



EXACTICA

Thesis and Dissertation Solutions

Course Duration: 3 days, (9:00 – 16:30)

Prerequisites: Supervisors of PhD/Master's degree candidates, PhD candidates.

Proposed Course Overview:

The course will provide attendees with the knowledge required to conceptualize, plan, research, structure, write and complete a research-based project in the form of a successful Master's or PhD dissertation. It will also provide practical methods of applying that knowledge. The skills acquired will be relevant to, and are intended to be applied to the supervising postgraduate of students.

The first part of the course will be devoted to ensuring that the fundamentals that apply to all research-based work are well understood by attendees. The second part of the course will cover how that knowledge can be translated into a good dissertation. Various skills and techniques that will make the dissertation a better work, or allow attendees to achieve their research/supervision objectives more effectively will be dealt with throughout the course, but particularly in the third part of the programme. The course is practical, intensive and outcome-based. Attendees will be required to participate in a number of exercises to ensure mastery of key skills.

The course textbook is *Constructing a Good Dissertation: A Practical Guide to Finishing a Master's, MBA or PhD on Schedule* by Erik Hofstee. The book and all other required materials will be supplied to attendees.

Outcomes: After completion of the course, participants will be able to:

- ✓ Effectively conceptualize (and judge the feasibility of) research projects
- ✓ Identify and delineate researchable problems, research objectives and research hypotheses/questions/propositions
- ✓ Project manage theses and dissertations from conceptualization to completion
- ✓ Structure theses and dissertations appropriately
- ✓ Select, evaluate and apply appropriate research methods
- ✓ Do effective preliminary and detailed primary and secondary research
- ✓ Create sound research proposals
- ✓ Structure and write the:
 - introduction
 - literature review
 - method section
 - body and
 - conclusion of theses/dissertations
- ✓ Deal with various formalities, including appendices, referencing, bibliographies, etc.
- ✓ Effectively manage student/supervisor communication
- ✓ Understand the principles of good academic writing and editing
- ✓ Evaluate the work of other scholars
- ✓ Identify and avoid common research and academic writing errors
- ✓ Evaluate work prior to submission to external examiners.

Workshop Materials per Attendee:

- *Constructing a Good Dissertation: A Practical Guide to Finishing a Masters, MBA or PhD on Schedule* by Erik Hofstee (EPE, 2006) 320 p.
- Workbook, set of index cards
- Subscription to the *Dissertation Bulletin* (bi-weekly email newsletter)

Individual attendee questions/concerns that arise after the workshop will be addressed free of charge by email or telephonically. Attendees are welcome to ask anything regarding the matters covered in the workshop or any other questions regarding theses/dissertations and academic research and writing in general. However, any matters pertaining to the subject matter/content of attendees own work will be referred to the candidate's supervisor as they are the subject experts, and the facilitator will not undermine their authority.

About the Facilitator: Dr Hofstee holds a Master's degree (doctorandus, *cum laude*) from the University of Groningen, in the Netherlands (RUG). He won a Fulbright Scholarship to Michigan State University (MSU) where he earned his second Master's degree and Ph.D. He was elected a member of the Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars and has taught a broad range of courses at MSU, the RUG, the University of Utrecht as well as various South African Universities.

He established his company Exactica in 2003 in response to the high student drop-out rates and prolonged time-to-completion by students enrolled for advanced degrees. Dr. Hofstee helps postgraduate degree candidates prepare themselves to complete their Honours, Masters or PhD dissertations well and on time. His book *Constructing a Good Dissertation* has assisted many thousands of postgraduate students in South Africa and internationally. Dr. Hofstee also trains supervisors of postgraduate students to supervise effectively.

Corporate and university clients include the University of Pretoria, UNISA, the University of Fort Hare, the University of Stellenbosch, the Elsenburg Research Centre, the CSIR, Telkom, Sasol and many others. Government clients include the Ministry of Finance, Department of Health and numerous municipalities. Dr Hofstee has recently designed and run a 5 year programme financed by the Royal Dutch embassy which has enabled some 370 doctoral candidates create research proposals to successfully gain entry into PhD programmes of their choice and facilitated more than 200 Master's candidates completing their degrees.

Postgraduate Dissertation Research/Writing, and Supervisory Skills Development

Course Duration: 3 days, (9:00 – 16:30)

Prerequisites: Supervisors of postgraduate students, PhD and Master's degree candidates.

Outcomes: After completion of the course, participants will be able to:

- Effectively conceptualize (and judge the feasibility of) research projects
- Identify and delineate researchable problems, research objectives and research hypotheses/questions/propositions
- Project manage theses and dissertations from conceptualization to completion
- Structure theses and dissertations appropriately
- Select, evaluate and apply appropriate research methods
- Do effective preliminary and detailed primary and secondary research
- Create sound research proposals
- Structure and write the:
 - introduction
 - literature review
 - method section
 - body and
 - conclusion of dissertations
- Deal with various formalities, including appendices, referencing, bibliographies, etc.
- Work effectively with supervisors
- Understand the principles of good academic writing and editing
- Evaluate the work of other scholars
- Identify and avoid common research and academic writing errors
- Evaluate their own work prior to submission to external examiners.

NOTE: The times in the proposed programme below are flexible; depending on attendees' needs they may be adapted.

COURSE PROGRAMME

DAY ONE

08:30 REGISTRATION

9:00 INTRODUCTION
Course Overview

Part 1: **RESEARCH AND STRUCTURE**

Project Planning, Student Research Timelines
Identifying Researchable Topics and Problems, Research Objectives

10:30–10:45 BREAK

The Thesis (Research Proposition), Hypothesis and Research Question(s)
Research Techniques: Preliminary
Research Techniques: Detailed

12:30–13:30 LUNCH

The Meta-Structure of Theses and Dissertations, Alternate Structures
Using Index Cards (to record research, to structure dissertations, and while writing) The
Proposal (purpose, structure, contents, defense)

15:00–15:15 BREAK

Supervisors: Supervisor and Postgraduate Student Responsibilities
Psychological Aspects of Completing Dissertations
Q and A

16:30 CLOSE

DAY TWO

9:00 Recapitulation, Q and A

Part 2: THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE

The Introduction (purpose, typical elements and structure) The
Literature Review (purpose and structure)

10:30–10:45 BREAK

The Literature Review continued... (identifying relevant works, critical review) The
Method (theory, purpose and structure)

12:30–13:30 LUNCH

The Method continued ... (selecting appropriate methods, common research designs) The
Body Chapters (purpose, structure, contents)

Analysis and Evidence

Using Non-Textual Materials (charts, tables and other graphics)

15:00 -15:15 BREAK

The Conclusion (purpose, contents, structure) Appendices

Formatting and Formalities (formatting, referencing and bibliography) 16:30

CLOSE

DAY THREE

09:00 Recapitulation, Q and A

Part 3: MISCELLANEOUS ESSENTIALS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

The Dissertation Defense (*if required*)

Principles of Good Academic Writing

10:30–10:45 BREAK

Editing of Academic Works

Avoiding Common Dissertation Errors The

Cum Laude Pass

12:30–13:30 LUNCH

Marking of Dissertations

Bringing It Back to Basics

15:00 BREAK

Evaluations Q

and A

Informal Individual Q and A with participants

16:30 CLOSE