



HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH POLICY

Policy Code: R7
Version: 1
Approved by: Senate
Approval Date: 29 August 2024
Decision No: SEN189/2024

Contents

1. PREAMBLE	3
2. SCOPE OF POLICY	3
3. DEFINITION OF TERMS	3
4. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY.....	4
5. MASTER'S DEGREES	5
6. DOCTORAL DEGREES.....	5
7. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS TO THE DBS'S HIGHER DEGREES	6
8. ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES	6
9. SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT	7
10. PROGRESSION OF STUDENTS.....	7
11. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES.....	8
12. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	8
13. SELF-REFLECTIVE MONITORING	8
14. ETHICS.....	9
15. CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE QUALIFICATION.....	9
16. VERSION HISTORY	10

1. PREAMBLE

This policy of the DaVinci Institute for Technology Management (DaVinci Business School / DBS) on higher degrees, lists the minimum requirements as approved by DaVinci's Senate on the recommendation of its Higher Degrees by Research Committee. It further ensures compliance with local and international academic standards and practices.

This document must be read in conjunction with the following policies: Higher Degrees by Research Policy, Application, Admission and Registration (D2), Research Framework (D9), Appointment of Supervisors (D10), Nomination and Appointment of Examiners (D11), Student-Supervisor Relationships (D12), Examination of Dissertations and Theses (D13), Conducting Ethical Research (D15), Assessment and Moderation (D19), RPL, CAT and Articulation (D20), Certification (D21) and any other related policies.

In particular, this policy speaks to the enhancement and ongoing monitoring of quality assurance for higher degrees by research at DBS.

This policy describes the broad framework for master's and doctoral degrees. The specific procedures are dealt with in the Procedures for Higher Degrees Administration.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

2.1 This policy governs all processes leading to the award of higher degrees at DBS ensuring that our higher degrees meet local and international expectations on social justice, academic and procedural rigour as well as integrity.

2.2 The policy also seeks to accommodate expectations that flow from constitutional and other contemporary South African imperatives, such as:

- 2.2.1 The right to fair treatment;
- 2.2.2 An open and transparent flow of information;
- 2.2.3 The need to promote equity; and
- 2.2.4 Improvement in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.

3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION
Higher Degrees by Research Committee (HDRC)	The HDRC, which is a sub-committee of Senate, has the delegated responsibility for the management of all aspects relating to higher degrees by research as detailed in the Higher Degrees by Research Committee (HDRC) terms of reference.

Executive Dean's Office	The Executive Dean's Office (including the Dean Research, Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies, faculty officer/administrator and his/her staff) is responsible for the administrative structure supporting operations and functions associated with higher degree studies.
Recommendation	Implies no final decision-making authority but is a necessary step for approval (at a higher level). Recommendation requires substantive consideration informed by insight into a full set of documentation.
Approval	Implies full and final decision-making authority (necessary and sufficient), and requires substantive consideration informed by insight into a full set of documentation.
Ratification	Implies full and final decision-making authority (necessary and sufficient). Differs from "approval" in that it is usually exercised based on insight into only a summary of the relevant documentation while retaining the right to consider all relevant documentation (and the duty to do so where necessary). Because it is in practice more cursory than "approval", ratification typically requires at least one earlier recommendation made based on a substantive consideration informed by insight into a full set of documentation.
For noting	Except in extraordinary circumstances, no decision-making authority associated with this step, but may refer matters back for further consideration.

4. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

- 4.1 The purpose of this policy, together with the rules and procedures as set out in the document on Higher Degrees Administration, is to provide a framework for the administration, governance and quality management of higher degree studies and programmes at DBS. The framework aims to:
- 4.1.1 Establish rational and transparent decision-making processes around the governance and administration of higher degree student matters;
 - 4.1.2 Provide for the generation and capture of relevant institutional management information relating to higher degree students and programmes;
 - 4.1.3 Ensure the highest levels of quality care regarding higher degree studies;
 - 4.1.4 Clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of higher degree students and supervisors;
 - 4.1.5 Ensure fairness and transparency in the treatment of higher degree students and in addressing their concerns; and
 - 4.1.6 Ensure adequate capacity development for the support of higher degree students.

5. MASTER'S DEGREES

DBS offers two coursework master's programmes. Coursework master's degrees, for which the mini-dissertation (with an associated oral component) constitutes a minimum requirement of 60 out of a total of 180 credits in the case of the Master of Business Leadership and 120 out of a total of 240 credits in the case of the Master of Management in Technology and Innovation. Completion of compulsory formal, taught courses or modules constitutes the remaining part of the requirements of the respective degrees.

The scope of a coursework master's degree (as governed by HEQSF qualification descriptors) is as follows:

- 5.1 A coursework master's degree equips the student with specialised knowledge of the field and field-appropriate methodologies;
- 5.2 It utilises both coursework and a self-directed research project as the pedagogical vehicles for achieving the objectives of the degree;
- 5.3 The student is not generally expected to make an original theoretical or fundamental contribution to the field of knowledge;
- 5.4 The student is required to demonstrate proficiency in research methods and the ability to apply these methods and work independently;
- 5.5 The core output of the research component is a mini-dissertation in the form of a written document, in an appropriate format, reporting on the various aspects of the research project.
- 5.6 Coursework credits for the respective degrees may be assessed in a form which meets discipline-specific norms and standards but is in keeping with DBS's relevant assessment and moderation policy/policies; and the principle of trans-disciplinarity.
- 5.7 In addition to the mini-dissertation and completion of coursework modules, each master's candidate must have submitted to the supervisor at least one piece of work in a format suitable for submission to a peer reviewed publication on an index journal list, with a view to possible publication. Authorship of such an article is guided by the Academic Publishing Policy (D27).

6. DOCTORAL DEGREES

DBS offers two doctoral programmes, namely the Doctor of Business Leadership and the Doctor of Management in Technology and Innovation. The scope of a doctoral degree by thesis (as governed by HEQSF qualification descriptors) is as follows:

- 6.1 It utilises a self-directed research project to achieve the objective of the qualification, requiring the candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic level;
- 6.2 The doctoral thesis makes a significant and original contribution to the body of knowledge in the discipline or field or to research methodology;
- 6.3 The output of a doctoral degree takes the form of a conventional thesis, as governed by the DBS Research Guide; and
- 6.4 In addition to the thesis, each doctoral candidate must have submitted to the supervisor at least two pieces of work in a format suitable for submission to a peer

reviewed publication on an index journal list, with a view to possible publication. Authorship of such articles are guided by the Authorship Policy.

7. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS TO THE DBS'S HIGHER DEGREES

- 7.1 Students applying for admission to a master's degree (HEQSF level 9) are required to hold a qualification at the HEQSF level 8; an Honours degree, a four-year 480-credit Bachelor's degree (with a minimum of 96 credits at level 8), or a postgraduate diploma, in the relevant discipline);
- 7.2 Students applying for admission to a doctoral degree (HEQSF level 10) are required to hold a qualification at the HEQSF level 9 with a master's degree in the relevant discipline;
- 7.3 If refused admission, the applicant has the right to request written reasons from the Admissions Department in Registry and may appeal those to the Executive Dean in writing. If the Executive Dean upholds the refusal, the applicant may appeal to the Chief Executive Officer of DBS, whose decision is final;
- 7.4 The applications of students who do not satisfy the formal entrance requirements for a specific higher degree programme may be considered in terms of the Policy: Recognition of Prior Learning to establish the student's suitability for enrolment in the envisaged degree, or any additional requirements that the student may need to fulfil;
- 7.5 Students may furthermore gain access to higher degree studies through means provided for in the Policy: Admission; and
- 7.6 A student who fails a research master's or a doctoral degree will need to reapply for the degree and register a new topic if s/he wishes to re-attempt the degree. In the case of a student who fails the mini-dissertation of a coursework master's degree s/he will be given only one more opportunity to attempt the mini-dissertation on a new topic, provided that the qualification can still be completed within the prescribed maximum period, with the possibility of an allowable extension. A failed research master's dissertation or doctoral thesis may not be resubmitted for examination.

8. ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

- 8.1 There is a clear separation of responsibilities between the students, supervisors, the Office of the Executive Dean: Teaching, Learning & Research, Dean of Research, the Registrar, the Research Office, the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies, and associated Senate structures;
- 8.2 For all academic and most operational purposes, the point of contact of postgraduate students is their Supervisors, their Learning Coordinator and Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies;
- 8.3 The DBS Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies and the Learning Coordinator supports DBS postgraduate students;
- 8.4 The Office of the Executive Dean: Teaching, Learning & Research in conjunction with the Registrar, Faculty Officers and Academics and committee administration

is responsible for overseeing and administering the functions of the Higher Degrees by Research Committee (HDRC); and

8.5 Student complaints must be dealt with in accordance with the Policy on Student Complaints.

9. SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

9.1 After all due procedures regarding admission have been finalised, DBS contracts successful candidates by means of a formal letter that is specific to the individual applicant. The terms of the letter are binding on the institution and, upon acceptance, on the student. The letter will refer to or enclose other information, for example references to institutional web pages, supplemented by any necessary information. The letter and enclosures will include:

9.1.1 fees as determined by the DBS;

9.1.2 the expected period of study for which the student is enrolled;

9.1.3 the requirements which the institution places upon the student (for example, attendance of induction and orientation workshops, progress reports, contact with supervisors) and arrangements for enrolment and registration; and

9.1.4 references to the institution's regulations and other relevant information for a research degree programme, all of which is available via the DBS web page.

9.2 The provision of adequate supervision and support of higher degree research resides with the Research Office and relevant support divisions. Specific structures and processes are described in the procedural document Higher Degrees Administration; and

9.3 A formal Student Supervisor Agreement must be signed and adhered to for doctoral students, research master's students, coursework master's students registered for a mini- dissertation. The agreement should be signed within a month of registration and stored electronically within the Research Office.

10. PROGRESSION OF STUDENTS

10.1 DBS will ensure that there is sufficient capacity to support master's and doctoral students and will provide a context in which high quality research is taking place. This includes:

10.1.1 appointing supervisors who have shown demonstrable research achievement/output in the subject, such as journal publications, books, chapters in books, NRF-rated scholars (if employed at public universities);

10.1.2 making arrangements, where necessary, for a supervisory team to ensure that the student has an identifiable point of contact at all times during the period of study. Such a team may include co-supervisors (particularly for international students), mentors, and tutors;

10.1.3 refusing to overload any one supervisor with too many master's and doctoral students, considering the experience and workload of a supervisor before allocating students for supervision. A maximum of five (5) students on either master's and/or doctoral level will be allocated to any supervisor. With exception and a motivation to the HDRC an exception to this workload may be approved;

10.1.4 requiring all supervisors to attend compulsory training sessions which include orientation for first-time supervisors and re-skilling for experienced supervisors and any supervisor forums. All tutors, mentors and postdoctoral fellows who are involved in the supervision process are also required to attend such training.

11. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

- 11.1 Assessment of higher degrees is done in accordance with the procedures in the Higher Degrees Administration. Specific structures and processes relevant to the assessment of higher degrees are described in the procedural document Higher Degrees Administration.
- 11.2 Assessment of master's and doctoral students will be clear, rigorous, fair and consistent and will include input from two examiners for a master's degree and three examiners for doctoral degrees, with one being preferably an international examiner of scholarly repute.
- 11.3 External examiners must be recognised experts in their fields and must not be attached to or affiliated with DBS.
- 11.4 All examiners are recommended by the relevant Head of Programmes: Postgraduate Studies and their names are forwarded to the HDRC. Such appointment is made upon receipt of an abbreviated CV from the potential external examiner containing evidence of experience in examining higher degrees and appropriate research expertise in the field of study of the student, confirming that s/he is comfortable to assist with examination, considering the topic of the research.
- 11.5 The supervisor may not be a member of the examining panel.

12. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

- 12.1 All master's and doctoral students have the right to appeal against unfair practice in supervision.
- 12.2 Complaints and appeals not dealt with satisfactorily by the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies are addressed to the relevant Dean / Executive Dean.
- 12.3 Appeals are monitored by the HDRC.

13. SELF-REFLECTIVE MONITORING

- 13.1 Self-reflexive monitoring of all master's and doctoral students is undertaken by means of a central tracking system and a database which is updated regularly by the Research Office. Such monitoring will include:
 - 13.1.1 submission and completion times and rates;
 - 13.1.2 pass, referral and fail rates;
 - 13.1.3 drop-out rates;
 - 13.1.4 the number of appeals and complaints, the reasons for them, and how many are upheld; and
 - 13.1.5 an analysis of comments from examiners.

14. ETHICS

- 14.1 DBS will ensure that all master's and doctoral students are advised of the necessity to adhere to good practice in research, of the need for ethical conduct and of the penalties attached to research misconduct, including plagiarism, by directing the student to the guidance contained in the admissions letter and the appropriate policies in this regard, including the Plagiarism Policy (E2) and the Conduct Ethical Research (D15) which are available on the DBS website.
- 14.2 Supervisors are also bound by ethical norms to protect students from abuse or financial exploitation.
- 14.3 The accountability for research ethics resides in Senate which may delegate responsibility in line with principles of governance;
- 14.4 All higher degree students (and supervisors) are expected to familiarise themselves with and adhere to Conducting Ethical Research. For this purpose, all master's and doctoral research proposals must receive ethics clearance before a project can commence; and
- 14.5 The Executive Dean is accountable for ensuring that all research activities in DBS have undergone the necessary scrutiny and clearance regarding considerations of research ethics.

15. CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE QUALIFICATION

Certification of compliance with the requirements of a qualification is in accordance with the Policy: Certification, with due regard to the responsibility of the Candidate, Supervisor, relevant Learning Coordinator, Registrar, Dean Research and Executive Dean: Teaching, Learning and Research.

16. VERSION HISTORY

Version History	Amendment Details	Approval Date	Approving Committee
V1		29/08/2024	Senate