NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
INSTITUTIONAL OFFICE

Manual for
Master's and Doctoral
Studies

May 2016

Preface

This Manual for Postgraduate Studies has been approved by the Senate of the NWU for use by postgraduate students of the NWU, henceforth referred to as NWU.

The manual is a binding policy document, and provides guidelines regarding the different policies and processes involved in Masters and Doctoral studies at the NWU.

We strongly advise all prospective and registered students to acquaint themselves with the different rules, processes and policies referred to in this document.

Rules and policies to be studied to contextualize this document

- The general academic Rules of the NWU ("The A Rules")

- Different rules and regulations of NWU faculties (Faculty Rules)

- Rules for the Classification of Theses and Dissertations

- Rules for the Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC) of the NWU

- NWU Financial Rules

- Guidelines for Applicants – Campus-relevant

- Guidelines for Foreign Applicants

- Institutional Language Policy of the NWU

- Library rules for writing Master's and PhD dissertations

- Institutional M and D template for the manuscript of the thesis/dissertation

- Institutional Plagiarism Policy

Table of Contents

1 DEFINITIONS

In this manual, *Masters and Doctoral studies* refers only to study for a Master's and doctorate degree. The Master's degree usually follows on the honours degree (as well as a four year professional bachelor's degree), while the doctorate follows on the Master's degree.

The following terms are used often in this manual:

"**assistant promoter**" means any person who is normally but not necessarily on the staff of the University and who, in consultation with the promoter, renders assistance and guidance to a student studying for a doctorate in respect of any particular part or parts of the study undertaken by the student;

"**assistant supervisor**" means any person who is normally but not necessarily on the staff of the University and who, in consultation with the supervisor, affords assistance and guidance to a student studying for a masters' degree in respect of any particular part or parts of the study undertaken by the student;

"**co-promoter**" means a person who is normally but not necessarily on the staff of the University and who, in consultation with the promoter, affords assistance and guidance to a student for a doctorate with regard to the study undertaken by such student;

"**co-supervisor**" means a person who is normally but not necessarily on the staff of the University and who, in consultation with the supervisor, affords assistance and guidance to a student for the masters' degree with regard to the study undertaken by such student;

"**dissertation**" means a manuscript prepared for examination purposes, or a single published research article or set of published research articles or unpublished manuscript(s) in article format, in accordance with the prescripts of documentation, argumentation, language and style in which the student must provide proof that he/she is conversant with the method of research, and which is presented in partial or full compliance with the requirements for the prescribed outcomes for the specific masters' degree from the University;

"**mini-dissertation**" means a manuscript prepared for examination purposes, or a written report or a single published research article or set of published research articles or unpublished manuscripts in article format, more limited in scope than a dissertation, and in accordance with the prescripts of documentation, argumentation, language and style and which, in addition to the writing of a number of prescribed examination papers, will be evaluated with a view to determining whether the student is conversant with the method of research, and is presented in partial compliance with the requirements for obtaining a masters' degree or honours bachelor degree or another professional degree from the University in terms of the prescribed rules;

"**promoter**" means a person who is normally on the staff of the University (but who can also be contracted in) and who has been appointed to give guidance to a student registered for a doctorate and to supervise the work which the latter is required to do in this regard;

"**supervisor**" means a person who is normally on the staff of the University (but who can be contracted in) who has been appointed to give guidance to a student who has registered for a masters' degree, and to supervise the work which the latter is required to do with regard to a dissertation or mini-dissertation;

"**thesis**" means a manuscript prepared for examination purposes, or a set of research articles or unpublished manuscripts in article format, and/or an internationally examined patent, which represents a distinct contribution to the knowledge of, and insight into, a subject and provides proof of originality, either by the presentation of new facts or by the exercise of an independent and critical faculty, in accordance with the prescripts of language, style, documentation and argumentation, and which is presented by the student in partial or full compliance with the requirements for the particular doctorate from the University in terms of the prescribed rules.

2 PROCEDURES WITH RESPECT TO MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL STUDIES

2.1 Introduction

 Masters and Doctoral studies involves both training and research. In addition to training in research, which is particularly emphasised, lectured master's degrees also include advanced course work on a postgraduate level. This manual is aimed at discussing the research portion of the study and not the advanced course work involved in the professional, lectured and structured master's degrees.

At the NWU research is conducted mainly in a number of approved **research entities.** Each of the research entities functions under the guidance of a research director. The research director, or person responsible for research, provides guidance to the staff and postgraduate students who participate in the research work of the research entity, and he/she is also responsible for managing the research entity. In this regard research directors act in close consultation with school directors and deans. The research entities is tasked to promote **quality** and become competitive at an international level. The research and postgraduate training are regularly evaluated externally and internally.

Some research are also done outside of the research entities.

Details on the research entities and different directors are available on the website of the University and at the Department of Research Support.

2.2 The life-cycle process of master's and doctoral studies

Master's and doctoral students need to complete the following five distinct processes before the appropriate degree may be conferred:

- Application

- Registration (annual process)

- Registration of title and appointment of supervisors/promoters and examiners

- Study guidance

- Examination and results

These processes are described in detail below. Note that they do not necessarily follow linearly on one another. For instance, the applications process must necessarily be completed before the student may register. The registration process has to be repeated annually, and hence the study guidance process and the registration process may run concurrently. The registration of a title may happen at any time during the study guidance process, **as stipulated by the rules of the relevant faculty**. Students are reminded that they must acquaint themselves with Faculty or Campus-specific

rules related to title registration and the period that must follow before submission of the work for examination. Examiners may be appointed any time after the title is registered and at least six months prior to submission for examination.

2.3   The application process

Please note that the nature of this process will depend on the Campus/Faculty/School or Entity level involved.

A student who wishes to continue studying at master's or doctorate level at the NWU, will be subject to an application process. This is done to establish:

1. Whether the candidate satisfies the entrance/minimum requirements for the programme, and

2. Whether the NWU has the capacity to accept the student.

3. In some faculties an applicant must identify a supervisor/promoter as part of the application process, and the application can only be processed once this has been done.

In some cases point 1 above can be easily answered. For instance, the student may have completed all previous studies at the NWU, in which case his/her student record will be available for scrutiny. In other cases it may be more complex than simply assessing a student's previous learning. The relevant programme may have some specialised entrance requirements, and may even require all applicants to be subjected to some assessment procedure.

The second question can only be answered by the director of the relevant research entity (and/or relevant School). It may for instance involve determining whether there is a suitable supervisor or promoter for the chosen subject field, and then assessing whether the workload of that person is such that he/she will be able to accept another student.

Students from abroad (i.e. who are NOT South African citizens) should visit the webpage for international students at: http://www.nwu.ac.za/nwu/students/int.html.

A prospective student wishing to apply for entrance into any specific programme, must first ensure that he/she has all the relevant information for the specific programme. Such information will be available on the NWU internet page referring to the Entity or School presenting the specific programme. The relevant entity and/or school director may also be consulted. The applicant must also consult the *Guidelines for Applicants* available from the postgraduate support office on the relevant Campus.

The applicant may apply using the prescribed application form available from the relevant Admissions Office from the NWU website (www.nwu.ac.za). All application forms and supporting documents may be submitted to the relevant Admissions Office, or via the NWU website. This process must be completed before the published closing date for applications. Applicants must ensure that all items of supporting documentation as requested in the specific guides, are submitted.

Once an application, including supporting documentation, has been received, a student number will be issued, a profile created, and the relevant Faculty notified. Applications are evaluated by the relevant Faculty structures, with a report to the Admissions Office to notify the applicant of the outcome of the application. (*Approved*, *Conditionally Approved*, *Unsuccessful* or *Unsuccessful due to the capacity of the faculty*). The successful candidates will receive registration documents.

Applicants will appreciate that this process may take some time, especially if an applicant is required to submit a research proposal before he/she will be finally admitted to a programme. The NWU will keep to the dates as advertised, i.e. the closing date for admissions applications, as well as the closing dates for formal notices to the applicant.

At any time during this application process the student may consult the academic staff member under whose supervision he/she would like to conduct the research. If the student does not know under whose guidance he/she would like to work, he/she may consult the research director or school director concerned for a recommendation. The research entity or school director could request a potential promoter or supervisor to assist with the conceptualisation of the research project until a formal allocation is made.

The possible supervisor or promoter will then consult the research director about a possible research topic that suits the focus of the research entity, and also about the availability of funds. This is followed by consultations with the appropriate director (and where applicable subject chairperson) to determine whether the supervisor's or promoter's workload permits him/her to accept further students.

2.4   Registration

2.4.1 Reporting for study and first registration

Please note that the nature of this process will depend on the Campus/Faculty/School or Entity conventions.

If the application for admission was successful, the student will receive the registration documentation. To complete the registration process the student must return the signed registration documents together with proof of payment to the administration office. That means in particular that the student must already have secured the necessary funds to continue with the process. Information on funding schemes and bursaries, as well as assistance to apply for such funding, may be requested from the Bursaries Office on the relevant Campus. Proof of registration will be sent to the student by the relevant administrative assistant. Failure by the student/applicant to return the signed registration form to the assistant responsible for registrations will mean that the student will not be registered on the NWU system for that specific year, even if the application form had been received and approved and a payment had been made.

Payment of registration fees, study fees, etc. does not mean the registration has automatically been completed. Students must ensure that they follow the full registration procedures as stipulated.

If an unregistered Masters or Doctoral prospective student wishes to use the library the student must sign up with the Library as a prospective student, paying the prescribed fees.

2.4.2 Annual re-registration

See **the different rules and policies** with regard to the annual re-registration as well as the cut-off dates. The re-registration process may also involve the approval of special academic requests submitted by the student.

If a student wishes to use the University's facilities (e.g. the library) he/she must first register or re-register.

A student must re-register for each consecutive year of study. Students who fail to re-register, will not qualify for study guidance. A student who failed to re-register for one complete academic year, should apply to the relevant dean for re-admission to the programme.

2.4.3 Minimum and maximum terms

There are prescriptions for the minimum as well as the maximum term of study.

- Fulltime Masters: minimum 1 year, maximum 2 years.

- Part time Masters: minimum 1 year, maximum 3 years.

- Fulltime PhD: minimum 2 years, maximum 4 years

- Part time PhD: minimum 2 years, maximum 5 years

These terms also guide the period for which study permits to foreign students are issued. See the relevant faculty rules for further details.

2.5 The title registration and the appointment of functionaries

Once the student is registered, the study guidance process can start. This also involves a number of administrative aspects as described below. In some faculties the registration process may only be finalised once some of the other processes below are finalised.

Classification and declassification of mini-dissertations/dissertations/theses

As prescribed by the *A Rules*, it is sometimes necessary to classify the study as confidential. Consult the *Rules for the Classification of Theses and Dissertations* containing information on this process. The application form for classification is available from Higher Degrees Administration. The application must be motivated by the Supervisor/Promoter, and recommended by both the applicable Director and Dean. In cases where the Intellectual Property right of the NWU must be protected, the Director: Technology Transfer and Innovation Management must also make a recommendation.

The generation and dissemination of scientific knowledge through research at postgraduate level form an integral part of the University's core business. The University is a public institution and the knowledge generated by the University should firstly be available for the benefit of the general public. The classification of theses and dissertations through which some or other restriction is imposed on the disclosure or dissemination of such knowledge should thus be regarded as an exception. This should be permitted only in exceptional cases and after due consideration at a suitable level and in accordance with accountable norms and fixed procedures. All applications for classification and associated processes should therefore be tested against this principle point of departure.

2.5.1 The title of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis

Once the student is registered and a supervisor/promoter has not been nominated for the student yet, the entity director/research director/school director/responsible director must nominate a supervisor or promoter and inform the executive of the Faculty Board. The student, under the guidance of the supervisor or promoter, will then develop a research proposal and title for the study, which will be recommended by the research entity to faculty structures for final approval. Various

faculties have various rules on how soon after registration this process needs to be finalised. Specific faculty rules will therefore apply.

2.5.2 Formulating the title

In all cases a title (which may be amended later if required after results have been obtained) must be formulated for a study. Supervisors/promoters must guide the student so that the proposed title covers the topic meaningfully and optimally refers to the main aspects of the study. (Example: The **relationship** between A and B; The **implications** of A for B; The **effect** of A on B; The **impact** of A on B.) The title must have the necessary impact and should preferably not be longer than 12 words. Supervisors/promoters should guard against efforts to include all aspects of the study in the title, as such titles are unwieldy. The title should be brief and to the point for two reasons: (a) the various aspects of the study are set out in the course of the study and need not all be reflected in the title; (b) the title has to appear on the title page and spine of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis.

The title must conform to the standards of language use as prescribed in the NWU language policy. In other words, the title must be language-edited.

2.5.3 Approving the research proposal and registering the title

See *A Rules* and *Campus/Faculty/School/Entity Rules* for approval of the research proposal and the title of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis.

A considerable amount of prior study is required before one will be ready to apply for approval of the title and research proposal. According to the A-rule (4.3.1.1 and 5.3.1.1) the approval process must be completed within six months after registration. However, also consult your Faculty Rules on this matter. In some cases the student may only finalise the registration process after approval of the research proposal. Students must ensure that they are acquainted with the procedure of the faculty on this point; the supervisors/promoters will be able to advise the student on this matter.

 The process for the ethical clearance of the proposed study runs concurrently with the research proposal process, cf section 7 below.

2.5.4 Study guidance

2.5.4.1 General

Guidance to the student implies that the student will receive help, advice, support and assistance to submit a (mini-)dissertation/thesis that must eventually be the end product of his or her own labour and initiative. Guidance to the student further implies a relationship of trust in which all parties should have the confidence to take a stand openly and freely at a professional as well as personal level, and communicate in a responsible and mature manner. However, in this relationship the supervisor/promoter remains the senior partner, which means that decisions and guidance must be accountable at all times. *This necessarily means that the supervisor/promoter, like the student, must remain up to date on the topic concerned.* It is possible and even desirable that the supervisor must also participate in any possible empirical investigation.

If the supervisor/promoter finds that the study is taking a direction that will deviate from the original scheme, the supervisor/promoter may in the case of smaller changes allow the student to deviate. In the case of a more drastic deviation in the course of the study, the supervisor/promoter and the student must inform the relevant research director, and an assistant supervisor/promoter may even

be appointed at that stage if required. In such a case the student may also apply for the title to be changed. *In the case of a* drastic *change in the contents of a* (mini-)dissertation/*thesis an amended research proposal must be submitted.*

2.5.4.2 Course of the study, volume of work, time schedule and appointments

As soon as possible after the appointment of a supervisor/promoter the parties must decide about the following:

Course of the study

It is essential for an agreement to be reached about where and with what the student must start. The study may be of such a nature that the empirical or experimental part may commence immediately. In other cases the theoretical basis of the personal investigation can be started. It is therefore essential for the student to receive very clear guidance about the course of the study, keeping in mind the maximum permissible study period.

Volume of work submitted

A further issue that is important here, is agreement on the volume of work to be submitted to the supervisor/promoter at a time. It is preferable that the work be submitted chapter by chapter (or even chapter section by chapter section). This has the benefit that any amendments and changes in direction are effected early on, without wasting time on superfluous work.

The supervisor/promoter, in consultation with the student, must decide on the format in which the student's work must be submitted for comment and guidance. Normally this will be in electronic format, and the comments will be done in track mode. eFundi is an effective platform to deposit the manuscript from both sides.

Time schedule

It is in the interest of both the supervisor/promoter and the student that a time schedule for the study and/or the (mini-)dissertation/thesis be set. If both parties act in a responsible manner, provision may be made, within limits, for deviations from this schedule. The student must undertake to provide the supervisor/promoter with a certain portion of the work within an agreed upon period, and the supervisor/promoter must undertake to work through the submission within a certain time and provide the student with the appropriate feedback. The feedback may occur in the form of written comments and suggestions, and/or a personal interview. If the student cannot meet the deadline, he or she must inform the supervisor/promoter in time and an alternative date may be selected immediately. *If the student is of the opinion that the study is being delayed by the supervisor/promoter not adhering to the agreed upon time schedule, and the student cannot obtain any reaction from the supervisor/promoter through a diplomatic approach, the student must bring the matter to the attention of the research director (or dean if the research director is the supervisor/promoter) concerned.*

Appointments

Appointments are made in writing (preferably using the diary functionality of GroupWise) or verbally and the supervisor/promoter must ensure that enough time is allowed for an in-depth discussion of all relevant aspects of the student's work. Any text that the student would like to discuss with the supervisor/promoter must as a rule be submitted to the supervisor/promoter at least two weeks before the appointment. Obviously, appointments must be strictly kept. If either of the parties

cannot keep an appointment, the other party must be informed timeously. Contact between student and supervisor/promoter should occur regularly, preferably at least six times a year.

Reporting on progress

The supervisor/promoter must report on progress on a six-monthly basis as required by faculty specifications. At the same time the Faculty will ask the student to evaluate the study guidance received.

Upgrading of a dissertation to a thesis

A Masters dissertation may in exceptional cases be upgraded to a Doctoral thesis. In such a case the *A Rules* (4.4.9) as well as applicable faculty specifications must be followed.

2.5.4.3 The protocol for study guidance to the student

- The supervisor/promoter should make sure that the student is thoroughly aware of the applicable rules, as well as the nature and format of and requirements for mini-dissertations/dissertations and theses. The supervisor/promoter must bring the "Manual for Masters and Doctoral studies" to the attention of the student. In accordance with the prescriptions in this manual, it must be assumed that what the student eventually submits is his/her own work, and the student should therefore be given the opportunity to optimally utilize his/her own style, points of view and personality in the document.

- The identification of sources is the duty of the student and not of the supervisor/promoter.

- The supervisor/promoter must check the sources and the correct use of the sources; tools such as Turn-it-In may be used.

- The supervisor/promoter should draw the student's attention to poorly substantiated or formulated statements and arguments, but the student must make the improvements himself/herself.

- The supervisor/promoter does not have the task of correcting language errors, but to guide the student towards using the correct scientific language and a scientifically acceptable technical finish. The supervisor/promoter should also ensure that the technical language is up to standard.

- The supervisor/promoter does not have the task to rewrite portions of the work, but to indicate shortcomings to the student and provide guidance for correcting these.

- The supervisor/promoter should mainly provide only general criticism and comments on the technical finish and methods and allow the student to correct those himself/herself.

- Before the (mini-)dissertation/thesis is submitted for examination, the supervisor/promoter must carefully work through it. The supervisor/promoter will work through the document several times and provide the student with comments and suggestions. Only when the supervisor/promoter is satisfied with the structure and standard of the work, will permission be given for the (mini-)dissertation/thesis to be finalized as a manuscript for submission. A text similarities report (e.g. Turn-it-In) is a requirement to ensure that all parallel texts are checked for plagiarism.

- The supervisor/promoter must ensure that the (mini-)dissertation/thesis is properly language-edited, and that an official document is available to substantiate any claims in this regard.

- The supervisor/promoter and student should set a date on which the final revised or corrected version of the document should be supplied to the supervisor/promoter so that the final check may be easily completed by the submission date. The official timetable is the decisive factor.

- The supervisor/promoter must undertake to adhere to the code of conduct for promoters and supervisors provided in section 2 of this manual.

- The Masters or Doctoral students must undertake to adhere to the code of conduct for Masters and Doctoral students contained in section 5 of this manual.

2.5.4.4 Functions of the co-supervisor/promoter or assistant supervisor/promoter

The supervisor/promoter may request that a co-supervisor/promoter or an assistant supervisor/promoter be appointed for the study. A co-supervisor/promoter is usually involved in the full course of the study in consultation with the supervisor/promoter. If discussions are held about the study, the co-supervisor/promoter must be involved at all times.

The assistant supervisor/promoter is often involved in providing guidance with regard to aspects or sections of a specific study. When a study has a clearly interdisciplinary character, an assistant supervisor/promoter from another discipline is appointed for practical and technical reasons. A postgraduate student may request the supervisor/promoter to appoint a co-supervisor/promoter or an assistant supervisor/promoter for the study.

The supervisor/promoter remains primarily responsible for the study.

2.5.4.5 Termination or extension of study term

See the *A Rules* about the possible termination and the possible extension of the study term.

Please note that the extension of studies may have financial implications, as stipulated in the *A Rules*, and may amiably be granted in exceptional cases. Students are advised to discuss these implications with the research director or school director before taking a final decision on the matter.

3 EXAMINATION

3.1 Submission and examination procedure

3.1.1 Submission

See the *A Rules* and *Campus/Faculty/Entity Rules* with regard to the submission of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis.

Students are often so busy completing the (mini-)dissertation/thesis that they lose sight of the submission procedure, and then experience serious problems at the last minute. If the steps below are followed timeously, there should be no problems.

3.1.1.1 Submission date

See the *A Rules* and *Campus/Faculty/Entity Rules* and specific dates. It is in the student's best interest to adhere to submission dates, as late submission may mean that the examination process may have to be delayed and that the conferral of the degree may have to be postponed to the next graduation ceremony. This may imply that the student **will have to register once more, for the next year**.

3.1.1.2 Notice of submission

A student who is not registered may not give notice to submit. Three months (or as otherwise stipulated in the *Campus/Faculty Rules*) before submission, the student must give notice in the prescribed format, of the intention to submit the (mini-)dissertation/thesis for examination so that Higher Degrees Administration may ensure that all the required administrative matters have been dealt with.

- Such notice must, after approval by the supervisor/promoter, be submitted to Higher Degrees Administration and marked for the attention of the specific faculty advisor at Higher Degrees Administration

- Deviation from the above may lead to the conferral of the degree being postponed, so that the student involved will have to register once more for an additional year.

3.1.1.3 Authorisation for submission

See *A Rules* (4.4.2 and 5.4.2) for details

With the submission of any dissertation or mini-dissertation which is not submitted in the form of a series of manuscripts in article format, faculty rules may also require proof that the candidate submitted a research article to an accredited journal. In the case of a thesis, the student must submit proof, in the form of a letter from the editor, that a research article was submitted to an accredited journal; of course, if the article has already been accepted or published, this may be provided as proof.

The supervisor/promoter must sign a declaration, giving consent that the student may submit the (mini-)dissertation/thesis. That does not mean that the student's success is guaranteed. Conflict may arise between student and supervisor/promoter if this consent is refused. In that case the relevant director or dean may sign the consent form, after consultation with all parties involved (cf A Rules 4.4.2.5 and 5.4.2.4).

3.1.1.4 Format and number of copies for examination

The current rule stipulates that a student may submit the thesis or (mini-)dissertation in any one of the following formats:

- Electronically

- Electronically, plus a printed copy (or copies) when examiners request a paper copy.

Printed copies with a spiral or ring binding are permissible at this stage. One sided printing is required. Printing in full colour is not required, unless colour coding is essential. No printed inspection copy for the library is at this stage needed, since the electronic version can be made available. Any such comments received will be taken into account in the examination process. In the near future the submission will be done on line via the internet; full information will be made available at a later stage.

After the examination results have been made known, **hardcover copies** or **CDs (**where applicable) or on line submission of the final manuscript must be submitted to Higher Degrees Administration. The required number of copies should be confirmed with Higher Degrees Administration beforehand.

If a student fails to submit these hardcover copies or electronic copy (or CD copies where applicable), the degree certificate will be held back until this requirement has been met.

3.1.2 Examination procedure

The names of the examiners of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis may not be revealed to the student before completion of the examination process. The names of the examiners will not be made known to the candidate without the permission of the examiners concerned. After the examination copies of the mini-dissertation/dissertation/ thesis have been submitted, the supervisor/promoter or co-supervisor/promoter or assistant supervisor/promoter may not contact or negotiate with the examiners.

3.1.2.1 Guidelines for the examination of the (mini-) dissertation/thesis

The examiners must assess the (mini-)dissertation/thesis by, among other things, evaluating the following aspects:

The topic:

- Is the topic demarcated meaningfully, appropriate and is it worthy of research?

- Is the research design scientifically based?

Problem statement, aims and, where applicable, hypotheses or central theoretical statement:

- Are they formulated clearly and unambiguously, do they link up and have a bearing on one another?

- Is the problem statement scientifically relevant and are the aims clear?

The research method:

- Does the study show that the student adequately control the theoretical basis?

- Is the research method suitable, selected in a critical and accountable manner, and described clearly?

- Is there evidence that the student properly controls the methods and/or techniques?

- Is the student's own contribution clear in the case of a multidisciplinary study or project, and also the scientific processing, content and contribution that the work makes?

- Is the work systematic, logically developed, and well-structured and balanced?

- Do the chapters form meaningful units?

- Does the content reveal in-depth knowledge of the research field?

- Is there evidence that the student can interpret and argue in a scholarly manner, discuss different views and theories critically, and where necessary motivate his/her own views?

- Is the final summary meaningful and does it reflect the character of the study clearly?

- Is the relative meaning of the study presented briefly?

- Do the conclusions fit in with the problem statement and aims of the study?

- Does the student make meaningful recommendations that may be followed up by other studies?

- Does the student provide meaningful and convincing solutions to problems?

- Are the aims of the study achieved satisfactorily?

- Is adequate attention given to the internal as well as external validity of the findings and interpretation?

- Does the work display originality (in the case of doctoral study) with regard to the retrieval and/or development of knowledge?

- Can the work or parts of it be published?

- Is the work subject-philosophically and scientifically theoretically accountable (where applicable)?

- In the case of theses, is proof given of a definite contribution to the knowledge of and insight into the subject, and does the work provide proof of independent thinking and that the student has the ability to work and conduct research independently?

Study of sources:

- Does the student provide proof of a thorough knowledge of the related literature and of an argumentative, critical and integrated handling of it, or is the literature merely used as far as it supports the student's own views? Has the correct available and related literature been consulted and used in an acceptable manner?

- In the case of qualitative studies, has an adequate literature review been carried out?

Language and style, technical composition, care and finish:

- Is the student's style of writing and expression up to standard, can the text be read easily (with respect to font size, typing format and spacing) and was it language-edited?

- Does the (mini-)dissertation/thesis, as far as technical care is concerned, comply with the requirements (title page, table of contents, footnotes, reference technique, graphs, figures and tables, list of sources)?

- Does the document contain a summary in the language in which it was written, as well as annexures of relevant research documents?

- Are the printing and binding of acceptable quality.

Examiners are referred to the rules of the faculty on possible weights and/or subminimums for certain subsections.

Each examiner must make a clear recommendation on the basis of the evaluation (cf A Rules 4.4.4.6 and 5.4.4.5).

In the case of a (mini-)dissertation a definite **mark** is awarded. The student must obtain at least 50% in the (mini-)dissertation to pass. If examination papers are required together with a dissertation for a master's degree, at least have 50% is required for each paper (or as indicated in faculty rules), while 50% for the dissertation and an average examination mark of at least 50% is required to pass. A master's degree may be awarded *cum laude*.

Reports by the various examiners must be submitted **individually** to the Higher Degrees Administration.

The supervisor then draws up a summative score sheet or final report (co-signed by the research director) and submits it to the administrative manager of the relevant Faculty or to Higher Degrees Administration if applicable.

3.2 Publication of research

Postgraduate students are urgently reminded that it is in their best interest **and** the interest of the University for their research to be optimally accessible. Permission to publish the entire (mini-) dissertation or thesis in book form must be obtained in writing from the relevant vice-rector.

4 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SUPERVISORS AND PROMOTERS

The NWU strives to communicate and develop knowledge by means of research. In the training of master's and doctoral students, these tasks are integrated and reach a joint culmination. It is therefore extremely important to the University (as well as the country and its people) for this training to be of outstanding quality. The guidance provided to the master's and doctoral students to a great extent determine the quality of the training. The University uses rules and certain procedures to guarantee this quality. In addition to these rules and procedures, the University also uses a code of conduct for supervisors and promoters to:

- ensure the quality of the training;

- give timeous feedback on the work submitted for comments

- serve the interests of the students; and

- develop the career of the supervisor/promoter as an academic.

4.1 The research process

A supervisor or promoter who has agreed to guide a student in his or her master's or doctorate studies, must undertake to:

- guide the student in the introductory phase of the research in such a manner that the student may select a feasible research theme within the programme of the research entity, demarcate the problem and the aim of the research clearly, and become familiar with financial support and administrative procedures;

- guide the student during the planning phase in such a manner that the student may submit an acceptable research proposal, and select the right and appropriate research methods to achieve the objectives of the research;

- support the student in the **implementation phase** to such an extent that the student may obtain the required data, solve practical problems when gathering data and draw meaningful, correct and logical conclusions;

- encourage the student in the reporting phase and provide guidance with respect to all aspects of the writing of the report, and the presentation of the results of the research at national and international conferences and in scholarly journals; and

- assesses in the final phase before submission, the standard of the student's work to determine whether the (mini-)dissertation/thesis will meet the requirements and academic standards before the student submits the work for examination purposes. The supervisor/promoter must be satisfied with the quality of the (mini-)dissertation/ thesis (i.e. that it complies with the accepted academic standards).

4.2 Expertise in the research field

A supervisor or promoter who has agreed to guide a student in his or her master's degree or doctorate studies, must undertake to:

- develop continuously as an expert in the research field; and

- make use of other scholars as co- or assistant promoters where his or her own expertise is not sufficient.

4.3 Expert on the methodology of research

A supervisor or promoter who has agreed to guide a student in his or her master's or doctorate studies, must undertake to continuously keep abreast of new developments and possibilities regarding the required or applicable research methodology.

4.4 Relationship with the student

A supervisor or promoter who has agreed to guide a student in his or her Masters degree or Doctoral studies, undertakes to:

- pay dedicated attention to the guidance of the student;

- diagnose any possible deficiencies in language ability, and initiate the necessary remedial steps.

- maintain a professional relationship with the student as an adult learner or colleague;

- guide the student into the academic community;

- take individual differences between students and their circumstances into account;

- provide special support to students who are not studying in their mother tongue;

- motivate the student continuously, ensuring contact al least 6 times per year

- make the expectations of the supervisor/promoter clear to the student at all times;

- give the student a chance to formulate expectations to the supervisor or promoter;

- ensure to be readily available and to the student;

- encourage the student to work independently to an increasing extent as the research progresses; and

- create effective appropriate communication channels.

4.5 The assessment of submitted work

A supervisor or promoter who has agreed to guide a student in his or her master's degree or doctorate studies, must undertake to:

- assess the work critically but constructively, and not negatively;

- substantiate comments on the work for the student adequately;

- give a high priority to the assessment of the student's work;

- provide the student with the comments speedily (preferably within two weeks) after having received it; and

- provide clear guidelines on the requirements that have been set.

4.6 Research management

A supervisor or promoter who has agreed to guide a student in his or her master's degree or doctorate studies, must undertake to:

- give clear instructions about the work to be completed before the next appointment at each interview;

- jointly determine the date for the next appointment;

- guide and check the student with respect to the planning of the research;

- provide clear target dates beforehand that the student and supervisor/promoter should adhere to;

- require regular interim reports or research results from the student; and

- advise the student on using time as effectively as possible.

4.7 Other matters

A supervisor or promoter who has agreed to guide a student in his or her master's degree or doctorate studies, must undertake to:

- guide the student, while respecting the ethics of research;

- make the student aware of the security aspects of research, where applicable;

- have clear discussions with the student about patent and copyright, where applicable; and

- inform the student timeously if the student does not progress satisfactorily.

5 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE STUDENT

- The student must make sure that he/she is registered for each year of his studies, until he/she graduates.

- The student must ensure a healthy relationship with his/her supervisor/promoter

- The student must undertake to make contact with his/her supervisor/promoter on a regular basis and be honest about progress and the work done, as well as any personal situation that may hinder progress.

- The student must update his/her supervisor/promoter on all relevant development

- The student may not publish or share results of work done towards the qualification program

- The student may not commit plagiarism and should equip himself with information on the topic in order to avoid this malpractice

- If a student is not satisfied with the study guidance, he/she must bring this to the attention of the Research director of the Research entity (A Rule 4.4.2.2).

6 COMPILING THE (MINI-) DISSERTATION OR THESIS

Compiling or writing the (mini-)dissertation/thesis is one of the major activities of any advanced study. The student will probably have no experience of compiling a document of this size, and may find it a daunting task. Students often underestimate the complexity of this task. The supervisor must guide the student in this process.

A Word template customised for NWU (mini-)dissertations/theses are available at the following link (www.nwu.ac.za/it/sc/nwu-templates-postgraduate). Students are encouraged to use all of the features of this template, such as the automatic creation of the table of contents, list of figures/tables and page numbering, headers and footers, section numbering, cross-referencing and automatic creation of references and bibliographies.

Any (mini-)dissertation or thesis should be compiled according to a clear plan and in such a way that the layout is clear to the reader immediately. The following is an **example** of the various elements that may typically be found in a (mini-)dissertation/thesis:

- title page

- abstract ("Opsomming") and key words

- preface

- table of contents

- introduction

- sections of the text

- closing chapter

- annexures

- illustrations (may also be distributed in the text)

- Bibliography.

6.1 Title page

On the title page of the (mini-)dissertation or thesis the following must appear in this sequence:

Title as approved by the Faculty

Full initials and surname of the student

Wording of the degree qualification (see examples below). This wording does not refer to the Faculty or Entity/School, but only to the subject (e.g. for a thesis in Biochemistry only "Biochemistry" and the University is used, not the Faculty of Natural Sciences or School of Chemistry and Biochemistry. In all cases, including (mini-)dissertations/theses written in English, the registered name of the University must be used, namely "NWU". Exceptions: In the case of (mini-)dissertations for degrees like Magister Musicae, Magister Bibliothecologiae and Magister Artium et Scientiae [Planning], which must be indicated as such in the wording, the subject may be omitted. In all cases the correct name of the qualification, as indicated in the NWU Calendar, must be used.

All supervisors (including co-supervisors and assistant supervisors) and all promoters (assistant and co-promoters) must be mentioned. Please note the following Afrikaans and English names:

ENGLISH	AFRIKAANS
Supervisor	Studieleier
Co-supervisor	Medestudieleier
Assistant Supervisor	Hulpstudieleier
Promoter	Promotor
Co-promoter	Medepromotor
Assistant promoter	Hulppromotor
Mini-dissertation	Skripsie
Dissertation	Verhandeling
Thesis	Proefskrif

The month and year of submission for examination: Give the month and year of the submission for examination.

The month and year of final submission before graduation: Give the month and year of the submission for the graduation ceremony.

6.2 Preface and acknowledgements

The preface, which does not form part of the content of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis, should not be confused with the introduction. In contrast to the introduction, the preface which is brief, is used for **personal** comments about the conditions in which the research was conducted and about persons and institutions that provided assistance. The required acknowledgements, if any, are therefore given in the preface. If it comprises only acknowledgements, it may be placed at the front or back of the document under the heading "Acknowledgements". The style and nature of the preface should be sober.

6.3 Summary and key terms

Although the *A Rules* specify this requirement for mini-dissertations and dissertations, it is also applicable to theses.

A dissertation/mini-dissertation/thesis must contain a summary of no more than 500 words and five to ten descriptive key terms in the language in which the document is written.

The summary should contain a brief and relatively complete version of the line of argument of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis. The aim, method and core of the findings must be set out in the summary. The summary is intended for publication in an abstract journal. It does not form part of the text and may be placed either between the title page and the table of contents, or between the final chapter and the bibliography. Table of contents

The main heading is "Table of contents" or just "Contents". If the table consists of more than one page, the pages must be numbered in lower case Roman numerals and each must bear the heading "Contents (continued)". We strongly recommend that the **decimal system** be used, like in this manual, as it has an inherent logical sequence. The page indication in the table of contents must appear on the right-hand side of the page.

If the document contains many photos, maps, illustrations and/or tables, a list of these elements must be included after the Table of Contents. The headings "Illustrations" or "Tables", or whatever the case may be must be used for this purpose. If the captions are too long to be contained comfortably in such a list, summaries may be used, provided the heading is then changed to "Illustrations (short list)" or something similar. Each caption relating to a figure or table in the text must refer to the relevant page number in the text.

6.4 Introduction

The function of an introduction to a (mini-)dissertation/thesis is to introduce the reader to the topic of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis, to indicate what previous work has already been done, what the problems are and why they were investigated, so that the reader may be prepared to read the text and evaluate the results and findings. The following matters are normally discussed in the introduction – not necessarily in this sequence:

- Problem statement, i.e. an explanation and substantiation of the choice and relevancy of the topic, the aim of the investigation, etc.

- A literature review of previous research in this field and of shortcomings that still exist.

- A demarcation of the field of study.

- A breakdown of sources, methods and procedures regarding the investigation.

- Definition of terms.

- Explanation of a certain viewpoint or approach.

- A statement with regard to the further breakdown of the topic and/or the structure of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis.

6.5 Sections of the text

The text of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis must be divided into specific sections, while each section is subdivided into subsections. As no set prescription for this division that will apply in all cases can be given, the general term used here is "sections". The division of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis will primarily be determined by factors like the nature and method of the subject and/or subject group involved, the nature of the topic and the data obtained by way of research with respect to the topic. The most common division is that of **chapters,** which have to be duly numbered and provided with headings. A document may also be divided into **parts** and **sections** (indicated as Part I, Section II, etc.), and each section is then divided into chapters. Each chapter may also be divided into

subsections, etc., depending on what is required. In this regard the student will find the advice of the supervisor/promoter indispensable.

The division into sections (or chapters) of a text is extremely important, as it determines the shape of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis to a great extent. For this reason the student should pay particular attention to this aspect. There is **one rule** that applies to all writers of scholarly documents: the division should be **simple, clear and effective,** so that it gives a clear indication at first glance of what each individual section and eventually the whole document involves. The division should be made in such a way that each section contains only the information relevant to it, and all the sections must be arranged so that the required unity is accomplished and emphasised. Because the supervisor/promoter has to assist the student with the division, the supervisor/promoter must always be kept up to date on the progress of the research.

On the other hand, the student should guard against using too many and small divisions, as these may confuse the reader rather than help him, and they needlessly complicate the document. Too many sections and subsections also hamper the fluency and legibility of the text. As the ranking of sections and headings is usually adequate, the headings in the text should be limited to the following as far as possible:

- Primary headings, usually written in upper case (e.g. chapter headings)

- Secondary headings

- Tertiary headings

The decimal numbering system is excellent for reflecting the relationship between these three types of headings. Normally it is meaningful to use no more than four, and in exceptional cases five, decimals, for example 2.1.3.2 or 2.1.2.3.1, but not 2.1.2.3.1.7.

In addition to sections, the text should also contain a logical system of **paragraphs.** These are indicated by leaving some blank space between consecutive paragraphs. The fact that a text is divided into paragraphs is an indication that the author has analysed the material for the reader and has set it out in units that the reader can understand. Paragraphs are a necessary concession to the natural limitations of the human attention span; consequently the length of paragraphs is determined by careful and sympathetic consideration of the complexity of the topic and the knowledge and experience of the person who has to read the document.

A paragraph is not an isolated, unrelated breakdown of a single thought or idea, but usually fits in with a relatively complex structure (or: argument) of which it is only a component part. The author should therefore be able not only to use the paragraph throughout as a cohesive, united discussion of a single aspect or view, but also to indicate carefully and clearly the link between the paragraph and the paragraph system in the text.

Guard against presenting the same information in tables as well as in figures. Tables should be fully comprehensible as separate units.

6.6 Closing chapter

A closing chapter is essential for any (mini-)dissertation/thesis. In the first place it must provide a summary of the deductions, conclusions, viewpoints, etc. that arose from the argument. Since each chapter could also end with a summary, the summary in the closing chapter should be at a different (higher) level. However, this chapter should be more than merely a summary. It should be used to draw a final conclusion on the essence of the investigation and/or argument. The student's own view

on the matter should be stated as clearly as possible in conclusion. The insights and viewpoints of the student that are spread throughout the text should be brought to a final synthesis here. The closing chapter should clearly indicate whether the gaps in the literature have been filled, and whether the research objectives have been achieved. This chapter is the final proof of the student's mastery of the topic. Recommendations on further research should also be made.

6.7 Annexures

Annexures are particularly valuable for presenting data that cannot be included in the text or footnotes for some reason, but without which the text cannot be fully understood. That applies particularly to extensive descriptions, the contents of sources (documents) that are not published elsewhere and/or are not easy to obtain, tables, mathematical arguments on which conclusions are based, different kinds of maps, questionnaires, etc. Such annexures are usually indicated only as "Annexure", and if there is more than one, as "Annexure A", "Annexure B", etc. *Annexures should be used extremely judiciously and students should consult their supervisors/promoters in that regard.* Permission sometimes has to be obtained from publishers to include certain material in an annexure.

6.8 The bibliography

The NWU Referencing Guide is available from the Library's website to all registered students. All literature references in the text must be supported by a bibliography containing full bibliographical details of the sources referred to in the text. This list of sources is placed right at the end under the heading "Bibliography", "Literature list" or "List of sources". However, the bibliographical style used for this purpose is no random matter.

In a few cases it might be necessary and/or desirable to provide a full bibliography on the topic, even if all the sources are not directly referred to in the text.

6.9 Guidelines for submitting a dissertation/thesis in article format

In some cases, a student may choose to submit the (mini-)dissertation/thesis in the so-called article format. In that case, the document will consist of a number of scholarly articles (published or unpublished, but submitted for publication) and other documentation. In particular, it will contain the following elements:

- A title page as prescribed above

- Acknowledgements

- A table of contents of the dissertation/thesis

- An abstract with 5-10 keywords

- A preface comprising the following:

  - A statement that the article format has been selected

  - An indication of the student's share in the research if there are co-authors for the article(s)/manuscript(s)

  - An indication of the journal to which the article(s)/manuscript(s) was/were submitted if it/they has/have not yet been published

- Permission from co-authors that the article(s)/manuscript(s) may be submitted for degree purposes

    - Permission from the editor of the technical journal if any copyright is involved

- If more than one article/manuscript is used, the dissertation/thesis must be presented in a scholarly unit format.

- Depending on the study field, the supervisor/promoter may also require other items like a literature review. Each article must be preceded by a copy of the guidelines for authors for the journal concerned.

- When a dissertation or mini-dissertation or a part or summary or an adaptation thereof by the student is published, mention must be made of the fact that it results from a master's degree study at the University and, where applicable, the name of the supervisor(s) as co-author(s) must also be mentioned.

6.10   Use of sources and the danger of plagiarism

Students are advised to study the *NWU Referencing Guide: NWU Harvard, Reference Style of the Faculty of Law and APA,* published by the Library Services of the NWU and available at all campus libraries. It is extremely important that the correct use of sources, referencing style and layout of the bibliography are used, as described in this publication.

6.11   Technical aspects

6.11.1   Language and style

6.11.1.1   Language editing

It is a basic requirement that the language and style of a (mini-)dissertation/thesis must be correct. Adequate guidelines exist for the correct use of the language in which the (mini-)dissertation/thesis is being written, but it is not possible to provide fixed rules for the most suitable style of writing a (mini-)dissertation/thesis. However, the writer must meet two requirements: the information must be conveyed to the reader in a clear, careful, logical and unambiguous manner, and this must be done in a nice, well-finished and correct manner.

The selection of the right words, the formulation of well-constructed sentences and the layout of sentences in systematic and logical paragraphs are essential to retain the reader's active and concentrated attention. In short this means that the writer must arrange the information in such a way that the reader gets it in units that are not so brief that they interrupt the flow of the presentation, but are not so long or complicated that they are confusing or allow the reader's attention to wander. The main aim of the writer should always be consideration for the reader.

Most of the obvious errors in sentence construction arise when the writer tries to write too concisely and omits words that are essential for a good understanding of the information being presented. This links up with inadequate use of a good explanatory dictionary.

Mistakes that occur in (mini-)dissertations/theses are in many cases the result of incorrect use of the written language. This includes spelling and punctuation errors, -isms and incorrect words. Because the premise is that not all students necessarily possess an adequate knowledge of language usage, it is a **requirement** that the language of mini-dissertations/dissertations/theses must be edited by a competent language editor.

Language editing primarily remains the responsibility of the student. However, the supervisor/promoter should ensure that the student has the (mini-)dissertation/thesis edited. Poor language usage necessarily leads to doubt about the scientific quality of such a (mini-)dissertation /thesis.

6.11.1.2 Language of (mini-)dissertations and theses

The choice of language should be in accordance with the language policy and style guide of the University.

6.11.2 Word processing and copying

6.11.2.1 Word processing functionality

It is essential that students should use word processing. This facilitates correction and final completion of (mini-)dissertations/theses. It is also essential that the full functionality of the word processor must be used to assist in the formatting of the document, automating cross-referencing, numbering of sections and subsections, creation of the bibliography, inserting references in the correct style, etc.

6.11.2.2 Format and length

The format in which the page layout of the (mini-)dissertation/thesis must be, is be determined beforehand. Two possible formats are acceptable:

A4 format is 210 x 297 mm and may be printed on both sides of the paper. The typing must make provision for margins: approximately 2,5 cm on the left and approximately 2 cm on the three other sides, i.e. the page number must be included. **A5 format** is approximately 147 x 210 mm and may be printed on both sides of the paper, with about 2,0 cm for margins.

Printing in double line spacing is acceptable if one-and-a-half spacing is not possible. A font size 11 may be used. The fonts **Arial** or **Times New Roman** are recommended because of their legibility.

There are no universal rules about the length (minimum and maximum number of pages/words) for a (mini-)dissertation or thesis, for each Faculty has its own rules for each type of research that is done.

Page numbers may appear at the top or bottom of a page, and placing them in the middle of the page eliminates confusion.

6.11.2.3 The printing/copying process

It is important to determine beforehand what printing process will be used, as not all printers use the same processes and each of these processes has different requirements.

6.11.2.4 Binding

If the student arranges the binding himself/herself and it is not done by the printer, the student should ascertain beforehand how many copies have to be submitted and what requirements apply. An abbreviated title should, for example, appear on the spine of the hardcover copies. The approved title on the research proposal must be retained in the exact way it was approved. (In cases where the approved title is too long for the side of the hard copy, exceptions may be made.)

6.11.2.5 Other details

A student must establish in time what the requirements of his/her supervisor/promoter, the University and the printer and binder are.

A student must establish beforehand from the relevant university official on the number of copies to be submitted for examination.

Examples of title pages are available from the relevant Faculty/Entity. The Addendum at the end of this document also contains some examples.

7 GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH ETHICS

Besides the code of conduct, guidelines, policies and compulsory registration with the applicable national bodies to which scientists subject themselves in their relevant area of investigation, research is also controlled by ethics principles underlying experimental work. The NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC) has formulated general rules and guidelines for the functioning of Research Ethics Committees. Supervisors will inform students of Faculty-specific ethics rules.

7.1 Ethics guidelines of the NWU

The Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC) of the NWU is responsible for the formulation of ethics guidelines for the University. Applications for research ethics approval is considered by the relevant Research Ethics Committee (REC), as organized by the Faculty. All research involving human beings (including human material such as blood, cells, urine, etc.) must be approved by a REC before the study may commence. Normally the supervisors/promoters of a postgraduate student will apply to the REC for approval of the relevant research programme in which he/she is the chief investigator. Most MSc and PhD students are allocated to projects which resort under a broad research programme and they therefore carry out their research projects under the ethics approval obtained for the research programme. However, if the specific study is not covered by prior ethics approval, a new application has to be submitted to the REC by a permanent staff member of the University, as students in this context may not act as primary researchers.

The process for obtaining research ethics approval is described in the Rules for the IRERC and the relevant REC.

8 Addenda

Example 1: **Dissertation without examination papers - Afrikaans**

Example 2: Dissertation with examination papers - Afrikaans

Example 3: Dissertation without examination papers - English

Example 4: Dissertation with examination papers: English

Example 6: Mini-dissertation: English

Example 7: Mini-dissertation: Afrikaans

Example 8: Thesis - Afrikaans

Example 9: Thesis – English

10/6/2016