

University of Cape Town
Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment
PhD PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

In terms of Faculty policy all new PhD candidates are required to present a formal seminar in their respective departments to an audience at which the Head of Department (or designated alternate), a member of the Faculty Committee of Assessors and the Supervisor must be present. The seminar must be based on a written research proposal (see below) which must be submitted to the member of the Faculty Committee of Assessors and Head of Department at least two weeks 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.

The written research proposal must be submitted within 12 months of first registration for a PhD and should satisfy the following criteria:

- Be at least 10 pages long
- 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 document should include:
 - A provisional title
 - A rationale for the study (i.e. why has this topic been chosen?)
 - An adequate understanding of the current literature in the field, and a summary of the essential background literature.
 - A clear articulation of the key research question(s) to be addressed in the context of the proposed hypotheses and/or aims and objectives of the research.
 - the research is of sufficient scope to result in a significant and original addition to knowledge on the chosen topic.
 - The approach to be taken in doing the project, viz. experimental procedures, methods of data collection, methodology for analysing results, etc.
 - That the research work is feasible within the expected timeframe, that there is support available or planned,
 - Indicate how the work will make a substantial original contribution to knowledge.
 - Key references
- Show a consideration of ethical issues and that, where relevant, the necessary ethical approval will be obtained, and the anticipated process for obtaining such.

After the seminar has been presented, the candidate may be required to incorporate in the written research proposal, any relevant issues which arise from the seminar. If necessary the panel may require the candidate to present another seminar if they do not demonstrate the required level of competence to undertake the research. The candidate must then sign and submit the written proposal to the Supervisor, Head of Department and the member of the Faculty Committee of Assessors (CoA) who attended the Seminar for endorsement and certification that the seminar has been held and the proposal is satisfactory. If the written research proposal satisfies the criteria above, the Member of the CoA that attended the seminar, the Head of the Department and Supervisor will endorse the proposal document and submit it to the Faculty Office in order for the relevant faculty administrators to process the proposal and accompanying forms further.

Faculty approval is normally sought via a Deans Circular, before ultimately being sent to the Doctoral Degrees Board for final ratification and confirmation of candidature of the doctoral student at UCT.

It is the normal expectation that a PhD student has completed and received approval for a PhD proposal within their first year of registration. Only in exceptional cases will a PhD student who has not submitted their proposal to the Faculty and Doctoral Degrees Board within their first year of registration be considered for re-registration and progress into the second year.

It should be emphasized 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 CoA,

as representing the Faculty, are given or provide every possible support to the candidate in order to ensure the successful completion of the thesis in the soonest possible time.

In addition to the EBE PhD Proposal Guidelines, the departments in the faculty have the following additional requirements:

The Department of Architecture and Planning requires the following:

- The prospective student will submit a short proposal to the supervisor / Programme Convenor / HOD, to determine if the proposal is compatible with programme research and teaching areas, and if supervision capacity is available.
- If the proposal is accepted, the student will be required to register provisionally for a period of 6 months in order to fully develop the proposal. The proposal may be submitted prior to the end of the period if the supervisor considers it sufficiently developed.
- Once the full proposal is submitted, the supervisor will convene a seminar and the process as described above will be followed.

The Department of Construction Economics and Management requires the following:

- A developed theoretical framework in addition to the methodological framework.

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PhD PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Doctoral Degrees Board

It is a requirement of all PhD candidates that they prepare, and submit a written PhD research proposal and seek departmental, faculty and ultimately DDB approval of the proposal. This is in line with best international practise and is to ensure that PhD candidates are appropriately prepared and supported to carry out studies leading to a PhD degree.

Exact requirements differ slightly, depending on the faculty/department/discipline in which the research is to be undertaken and details are provided by each faculty on their websites as follows:

Commerce	http://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/com/Postgraduate-Studies
Engineering & the Built Environment	The general guidelines apply.
Graduate School of Business	https://www.gsb.uct.ac.za/academic-programmes/phd
Health Sciences	Please contact your Faculty Office directly.
Humanities	http://www.humanities.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/2/Research_prop%20guide_2014.pdf
Law	http://www.sals.uct.ac.za/sals/programmes/doctoraldegress
Science	http://www.science.uct.ac.za/sci/postgrad/current/guide

In general all proposals are intended to demonstrate:

- A rationale for the study (i.e. why has this topic been chosen?)
- An adequate comprehension of the current literature in the field (with variations in disciplines e.g. Law proposals may include reference to case notes; legislation surveys etc. in addition to key journal articles and texts).
- A clear articulation of the key question(s) to be addressed and the main aim(s) of the
- A clear knowledge and justification of the research design, methodology and methods-
- That the research work is feasible within an appropriate timeline, that there is funding and support available or planned, and is of sufficient scope to result in a significant and original addition to knowledge on the chosen topic.
- That, where relevant, the necessary ethical approval will be obtained, and the anticipated process for obtaining such.

In general, once departmental processes have been followed and a PhD proposal has been approved at departmental and faculty level the relevant faculty administrators process the proposal and accompanying forms further. Faculty approval is normally sought via a Deans Circular, before ultimately being sent to the Doctoral Degrees Board for final ratification and confirmation of candidature of the doctoral student at UCT.

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Peter Meissner (on behalf of the DDB)

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