**GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION, PRESENTATION AND APPROVAL OF A PHD PROPOSAL IN THE FACULTY OF COMMERCE**

All doctoral students are expected to have developed and presented a **formal research proposal** within the first 6 months of registration, and must have completed and received approval for their proposal within their first year of registration. Only in exceptional cases will a student who has not submitted their proposal to the Faculty and, via the Faculty, to the Doctoral Degrees Board (DDB) within their first year of registration, be considered for re-registration and progress into the second year of study.

In terms of Faculty process, all new PhD candidates are required to present their proposal during a formal seminar in their respective departments/sections. A proposal review panel must be constituted at this seminar and must include at least three senior academics (excluding the supervisor). A chair, who is not the supervisor, should also be nominated.

The seminar must be based on a written research proposal (see below), which must be submitted (with supervisor’s sign off) to the chair and panel before the seminar is given.

The purpose of this seminar is to confirm that the candidate is appropriately prepared to carry out studies leading to a PhD degree. This will best be done by demonstrating:

* an adequate understanding of the current literature in the field,
* a clear definition of the key questions to be addressed in the context of the proposed

research,

* a clear knowledge of the research procedures to be used and the methodology to be used in analysing the results.

After the seminar has been presented, the candidate will usually be required to incorporate into the written research proposal any relevant issues which arise from the seminar. Depending on the feedback of the panel, subsequent revisions to the proposal might be:

1. To the satisfaction of the supervisor(s); or
2. To the satisfaction of the full panel, and the supervisor(s)

In the case of a (ii) outcome, the panel will need to decide as to whether the revised proposal will need to be formally re-presented by the student to the panel, or if revisions can be approved by the panel via means of a round-robin review. It is also an option that the panel fail the proposal.

Once the proposal revision requirements have been satisfied, the Head of Department, supervisor and full panel will endorse the proposal document by signing the proposal coversheet (see template attached). This must be then submitted, along with the revised proposal, to the Faculty Office (email: comfac-coa@uct.ac.za) in order that it may be referred to the core Dean’s Committee of Assessors (DCoA). As soon as the endorsed proposal has been submitted to the Faculty Office, the student should also proceed to obtain ethical clearance.

The DCoA will then review the proposal (and the accompanying supporting documentation) and endorse the recommendation of PhD candidature to the DDB. If necessary, the CoA may require the candidate to make further revisions to the proposal before this endorsement is granted.

General guidelines for the PhD proposal are as follows:

* The proposal should be approximately 10 pages long (excluding the abstract, references and appendices). At the discretion of the supervisor, a proposal length of up to a maximum of 15 pages might be permissible. In no instances should the proposal length exceed 15 pages.
* Candidates should note that the purpose of the proposal document is to make a case for the research to be undertaken. It is not a progress report.

The proposal document should also include:

* A structured abstract (see template provided).
* A summary of the essential background literature.
* An explanation of the need for the research to be done.
* The hypotheses / objectives of the research.
* The key questions to be addressed in the research.
* The approach to be taken in doing the project, including research design, data collection procedures, and methodology for analysing results.
* Ethical considerations.

It should be emphasised that the above procedures are not intended to do anything other than ensure that all concerned with the pursuit of the PhD, viz. the student, the supervisor, the Head of Department and the DcoA, as representing the Faculty, are given or provide every possible support in order to ensure the successful completion of the thesis in the soonest possible time.

Once the seminar has been presented and the proposal document submitted to the satisfaction of the Faculty and the DcoA, the Doctoral Degrees Board will confirm the candidate’s candidature.

Attachments:

1. PhD Proposal Coversheet
2. Structured Abstract Template (for full research masters and PhD)

Revised November 2022

A/Prof Sarah Chapman

**PhD Proposal Coversheet**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Department: | ACC |  | BUS  |  | DOC |  | DPP |  | ECO |  |
|  | FTX Finance |  | FTX Taxation |  | GSB |  | INF |  | STATS |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Student Name and Surname: |  |
| Student Number: |  |
| PeopleSoft Number: |  |
| Highest Qualification Obtained: |  |
| Supervisor: |  |
| Co-supervisor (include Institution/Company if external): |  |
|  | 2) |
|  | 3) |
| Administrative Supervisor: |  |
| Field of Research: |  |
| Proposal Title:  |
|  |

We confirm:

* That the above candidate presented a seminar on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [date] in the Department/School/College on the subject of this research proposal and we recommend that the proposal be approved.
* That the student is aware that he/she needs to immediately apply for ethics clearance

Primary Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Co-Supervisor 1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Co-Supervisor 2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Co-Supervisor 3: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of the members that attended the seminar (min of three senior academics excluding the supervisor/s):

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Title** | **Name** | **Surname** | **Signature** | **Date** |
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I hereby confirm that as Head of Department, I am of the view that the person(s) nominated as supervisor(s) is/are competent and has/have the time to supervise the PhD.

HOD: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**FACULTY OF COMMERCE: Structured abstract for research proposals**

The Higher Degrees Committee and Doctoral Committee of Assessors in the Faculty of Commerce require the submission of a two-page structured abstract from each 180-credit Masters candidate and every PhD candidate in addition to the full research proposal required by individual departments. Please complete your structured abstract using all the following headings. All fields are required. The abstract should reflect what appears in the full proposal.

**Title:** Provisional title (this may be changed over the course of the research)

**Background to the study:**Brief statement concerning the context of the research or the problem it addresses. Some background information on the research and how it fits in with other studies should be included. This point is important because new doctoral research should satisfy a significant 'gap' or 'missing link' found in previous research. Whenever appropriate, the approach and the theoretical or subject scope of the research should be noted.

**Purpose/aims of the study:**First, specify the research question/s addressed by the proposed study. Second, state the objectives of the research, its focus or aims of the investigation. |Research questions, thesis statements, proposition and primary hypotheses should be reported.

**Research design:**This section is likely to be the most substantial portion of the abstract and should state the research design to be used and the methods to be applied. If the study includes human participants, the sampling strategy and a description of participants should be noted. Variables investigated should be noted.

Required materials, equipment and access, should be mentioned.

**Data analysis:**Briefly describe approach and techniques of analysis

**Expected contribution to knowledge/originality:** Note the expected contribution to knowledge of the research and its importance.

**Ethics issues**: Note how ethical clearance will be gained, if required.

**Social implications (if applicable):**Not all doctoral research will have social implications. Briefly note the societal impact, policy impact or quality of life impact of the research.

**Principal references:**(no more than three)

**Keywords:** (no more than three keywords)