



HIGHER DEGREE ADMINISTRATION POLICY

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1. PREAMBLE

This document contains the structures and processes relevant for the regulation and administration of higher degrees at The DaVinci Institute for Technology Management (DaVinci/DVI). This document together with the DVI's Higher Degrees by Research Policy provide a framework for the administration, governance and quality management of higher degree studies and programmes at DVI.

For the purposes of this document, the term 'higher degrees' refers to studies, research, or programmes at the master's and/or doctoral level, equivalent to level 9 and 10 of the Higher Education Sub Qualifications Framework (HESQF).

This document must be read in conjunction with the following policies: Higher Degrees by Research Policy (R7), 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.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION
Additional Assessor	An Additional Assessor must meet all the criteria required of an external assessor and is appointed to expand the scope of the assessment or to resolve conflicting issues. The additional assessor receives the thesis or mini-dissertation as submitted and (and allocate a mark in the case of a mini-dissertation). The additional assessor has the same standing as any of the other assessors/examiners and the recommendation offered by an additional assessor is included in the examination process.
Approval	Implies full and final decision-making authority (necessary and sufficient), and requires substantive consideration informed by insight into a full set of documentation.
Arbitrator	An Arbitrator meets all the qualifying attributes of an External Expert/Examiner. The Arbitrator receives the reports of the other assessors/examiners/experts as well as the report by the supervisor (confirming readiness for examination) and the originally submitted mini-dissertation/thesis, and/or the version where corrections have been applied. If relevant an Arbitrator seeks to help all parties settle the dispute. The recommendation offered by an Arbitrator are submitted to HDRC for approval and to Senate for noting.
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.
External Expert	An External Expert meets all of the qualifying attributes of a Additional Assessor but is moreover someone of recognised experience and an unquestionable expert in the discipline and study field of the mini-dissertation/thesis. The External Expert will also receive the reports of all the other assessors and the original

	submitted version of the minor-dissertation/thesis, and/or the corrected version.
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.
For noting	Except in extraordinary circumstances, no decision-making authority is associated with this step, but may refer matters back for further consideration.
Research & Ethics Committee (REC)	The Research & Ethics Committee is a sub-committee of Senate.
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.
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.
Senate	The Senate is the body responsible for academic matters at DVI.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 The Senate, which approves, ratifies and/or notes any decision referred to it by the Senate Higher Degrees by Research Committee (HDRC) and in accordance with the approved delegation of authorities
- 3.2 The HDRC, which is a subcommittee of Senate, considers in detail recommendations on higher degree-related matters and advises Senate accordingly;
- 3.3 The supervisor ensures professional and ethical academic supervision of the higher degree research study and students registered under their name. S/he is also responsible for DVI academic administrative and managerial matters attendant on the project and students registered under their supervision. The general rule should apply that a supervisor may not supervise a student studying towards a qualification higher than their own. However, in exceptional cases, they may co-supervise such a student if they are bringing certain expertise. Exception like these should be properly motivated by the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies as supported by the Executive Dean: Teaching, Learning and Research. In general, Dvi does not limit the number of higher degree students any one staff member may supervise, but it expects faculty to manage throughput purposefully with due regard to student progress, timeous completion of degree studies, and academic employee workload, and to place a premium on quality management considerations in this regard. An ideal supervisor workload per annum is regarded as five full time masters or doctoral students in total. Where there is a need or request to change a supervisor during the study phase the allocation process should be followed, documented and records must be kept, and
- 3.4 The Research Office puts strategies in place to mitigate the risk of failure of higher degree students. This includes rigorous student selection, ensuring the implementation of the Supervisor-Student Agreement, monitoring student progress and mentoring and supporting

inexperienced supervisors. The Research Office also use a peer review system, consisting of two internal examiners not involved with the study at all before submission of a minor-dissertation and thesis for assessment. The internal examiners have no influence over the final external examination process. It is only used for internal quality control before of all studies before send for external examination.

4. REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES AS THEY APPLY TO THE STUDY CYCLE OF A HIGHER DEGREE STUDENT

4.1 The application phase

- 4.1.1 A student may contact the Research Office or a potential supervisor and seeks advice on admission, a potential research idea and the assignment of a supervisor to their study
- 4.1.2 The prospective student is advised on registration procedures by the Registrar's office or respective Business Developer
- 4.1.3 The Registrar is responsible for ensuring that systems and processes are in place to keep records of all relevant application documentation
- 4.1.4 Prospective students must apply for admission to a programme not later than the determined programme specific closing dates as stipulated on the official DVI website
- 4.1.5 The requirement for admission in a specific master's or doctoral qualification is in line with that specified in the Higher Degrees Policy, although specific requirements may apply as provided in the specific programme brochure, and
- 4.1.6 DVI has the right to revoke or amend the admission status of an applicant and cancel or refuse the registration of an applicant or student who provided incorrect information and/or documentation material to an application for admission or re-admission, or who omitted to provide information or documentation material to an application for admission or readmission.

4.2 Admission phase

- 4.2.1 Candidates may be admitted to a master's or doctoral programme as stipulated in the Higher Degrees by Research Policy and Admission Policy
- 4.2.2 Where an applicant for a master's or doctoral degree does not hold the prerequisite formal qualifications, the Policy: Recognition of Prior Learning may be initiated by the Registrar or Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies, if applicable, to award to an applicant academic status equivalent to that of an honours degree (NQF level 8) in the case of a master's and a master's degree (NQF level 9) in the case of a doctorate, as approved by Senate and contained in the DVI rules and regulations concerned
- 4.2.3 Even if an applicant meets the minimum entry requirements as stated above, the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies in consultation with the Executive Dean: Teaching, Learning and Research may refuse to admit an applicant if in their assessment the applicant is unlikely to succeed in the chosen research project or if DVI lacks sufficient supervisory capacity and an appropriate supervisor cannot be appointed
- 4.2.4 Applicants whose application for admission has been refused despite meeting the minimum admission requirements may request written reasons for such refusal from the Registrar

- 4.2.5 Master's and doctoral candidates have to re-register annually until they have completed their studies subject to duration and progress requirements, and
- 4.2.6 In general, if a student exceeds the maximum time of study for the relevant qualification the current relevant Higher Degrees Policy and Academic Regulations and Research Guide apply and not those at the time of registration.

4.3 Registration phase

- 4.3.1 Registration is done in accordance with dates set by DVI
- 4.3.2 Master's and doctoral candidates will be registered on admission for the full duration of the respective programme within the time constraints described in the Academic Regulations, until they have completed their studies, subject to the maximum periods of enrolment
- 4.3.3 The minimum formal registration period for a master's degree is two academic/calendar years and for a doctoral degree three academic years. In each case these periods run from the start of first registration for the degree to the completion of the registration period
- 4.3.4 Table 1 stipulates the maximum periods of enrolment for master's and doctoral studies. The maximum periods are calculated in terms of the months a student is registered. The month in which a student registers or completes the studies will count as a full month. Should re-registration be required due to a re-submission of a mini-dissertation or thesis, this extended period will be included in the calculation of the registration period

Table 1: Minimum and maximum duration of masters and doctoral studies

	Master's study	Doctoral study
Minimum completion time	24 months	48 months
Maximum completion time	36 months	72 months

- 4.3.5 Permission to register beyond the permissible maximum time requires a motivation by the Supervisor, recommendation by the Head of Programmes: Postgraduate Studies and approval by the Executive Dean. Permission will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and will in general be limited to a prolongation of 12 months
- 4.3.6 Interruption (a study break which does not count towards the period within which the study must be completed) may be granted in exceptional circumstances, for a maximum of twelve months, and only once during the period of study. This matter would be to the discretion of the HDRC, and
- 4.3.7 Approval must be obtained from HDRC prior to the interruption of studies.

4.4 The appointment of supervisors

- 4.4.1 Also refer to Appointment of Research Supervisors Policy (D10) and the research policy guidelines on supervisor and student roles and responsibilities.
- 4.4.2 The evidence that the most effective supervisors are those who are research active is taken seriously. It is understood that novice supervisors will not initially have strong research profiles, but all supervisors are expected to actively contribute to the relevant discipline or field or research area and to seek opportunities for their own development in this regard.
- 4.4.3 A supervisor needs to be assigned for a research master's or doctoral student upon acceptance of the research concept paper based on an outline provided by the student on his/her research idea. Additional co-supervisors may be appointed within six months for a master's student and

nine months for a doctoral student if deemed necessary. Thereafter, permission must be sought from HDRC for the appointment of co-supervisors. The supervisor for the research of coursework master's students must be assigned and recorded on the student system within one month of commencing with the six compulsory research workshops

- 4.4.4 To be appointed as supervisor for a master's mini dissertation a staff member must have a doctoral degree in the specific or cognate discipline and an approved research and publication record. In addition, the staff member must have acted as sole supervisor or as the main supervisor for a master's degree previously or must have gained experience to full completion of such a higher degree study as co-supervisor with an experienced colleague. Deviations from this norm (e.g. in fields of study in which lecturers with doctorates are relatively rare) should occur only for sound reasons, and should a supervisor not yet have a doctorate s/he can only be appointed as a co-supervisor
- 4.4.5 To be appointed as supervisor for a doctoral thesis, the staff member must have a doctoral degree in the specific or cognate discipline and an approved research and publication record. In addition, the supervisor must have acted as a sole supervisor or as the main supervisor for a doctoral degree before or must have gained experience to full completion of such a higher degree study as a co-supervisor with an experienced colleague. Deviations from this norm (e.g. in fields of study in which lecturers with doctorates are relatively rare) should occur only for sound reasons, and should a supervisor not yet have a doctorate s/he can only be appointed as a co-supervisor
- 4.4.6 Where the nature of the subject is such that expertise in more than one field of study is required or where the research methodology requires it, the appointment of a co-supervisor from another field of study or an expert on the research methodology may be considered
- 4.4.7 Additional supervisors might be added to the team at various points in the research process to attend to requirements for particular expertise as may arise. Such additions should be approved by the HDRC in the same way that supervisor allocations are approved at the time of research concept paper approval. If roles change considerably during the postgraduate process, for example, where a co-supervisor becomes the main supervisor, this should be reported to HDRC. Where supervisors recuse themselves from a supervision agreement, this should similarly be recorded at the HDRC with a clear explanation. Where students are left without a supervisor the Head of Programmes: Postgraduate Studies shall be responsible for making arrangements with the student for a replacement supervisor as a matter of urgency (see the section on Replacement of a Supervisor)
- 4.4.8 Postdoctoral Research Fellows, Research Associates, Visiting Associate, Professors and Visiting Professors who are appointed by DVI may be appointed as supervisors / co-supervisors, if they meet the requirements previously stated
- 4.4.9 Where external supervisors are used, a formal induction process must be completed by the supervisor to ensure adherence to DVI policies, guidelines, and regulations
- 4.4.10 Using the DVI research guide, guidelines are provided by the supervisor on the preparation of a research proposal and technical requirements pertaining to academic writing and referencing
- 4.4.11 The Supervisor-Student Agreement must be signed within one month after the Supervisor has been allocated and should be kept on record. A copy of the signed agreement must be provided for uploading to the student's profile on CRM in Registry
- 4.4.12 Any change in supervisors must be approved at HDRC and recorded on the student record in Registry. If a new supervisor is appointed, a new Student Supervisory Agreement must be signed and uploaded

- 4.4.13 The relationship between the student and the supervisor and co-supervisor(s) is guided through the roles and responsibilities of student and supervisors as per related policy, which stipulates the expectations of both the student and the supervisor
- 4.4.14 The supervisor and co-supervisor(s) will provide guidance and supervision in line with the roles and responsibilities of student and supervisors policy
- 4.4.15 The student formally registers for the degree programme to qualify for research supervision. Thereafter, master's students have twelve months (...to start with their research proposal after 50% of course work is completed) and doctoral students seven months and a maximum of twelve months to complete their research proposals to the standards required. During his time, they have access to the DVI resources that they require to formulate their research proposals. Should a doctoral student not be able to complete their proposal in twelve months, they will need to provide a detailed motivation to avoid being de-registered
- 4.4.16 Students may not undertake any data collection, or any activities related to data collection prior to applicable ethical clearance
- 4.4.17 The study field, title, supervisors and assessors for course-work mini-dissertations and theses are approved by the HDRC and noted by Senate
- 4.4.18 Supervisors are expected to continue with their HDR responsibilities while on sabbatical leave. In cases where there is a co-supervisor or supervisory team, such responsibilities might be re-allocated for the duration of the sabbatical and the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies and the student must be fully informed of such arrangements

4.5 Approval of research proposals

- 4.5.1 Once a supervisor is satisfied with a prospective candidate's research proposal, the Research Office will nominate two panel members to assist with the review of the concept proposal to conclude with an oral defence of the concept proposal
- 4.5.2 The oral defence panel has at least five members, all of whom, usually, have doctorates in the case of a master's study and must have doctorates in the case of a doctoral study: (a) the supervisor, (b) the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies who acts as the chair of the committee, (c) an additional member who is a senior colleague in DVI, (d) and the two panel members. If preferred, the oral defence panel may have more than five members. The oral defence panel must write a recommendation of a hundred words in which it comments on the following:
 - 4.5.2.1 The merit of the study
 - 4.5.2.2 The ability of the candidate, and
 - 4.5.2.3 Points of advice and potential concern, including possible ethical considerations
- 4.5.3 The recommendation must be submitted to the Research Office for forwarding to the HDRC in time to be included on the agenda for the next meeting. If accepted by the HDRC the acceptance of the proposal is noted by the Senate. If the HDRC does not accept the proposal, the candidate will be given the opportunity to revise and resubmit it
- 4.5.4 Research proposals are approved by a panel of at least two reviewers in terms of their quality and research ethics requirements. Students are required to defend their proposal to a panel as arranged by the Research Office, including five industry guests invited by the student
- 4.5.5 If a research proposal is not approved by the HDRC, the student may re-work the proposal but may only submit it for approval one more time. If the research proposal on this re-submission is not approved, the student's registration is terminated, unless permission to continue is granted by the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies and Dean/Executive Dean concerned

- 4.5.6 Changes to the study title, the supervisors and assessors of minor-dissertations and theses are approved by the HDRC and noted by the Senate.

4.6 The study phase

- 4.6.1 The structures that provide support during supervision and that can be utilised by the higher degree student include:
 - 4.6.1.1 The supervisor, who has specific responsibilities towards the higher degree student as specified in the roles and responsibilities of *Student and supervisors Policy*, and
 - 4.6.1.2 The Research Office, which may offer different kinds of support such as forums, webinars and one-one consulting
- 4.6.2 Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that quarterly progress reports from the date of first registration of the student are submitted to the Research Office. These documents must be signed by both the supervisor(s) and the student. The Research Office is the custodian of the records that should be uploaded on the student folder.
- 4.6.3 Any change in study field, scope, supervisor, or proposal does not constitute reasons for extending the time allowed for completing the study, except when there is a break in the student/ supervisor relationship or inadequate support to a student.

4.7 Ethical clearance

- 4.7.1 Also refer to Conducting Ethical Research Policy (D15)
- 4.7.2 Accountability for all research ethics vests with DVI Senate (through the DVI Research & Ethics Committee, with oversight from the HDRC). Delegated authority for ethics clearance does exist through the HDRC
- 4.7.3 Ethics matters on higher degree research activities will be dealt with according to the Ethical Research Policy
- 4.7.4 Approval by the HDRC of any higher degree proposal implies that the research will be undertaken in compliance with all applicable statutory and ethical guidelines, as defined in the related DVI regulations or academic information brochures and the Ethical Research Policy and with due regard to statutory and professional regulatory requirements and general best-practice principles to protect human and animal dignity and welfare in research
- 4.7.5 A unique ethics clearance number will be assigned to all research projects that have received ethical clearance by the Research & Ethics Committee, with notice to the HDRC.

4.8 Change of title of a research mini-dissertation or thesis

- 4.8.1 Draft and final titles are submitted to HDRC for approval and are also recorded on LMS
- 4.8.2 Changes of the final title of a submitted thesis, mini dissertation must have the approval of the HDRC
- 4.8.3 Where relevant, if the title, scope, or study field of the study has changed the supervisor must ensure that the study funder (if applicable) is notified of the change and possible impact.

4.9 Dispute resolution during the study period

- 4.9.1 If a dispute arises between two or more of the parties involved in a particular postgraduate study, namely the student and one or more supervisors, and they are unable to resolve the

- dispute they should approach the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies to resolve the matter
- 4.9.2 If the matter is not resolved and after exhausting the processes in the Research Office, any of the parties may approach the Executive Dean responsible for higher degrees to resolve the dispute
- 4.9.3 In the event of a dispute not being resolved, the case can be referred by the Executive Dean to the Chief Executive Officer with a comprehensive report detailing the situation and chronology for final consideration and steps to resolve the matter.

5. REPLACEMENT OF SUPERVISOR(S)

- 5.1 DVI recognises that on rare occasions a student/supervisor relationship may run into difficulties. A supervisor may be replaced when (1) the supervisor will retire, (2) when the supervisor's workload is too high due to other commitments, or (3) when requested by the student/supervisor
- 5.2 In options (1) and (2) above a supervisor will not be allowed to resign from the study once the data collection phase of the study commenced, as the study is nearing completion
- 5.3 When the workload of a supervisor is too high, as indicated by the supervisor or flagged by the Research Office, a course of action must be decided on to allow the supervisor to provide sufficient support to the student, or alternatively the supervisor must be replaced. When a supervisor requests to be replaced s/he must provide a detailed report to the Research Office outlining progress till date, indicating any outstanding matters and the course of action still to be taken
- 5.4 Where a student experiences difficulties in relation to any member of the supervision team and is unable to address the difficulty with anyone within the supervisory team, they should raise the issue with the Head of Programmes: Postgraduate Studies in the first instance
- 5.5 When a change in supervision team is requested in case of option (3) above, where possible, the student and supervisor(s) should seek to resolve any difference informally. Where this proves impossible the student/supervisor should approach the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies. In both instances above, these discussions must be undertaken in confidence and without fear of recrimination with the aim of resolving the difficulty amicably
- 5.6 When a student requests a replacement of a supervisor or the supervisor requests to be replaced, as both parties agree that they cannot work together, the party requesting the replacement must provide a motivation letter to the Research Office. The Research Office will consider the request, but also seeks input from the other party in writing
- 5.7 Disputes between any members of the supervision team, including the supervisor and student, should be managed by the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies or their designated representative. In the case where the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies is on the supervision team, both the Dean/Executive Dean may be approached by any person involved in the study, including the supervisor or student, to assist with resolving the dispute
- 5.8 Where it is believed to be in the best interests of the research project and members of the team that a new supervisor be allocated, the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies shall be responsible for making arrangements with the student for a replacement supervisor as a matter of urgency
- 5.9 If a supervisor needs to be replaced (inter alia, an irreconcilable breakdown in supervisory relationship, death, or resignation of the supervisor), or an additional supervisor appointed, the same formal governance must be followed as with the initial appointment of a supervisor

- 5.10 The Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies makes the nomination of the replacement supervisor. This is obviously in consultation with both the new supervisor and the student as the two parties need to be comfortable working with each other in the continuation of the study
- 5.11 An administrator may not change the listed supervisor at the request of a student, supervisor or any other person, but may act only on an approved decision by the HDRC
- 5.12 Where a current supervisor is released from the study any outstanding remuneration (if applicable) to the supervisor will be made, based on progress to date against the normal tranches for remuneration as per the supervisor agreement.

6. APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS

- 6.1 Also refer to Nomination and Appointment of Examiner Policy (D11) and the research policy guidelines related to external examiners of minor-dissertations and thesis
- 6.2 As the student's studies near completion (and the assessors have not yet been appointed), the supervisor notifies the Learning Coordinator of the student's intention to submit at least four (4) months in advance to start the process to appoint external assessors. The Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies must submit a motivation to the HDRC for approval for the proposed assessors to allow for timeous appointment, which is a prerequisite for the assessment process to commence
- 6.3 The supervisor or co-supervisor is not involved in the choice and appointment of any assessors.
- 6.4 In the case where the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies is the supervisor, the Dean / Executive Dean will appoint assessors to such a study
- 6.5 The Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies must appoint at least two assessors for a master's study and at least three (of which one must be an international assessor) for a doctoral study to be proposed to the HDRC
- 6.6 The nomination forms for the assessors, together with updated CVs or biography and biographical details, are submitted to the HDRC for approval
- 6.7 In the case of both a master's mini-dissertation and a doctoral thesis, two internal examiners (who will form part of the final oral defence panel) will review the submission before it is sent for external examination. The internal examination carries no marks
- 6.8 Suggestions made by the internal examiners must be affected satisfactorily, as confirmed by the Research Office, before the mini-dissertation or thesis will be submitted for examination
- 6.9 For a mini-dissertation at least two external assessors, both holding at least a doctoral degree in the particular discipline or cognate discipline, must be appointed. These assessors must be external to DVI and must not have had prior involvement with the study which might compromise their objectivity when assessing the minor-dissertation
- 6.10 Where a proposed assessor has been employed at DVI within the last 24 months and is no longer holding a fixed-term or permanent appointment with DVI, a motivation may be given to the HDRC that consideration be given to the appointment of an assessor, with confirmation that this must not have had prior involvement with the study
- 6.11 However, any person currently employed as an external supervisor or co-supervisor, or who is on any contract involving the receipt of payment from DVI for their work, will not be considered "external"
- 6.12 Any person who may reasonably be expected to lack sufficient objectivity in the assessment of a mini-dissertation or thesis is excluded from acting as an assessor; this includes, for example, relatives or dependents of degree candidates, persons over whom any of the

supervisors could exert undue influence, even by default, any person who has been involved in the study or who assisted the student in any way or co-published with the student or intend to co-publish with the student

- 6.13 Except for mini dissertations, all efforts should be made to ensure that a selection of assessors is used with no single assessor appointed more than two times within a single academic year for students linked to a specific supervisor or co-supervisor. The Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies may motivate to the HDRC that consideration be given to more frequent appointments of an assessor, provided that due diligence was followed to obtain a wider selection of assessors
- 6.14 For a doctoral thesis at least three assessors should be appointed. All assessors must hold a doctoral degree and be external to DVI. They must also not have had prior involvement with the project to the effect that their objectivity is compromised when assessing the thesis. Efforts should be made to identify at least one assessor from outside South Africa
- 6.15 To ensure the independence of assessments, each assessor must be attached to a different institution
- 6.16 All assessors must have an appropriate academic or industry research profile, experience, and stature.

7. SUBMISSION OF MINI-DISSERTATIONS OR THESES TO THE RESEARCH OFFICE

- 7.1 The Research Office decides and communicates to students as to how the assessment copies are submitted. Rules and regulations pertaining to the presentation, format, and layout of mini-dissertations and theses that are to be submitted for assessment are stipulated in the DVI Rules and Regulations
- 7.2 Supervisors should take reasonable steps to check that plagiarism or copying does not occur in higher degrees, as confirmed through Turnitin (including a position on AI generated content). The student remains responsible to ensure that plagiarism does not occur. The Plagiarism Policy applies
- 7.3 No mini-dissertation or thesis may be submitted for final assessment without the explicit written permission of the supervisor. Where the supervisor decides to withhold permission, due processes must be followed (refer to 7.11)
- 7.4 No supervisor shall unreasonably withhold permission for the submission of a mini-dissertation or thesis for assessment
- 7.5 Where a dispute arises between the supervisor(s) and student about the submission of the mini-dissertation or thesis for assessment, the student has the right to approach the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies, Dean or Executive Dean, in this order, with a written submission motivating why the mini-dissertation or thesis is considered ready to be assessed. The Executive Dean will decide in consultation with the Dean or Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies. The decision of the Executive Dean is reported to the HDRC
- 7.6 The submission of the mini-dissertation or thesis should be in accordance with the final submission dates per registration cycle and/or period of minimum registration at DVI to ensure timely completion of the assessment process. Late submission could imply the renewal of a registration and/or not graduating on time. However, even if a mini-dissertation or thesis is submitted timeously, DVI can offer no guarantee that all assessors will complete their assessment in time for the next graduation ceremony
- 7.7 An abstract in English of no more than 450 words, describing the problem statement, the most important methods followed, the most important results obtained, and a summary of research

- outputs and impact must appear in the front of every mini-dissertation or thesis. The abstract must include four to six keywords to be included at the bottom of the abstract
- 7.8 The candidate is responsible for ensuring that the mini-dissertation or thesis is of the required technical and language quality required by the supervisor(s) before submission
 - 7.9 All electronic documents should be done in high resolution and submitted to the Research Office to upload on student record. All text and graphical material must be clearly legible and should be easily print or photocopier reproducible. The submission should be prepared for upload to DVI's institutional repository (open access) and therefore access of the research to public-at-large
 - 7.10 The candidate must submit the following to the Research Office for assessment purposes: soft copies of the mini-dissertation or thesis as an encrypted PDF document (the encryption must be shared with the assessors)
 - 7.11 Permission to Submit for Assessment Form signed by the candidate and supervisor(s). Where a supervisor did not support or approve submission this must be indicated and the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies consider the eligibility of submission post internal review by the two panel members of the final oral defence
 - 7.12 An affidavit confirming that the work is the candidate's own and that all sources used have been duly acknowledged and copyright approval has been obtained where applicable. The affidavit must also state that the study has not been submitted to another institution as part of the requirements for a formal qualification and that it has been language edited. A letter confirming language editing, signed by the language editor, must also be attached to the study.

8. DISSEMINATION OF DOCUMENTS TO ASSESORS AND SUPERVISOR(S)

- 8.1 Before a mini-dissertation or thesis is sent to assessor(s), the assessor(s) must be formally appointed
- 8.2 When the mini-dissertation or thesis and the other relevant documentation have been submitted to the Learning Coordinator, the assessment documentation is sent to the internal review panel. All required changes to be effected before it will be submitted for external examination
- 8.3 Assessors are granted four (4) weeks to assess a mini-dissertation and granted six (6) weeks to assess a doctoral thesis and to return the completed assessment form, narrative report (and mini-dissertation or thesis if the assessor has indicated corrections in the manuscript) and the completed Temporary Appointment and Claim forms to the Research Office
- 8.4 When a mini-dissertation or thesis is sent to an assessor it must be accompanied by a cover letter from the Research Office, the assessment guidelines stipulating the requirements for the particular qualification (specifying inter alia the aspects the assessor is expected to report on in the case of a mini-dissertation or thesis) and a copy of the Assessor's Report Form. The cover letter must contain the following sentence: "Please note that no inference as to the result expected by DVI can or should be drawn from the fact that a mini-dissertation or thesis, is submitted to an assessor for assessment, as submission for assessment may occur with or without the permission of a supervisor"
- 8.5 The Research Office responsible for overseeing higher degree studies must ensure that the assessors' reports are received timeously, and if not, the responsible Learning Coordinator member must follow up on these reports

- 8.6 Sound communication should be maintained between the Research Office and students, supervisors, and assessors. For example, assessor reports must be acknowledged and remuneration processes, where applicable, should be timeously actioned
- 8.7 The Learning Coordinator and Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies must compile the reports and submit to the supervisor, ensuring that all details about the identity and affiliation of the assessors are removed from the material shared with the supervisor
- 8.8 The supervisor shares the reports from the assessors with the student to enable corrections
- 8.9 When the supervisor shares requirements for changes or corrections by assessors with the student, it must be ensured that only the part of the assessors' reports stipulating the requirements and no other information is shared
- 8.10 Specifically, under no circumstances may the identity of any assessor be made known to the student and supervisor. In cases where an assessor has indicated on their report that the assessor does not object to their identity being made known to the student, this step may take place only once the assessment has run its complete course, which is ordinarily when the HDRC has endorsed the final outcome of a higher degree study. When there are conflicting results, the reports are not to be placed at the disposal of the student. The supervisor together with the Research Office will first deal with the conflicting results as explained in sections 9 and 10
- 8.11 In the case of conflict reports as flagged by the Research Office, the supervisor(s) submit a Summary Assessment Form report to the Learning Coordinator and Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies responsible for higher degree studies which contextualises the supervision process and highlights the achievements and shortcomings and must be submitted to the Research Office. This report serves along with all other documents at the HDRC meeting.

9. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES RECOMMENDED BY THE INDIVIDUAL ASSESSORS

- 9.1 There are four possible responses from an assessor of a minor-dissertation, namely
 - 9.1.1 S/he may approve the mini dissertation with no corrections to be made and award a mark of 50% or more, or
 - 9.1.2 S/he may provisionally approve the mini dissertation with minor corrections to be done to the satisfaction of the supervisor and award a mark of 50% or more, or
 - 9.1.3 S/he may recommend substantial amendments to the mini dissertation without awarding a mark in the light of deficiencies identified in their narrative report and advise that the revised version be submitted to them for reassessment acknowledging the fact that their final mark will be capped at 50%, or
 - 9.1.4 S/he may reject the mini-dissertation, awarding a mark reflecting a fail (less than 50%) in which case no reassessment by this assessor will take place.
- 9.2 There are five possible responses from an assessor of a thesis, namely:
 - 9.2.1 Approval of the thesis and that the doctoral degree be conferred, with or without minor corrections, or
 - 9.2.2 Provisional approval of the thesis, subject to the candidate effecting non-substantive corrections and improvements as identified in the assessor's report, to the satisfaction of the supervisor, or
 - 9.2.3 Non-approval due to substantial deficiencies in the thesis as identified in the assessor's report. With a recommendation that the substantial amendments be effected to the satisfaction of the HDRC (which process may involve the advice from an external independent expert), or
 - 9.2.4 The thesis to be re-submitted to the assessor for reassessment

- 9.2.5 Reject the thesis, in which case no reassessment is recommended or considered and a fail of the thesis is recommended by the assessor
- 9.3 Because processes in DVI are subject to occasional auditing, such as in favour of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Act 3 of 2000), the onus is upon the Research Office to keep accessible records of the examination process.

10. MANAGING AND PROCESSING THE ASSESSMENT RESULTS IN THE RESEARCH OFFICE

- 10.1 The standard process for managing and integrating assessment results is provided for in Tables 1 and 2 below. The Research Office engages with assessors separately and independently during the assessment process unless they elect the option to seek a unified recommendation from assessors when there are conflicting results, as indicated in Tables 1 and 2 below. The Research Office may, however, choose to incorporate the seeking of a unified recommendation as a standard step into their processes, regardless of whether there may be conflicting assessment results or not
- 10.2 Where a unified recommendation is arrived at, a Consolidated Report authored by Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies or the individual delegated by the Dean or HDRC and approved by all assessors is submitted to the HDRC, along with all the assessors' reports. Significant differences between the individual and consolidated reports need to be explained in the consolidated report
- 10.3 Where a unified recommendation is not arrived at, the Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies or the individual delegated by the Dean or HDRC provides a report indicating the reasons. The report may recommend a particular course of action for the HDRC to consider. The HDRC will have regard to the various courses of action set out below
- 10.4 Where a unified recommendation is not arrived at, if one or more assessors provide a well-motivated argument for the revision and resubmission of the work submitted for assessment, the default position is to do such revisions. In all instances of corrections and revisions the supervisor(s) (and where applicable the Non-Assessing Chair) oversees the process and certifies in writing that all corrections requested by the assessors have been addressed before the student resubmits the corrected version of the study to the Research Office
- 10.5 Where a unified recommendation is not arrived at, if two (or more) of the assessors for a master's minor-dissertation fail the study it constitutes a fail
- 10.6 In the finalisation of the assessment of a master's study with conflicting assessment results or a mark difference of more than 10%, the HDRC is not obliged to award a simple average of the assessors' marks if there is a discrepancy of more than 10% between the marks allocated by individual assessors, or if one assessor recommends a distinction mark and the other allocates a mark lower than a distinction. The processes described in resolution of conflicting results may be followed in such a case – see Table 1
- 10.7 In the case where minor corrections are required, a candidate is granted a maximum period of three months to do the corrections to the satisfaction of the supervisor. In addition, should a student not complete the corrections before the cut-off date for completing results of a specific academic year, they might be required to register for the next academic year to complete the assessment process
- 10.8 In the case where substantial changes and resubmission for re-assessment are required, a candidate is granted a maximum of six months to do the corrections and to resubmit the mini-dissertation or thesis with the approval of the supervisor. The Learning Coordinator forwards

- the corrected document to the assessor(s) who requested a re-submission. The mark of the assessor(s) who proposed a re-submission will be capped at 50% in the case of a mini dissertation
- 10.9 Students who have failed a research doctoral degree will need to reapply for the degree and register a new topic if they wish to reattempt the degree. A failed doctoral thesis may not be resubmitted for examination.
 - 10.10 In the case of a professional or coursework master's qualification a student who has failed the mini dissertation, but has passed the coursework modules, the HDRC, on recommendation of the supervisor and Head of Programme: Postgraduate Studies, may approve that the candidate repeats the mini-dissertation module on a newly defined study field, to be submitted and approved as per the processes stipulated for first time submission and approval of study fields. Repeating the mini dissertation is subject to:
 - 10.10.1 Overall performance in the coursework, or
 - 10.10.2 Completing the mini dissertation in the allowed maximum period for a master's qualification, i.e. 48 months. In exceptional circumstances, another twelve months may be granted to complete the study subject to approval by the Executive Dean
 - 10.11 To be awarded a master's degree with distinction a student must achieve an average final mark for the qualification of at least 75% in the case of a coursework master's, calculated in accordance with the credit values allocated to all the coursework modules and the mini-dissertation respectively (for example, if the credit value of the mini-dissertation represents 33% of the total credit value of the qualification, the average final mark for the qualification will be weighted in the proportion of 33 for the mini-dissertation and 67 for all the coursework modules)
 - 10.12 Should the assessment result have been problematic, with assessors that made conflicting recommendations as to the awarding or not of the degree, or as to the merit of the mini-dissertation or thesis, the HDRC should take steps to resolve the impasse. The resolution of the conflicting recommendations could involve one or more of the following steps:
 - 10.12.1 Request additional information from the supervisors and/or assessors, or
 - 10.12.2 Recommend further engagement with the assessors. One possibility is to reach a unified recommendation, or
 - 10.12.3 Appoint a knowledgeable external expert to advise the HDRC, or
 - 10.12.4 Appoint an additional assessor to assess the originally submitted mini-dissertation, or thesis independently, or
 - 10.12.5 Appoint an arbitrator to consider the reports of the other assessors/ experts, the report by the supervisor, and the originally submitted mini-dissertation or thesis, and/or the version where corrections have been applied, if relevant to make a recommendation to the HDRC
 - 10.13 It should be borne in mind that submission to a further external assessor, external expert, or arbitrator still permits the HDRC to make a final decision concerning the end result.
 - 10.14 The HDRC may make further recommendations to resolve conflicting assessment results, on an ad hoc basis, depending on the merits of the individual case (except in the case of an arbiter's recommendation)
 - 10.15 Guidelines for HDRC responses in terms of the handling of non-conflicting and conflicting assessment results are provided in the Tables 1 to 2 below
 - 10.16 All assessments in the category of 'standard integration of non-conflicting assessment results' are reviewed and finalised by the Research Office, with a recommendation to confirm at the HDRC.

- 10.17 When there are significant discrepancies between the results of the assessors or where one or more assessors recommend revision and reassessment, results cannot be immediately finalised
- 10.18 An allegation of plagiarism will be dealt with in accordance with the Plagiarism Policy and no feedback from assessors should be provided to the student prior to resolving the matter
- 10.19 If two or more of the assessors for a doctoral thesis recommend a fail, the assessment outcome constitutes a fail.
- 10.20 A candidate who has failed a mini-dissertation or thesis may not again be assessed on the same project
- 10.21 When a mini-dissertation or thesis is failed, supervisors must provide details explaining why the study was allowed to be submitted for assessment unless the supervisor was opposed to the submission
- 10.22 When a mini dissertation is failed a proposal on a different project should be submitted should the student wish to reregister and DVI is willing to accept the reregistration
- 10.23 The final assessment outcome may be revealed to the candidate only once the assessment results have been approved by the HDRC
- 10.24 An assessor's name may be revealed to a student only after the assessment process has been finalised and the final assessment outcome has received endorsement at HDRC, provided that the particular assessor has given consent that their identity may be revealed to the student
- 10.25 The following Tables provide guidance for the standard integration of non-conflicting results:

Table 1: Guidelines for the standard integration of results for a master's mini dissertation. All outcomes are subject to complying with requested corrections

Mini-dissertation results proposed by assessors	Research Office Response
1. Both assessors recommend a mark of at least 50%, and the difference between the marks is less than 10%.	Average the marks. The HDRC may consider adjusting the marks at 73% or 74%, to 75% and 63% or 64% to 65%.
2. Both assessors recommend a mark of at least 50%, but the difference between the marks is more than 10%.	For mini dissertations the Research Office may decide to average the marks. OR Appoint an additional assessor. Consider the recommendation and recommend an appropriate mark. OR Appoint an additional assessor. Average the third assessor's mark with the mark of the original assessor or moderator that is closest to that of the third assessor to determine the final mark. OR

	Facilitate further discussion between assessor(s) to arrive at a unified recommendation. OR Appoint an arbitrator to consider the reports of the other assessors/ experts, the report by the supervisor, and the originally submitted mini-dissertation and/or the version where corrections have been applied, if relevant to make a recommendation to the HDRC.
3. Both assessors recommend a re-assessment.	The student revises and re-submits. The marks of the two re-assessments are each capped at 50%.
4. One of the assessors recommends a fail, while the other recommends a mark of 50% or more, or a re-assessment.	Appoint an additional assessor: If the additional assessor recommends a pass, the two pass marks are averaged, bearing in mind that if one of the original assessors required a re-assessment, the mark of the re-assessment of that assessor is capped at 50%. If the additional assessor recommends a fail, the student fails this component of the degree study. If the additional assessor recommends a major revision and reassessment, the student revises and resubmits for re-assessment. The additional assessor's mark, as well as that of the re-assessment of one of the original assessors where applicable, is each capped at 50%. The final mark is the average between 50% and the second assessor's (pass) mark in case the pass mark of the original assessor did not involve a re-assessment. OR Appoint an expert advisor or an arbitrator. Consider the expert advisor's recommendation (not binding on HDRCs pronouncement) and recommend an appropriate mark.
5. One of the assessors recommends reassessment, while the other assessor recommends a pass.	Student revises and resubmits for re-assessment to the assessor requiring re-assessment. If this assessor recommends a pass mark for the revised work, this assessor's mark is capped at 50%. The final mark is the average of the marks of the two assessors. If this assessor recommends a fail for the revised work, appoint a third assessor (as above) or appoint an expert advisor or an arbiter. Consider the recommendation of the expert advisor or the third assessor or the arbitrator.

Table 2: Guidelines for the standard integration of non-conflicting and conflicting results for Theses

Doctoral thesis results proposed by assessors	Research Office Response
1. All the assessors recommend awarding the qualification, with or without minor corrections, but	Recommend the awarding of the qualification following a declaration from the supervisor that all the corrections were implemented by the student.

without the need for resubmission or reassessment.	
2. Two or more assessors recommend the failure of the thesis.	Recommend that the majority result carries and the student fails.
3. One assessor recommends the failure of the thesis, while the other two recommend a pass or revision and re-assessment.	Facilitate further discussion between the assessors to arrive at a unified recommendation. OR Appoint an additional assessor. If the additional assessor recommends a pass, the thesis passes. If the additional assessor recommends a fail, an expert advisor can be appointed. Consider the expert advisor's recommendation and recommend an appropriate pass or fail.
4. One or more assessors recommend revision and resubmission for re-assessment and no assessor fails the thesis.	Student revises and resubmits for re-assessment. If the assessor (or assessors) who recommended a resubmission recommends a pass, the student passes. If one assessor then recommends a fail, follow the procedure in #3 above. If both assessors recommend a fail of the re-assessed work, follow the procedure in #2 above.

- 10.26 Following the examination, the Research Office must ensure that the compulsory oral defence or Viva Voce which forms part of the academic requirements for a master's and doctoral qualification is completed. The Viva Voce should be arranged by the Research Office. To promote the work of the candidate and/or their research team internationally, it is recommended that the session is conducted online or as a hybrid (online and in-person activity).

11. FINALISING OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

- 11.1 All forms and reports (assessors' assessment forms and narrative reports, supervisors' reports, summary reports, and HDRC reports) are submitted to the Research Office for recording keeping purposes
- 11.2 In addition to submitting their final mini-dissertation or thesis, students must provide their supervisor and the Research Office with evidence of scholarly work submitted to an indexed peer-reviewed publication(s), with the intention of possible publication, by the time the HDRC meets to consider the assessors' reports. Master's students are required to submit one piece of work, while doctoral students must submit two pieces of work suitable for submission to indexed peer-reviewed publications, all stemming from their study
- 11.3 The HDRC meets to review the results and assessment reports of all masters' and doctoral candidates, as well as the supervisor certification that the proposed corrections have been done. All master's and doctoral results are finalised at this level and submitted to the Senate for noting
- 11.4 After final acceptance of the mini-dissertation or thesis for graduation purposes the final version in an approved electronic format (single PDF file), with metadata, as required by the

institutional repository, that are an integral part of the mini-dissertation or thesis must be submitted by the candidate to the Research Office before the finalisation of the programme of the applicable graduation ceremony. No candidate's name may be included in the programme for the graduation ceremony unless the Research Office has verified in writing that these requirements have been met in full

- 11.5 Together with the electronic copy, the candidate must submit written confirmation stating that the content of the electronic copy is a true version of the finally approved mini-dissertation or thesis
- 11.6 Under the guidance of the supervisor, the candidate must provide at least three, but not more than six, internationally standardised keywords in English to be included in the abstract of the study
- 11.7 A doctoral candidate must also submit an abbreviated biography and a laudation, in the required format and approved by the supervisor, when submitting the finally corrected soft copy of the thesis to the Research Office, for uptake in the graduation programme
- 11.8 A candidate will not be deemed to have completed the requirements for conferment of the degree if the final corrected electronic copy of the mini-dissertation or thesis has not been submitted to the relevant Learning Coordinator prior to the closure of the graduation list of the forthcoming graduation ceremony
- 11.9 Any master's or doctoral degree can be awarded only after the successful completion of every requirement of each component of the qualification as determined by DVI regulations
- 11.10 Appropriate feedback must be given to all assessors once the outcome has been approved.