non-evaluative report to the Executive Dean or delegated person. The Executive Dean or delegated person submits the final result to the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department.

7.87 If there is no consensus among the examiners, the NEC must indicate this in his/her report and recommend a result for consideration by the Executive Dean or delegated person (which may be a College Examinations Committee established for this purpose) or the College Executive Committee. This result is recommended, via the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department, to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person for approval. When there are a sharp divergence of opinion and no other result is agreed upon, an arbitrator may be appointed by the Executive Dean or delegated person (which may be a College Examinations Committee established for this purpose) or the College Executive Committee. The arbitrator must be external to Unisa

7.88 The arbitrator will be sent an electronic copy of the thesis to examine. The arbitrator will have six weeks to examine and submit his/her provisional report. On receipt of the provisional report, the NEC provides the arbitrator with the anonymised reports of the original examiners. The arbitrator uses all the available information to compile his/her final report. The arbitrator's decision is final

The arbitrator's final report is forwarded to the Executive Dean or delegated person (which may be a College Examinations Committee established for this purpose) or the College Executive Committee for recommendation via the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person for approval.

The final decision must be communicated to the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department and the Executive Dean or delegated person.

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If the outcome of this process is a recommendation of resubmission after extensive revision, the original panel of examiners should be appointed to re-examine the Research component. In the case of a thesis, only the examiners who failed or indicated that the candidate must revise and resubmit for examination have to examine the revised copy. If any of the original examiners are not available to re-examine the dissertation or thesis, or there is a sound reason for not appointing the same panel of examiners, another examiner or other examiners may be appointed. The Chair of Department or delegated person should provide motivation in this regard

7.89 The result of a master's dissertation, be it pass, pass with distinction, or fail, is not necessarily decided based on the average of the marks awarded by the different examiners, but on a judicious appraisal of the examiners' reports. The NEC may substantiate and recommend a mark that deviates from the average to the Executive Dean or delegated person for his/her consideration.

7.90 The NEC or any other person involved in the examination process may not change or amend the examiners' reports or forms under any circumstances.

If the examiners recommend a pass but require that minor amendments or a pass with major revision be made to the satisfaction of the supervisor, the NEC must establish via the supervisor whether the improvements (if specifically, so required by any of the examiners) have been made, or obtain from the supervisor acceptable reasons why the required improvements need not be made. The NEC only submits his/her final report to the Executive Dean or delegated person after the supervisor's statement confirming that the required improvements have been made and that the post-assessment electronic copy of the dissertation or thesis containing such amendments has been received from the supervisor. The supervisor's statement and the post-assessment electronic copy of the dissertation or thesis are submitted with the report by the NEC.

7.91 If the approved result is one of revision and re-submission, the NEC must, on receipt of the official release of the results by the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department, submit the required reports, compile a detailed excerpt from all the examiners' reports concerning points (both technical and substantive) to be revised and forward it to the supervisor, who must forward it to the candidate, and inform the Office of the Executive Dean: College of Graduate Studies or delegated person that this has been done. The revision must be accomplished within a year (see paragraph 7.78). After being revised, the entire dissertation or thesis is examined by the same panel of examiners. The candidate must again submit an online Notice of Intention to submit the dissertation or thesis for examination. If any of the original examiners are not available to re-examine the dissertation or thesis, or there is a sound reason for not appointing the same panel of examiners, another examiner or other examiners may be appointed. The Chair of Department or delegated person should provide motivation in this regard. No dissertation or thesis may be revised and resubmitted for examination more than once without special permission from the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person.

7.92 Where a majority report in favour of a failure, pass or revision is clearly acceptable to the NEC, he/she may recommend the majority report as the final result via the Executive Dean delegated person (which may be a College Examinations Committee established

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for this purpose) or the College Executive Committee to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person.

7.93 In special circumstances and with appropriate substantiation, the NEC may also, via the Executive Dean delegated person (which may be a College Examinations Committee established for this purpose) or the College Executive Committee, recommend a minority report in favour of revision or a pass to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee based on the examiners' reports. The examiners' reports must accompany the NEC's recommendation.

A distinction for a master's dissertation should be awarded on a unanimous recommendation by the examiners. If one examiner awards a distinction and the other examiner is clearly not in favour of awarding a distinction, the NEC must submit a report to that effect, including his/her recommendation on whether the candidate should pass with distinction, to the Executive Dean or delegated person, (which may be a College Examinations Committee established for this purpose) or the College Executive Committee for a recommendation. This result is recommended, via the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department to the Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation or delegated person for approval. A distinction awarded for a mini-dissertation does not imply that the degree will be awarded with distinction.

7.94 The final result of matters referred to the Intercollege Postgraduate Studies Committee, or the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees Committee should be conveyed to the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department. Doctoral results will not be released unless the supervisor has confirmed the submission of the manuscripts, if applicable. This section, once all the requirements have been met, informs the candidate, the supervisor and the NEC of the final result. Under no circumstances may the result be conveyed to the candidate by any other party.

7.95 The examination copy remains the property of Unisa.

7.96 The same rules apply when a *viva voce* forms part of the examination process.

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Phase 3: Approval and release of the examination result and post-assessment submission of copies

Approval and release of the examination result

7.97 The Executive Dean or delegated person signs off on the examination report and forwards the result to the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department for processing.

7.98 The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department checks the reports received and ensures that the proof of submission of the manuscript(s) (in the case of doctoral degrees) is included as well as the approved result to ensure compliance with policy and procedure. If the candidate has passed the research component, the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department checks the candidate's curriculum to ensure that the qualification has been completed, in the case of a coursework degree, calculates the degree average and checks for a possible overall distinction, captures the result and average awarded (where applicable) on the student system and informs the candidate officially of the result. Where the curriculum comprises an internship module, it is the responsibility of the academic department to provide the DSAR: Master's and Doctoral Administration Division with the relevant result form prior to the release of the student's result for the mini-dissertation. The CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department also issues an official statement of compliance with the requirements for the awarding of the degree, and informs the supervisor, co-supervisor, Chair of Department, Executive Dean or delegated person and the library of the result. It further authorises, by means of a record card, the Graduation Section to proceed with graduation arrangements and the awarding of the degree.

If the final result is that the candidate should revise and resubmit, he/she is informed accordingly, in which case the candidate will be informed to reregister online for the next academic year. The registration will be activated when the prescribed fees are paid. In the case where an administrative registration was done (see paragraph 7.21) for the current academic year, the registration will remain as is and the student will register online and pay for the next academic year.

If the final result is that the dissertation or thesis is rejected (see paragraph 7.51), the candidate is informed accordingly, and he/she is regarded as having been excluded for academic reasons (see paragraph 7.69).

7.99 Once the result of a candidate's thesis has been approved, the NEC must: write to each of the external examiners thanking them for their participation in the examination and for their recommendations, informing them of the result and that their suggested improvements, if any, have been considered to the satisfaction of the University.

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Awarding of a qualification posthumously

7.100 Senate may, on recommendation by the Executive Dean of the college or delegated person, award a master's or doctoral degree posthumously if the student complied with all the requirements of the qualification concerned before passing away. In the case where corrections should be made, the supervisor can make these corrections as long as this does not significantly change the body of the research.

Post-assessment submission of electronic copy of dissertation or thesis

7.101 After approval of the dissertation or thesis and before conferment of the degree, the candidate must submit the final electronic copy of the dissertation (excluding mini-dissertation) or thesis, including the candidate's declaration (paragraph 7.17) and the summaries in additional South African languages (paragraph 7.13) in electronic PDF to his/her supervisor, who must submit it via email to lib-drc@unisa.ac.za for uploading on the Unisa Institutional Repository. The supervisor must inform the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department that the copy was submitted to the library. By such submission, the supervisor confirms that it is the final electronic copy of the dissertation or thesis (see also paragraph 8.1).

7.102 The degree will not be awarded unless the candidate complies with these requirements by a date set by the University.



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CHAPTER 8
PHASE 6: ARCHIVING

8.1 The supervisor must submit the final electronic version of the accepted dissertation or thesis including the candidate's declaration (paragraph 7.17) and the abstracts in additional official South African languages (paragraph 7.13) for purposes of archiving. The PDF copy of the dissertation or thesis is archived in the Unisa Institutional Repository (UnisaIR) as the final reviewed and approved dissertation or thesis. The dissertation or thesis may be accessed from the Unisa Institutional Repository or other research databases. The supervisor must, therefore, confirm that the version submitted is the final copy and that no amendments will, after submission, be allowed to the final copy. Access may be restricted on the recommendation of the NEC based on the examiners' reports.

8.2 The prepared research dataset(s) supporting the dissertation or thesis must be deposited in the Unisa Research Data Repository, subject to ethical, legal and contractual restrictions. The dissemination and sharing of research outputs and research data must be undertaken in accordance with the 2026 National Policy on Open Science and the Unisa Research Data Management Policy on the principle of being as open as possible and as closed as necessary. The Digital Object Identifier (DOI) assigned to the dataset(s) must be included in the UnisaIR metadata record of the dissertation or thesis.

8.3 Mini-dissertations and the research dataset(s) supporting the mini-dissertations are not archived in the Unisa Institutional Repository, nor the Unisa Research Data Repository.



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CHAPTER 9

PHASE 7: GRADUATION, REPORTING AND OTHER MATTERS

9.1 When the Graduation Department receives the examination card from the CGS: M&D Research Examination Coordination Department, they contact the candidate in respect of the conferment of the degree

9.2 The Department: Institutional Statistics and Analysis is responsible for Higher Education Management Information Systems (HEMIS) capturing, reporting and retrieving information from the relevant Unisa system(s) for this purpose

9.3 Subsidy generated by postgraduate supervision is allocated to the department(s) of the supervisor(s) and contributes to determining staff cost units. Co-supervision by members of different academic departments of Unisa will share the subsidy generated by the supervision. The department(s) to which the subsidy should be allocated is/are indicated when activities are recorded on the University approved platform. Where the supervisor's portfolio is not funded by the Academic Human Resource Allocation Model, the subsidy will accrue to the department in which the candidate is registered

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