Postgraduate Research Handbook

USP POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH HANDBOOK

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The information contained in this handbook is correct at the time of going to press. The University of the South Pacific reserves the right to make alterations to the information and requirements detailed in the handbook without prior notice if necessary. Any alterations and amendments to the handbook will be reflected in the Web version available through the USP Research Office homepage.

The content of this handbook is mainly designed to provide guidance for postgraduate research students and staff on policies and procedures that operate at USP. The handbook should be used in conjunction with the USP Handbook and Calendar.

General enquiries about programmes or applications should be directed to the relevant Academic Unit.

Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to inform postgraduate research students and their supervisors about the conduct of postgraduate research at the University. It provides guidance concerning the research policies and process, Postgraduate Research Portal [PGRP], skills development, student-supervisor responsibilities, and services available at USP. It aims to enhance the quality of postgraduate research student experience and enable the successful and timely completion of degree.

The handbook is divided into five sections. Sections 1 and 2 cover aspects of the postgraduate research student experience and the research process. Section 3 covers the University, Supervisor's, and the student's roles and responsibilities. Section 4 highlights the resources available to postgraduate students at USP. Section 5 includes other relevant information and key documents pertaining to research.

This handbook should be read in conjunction with the University Handbook and Calendar, Research Ethics Policy, and the Intellectual Property Policy, which govern the core regulations and policies of the relevant degrees. This and all other key documents and forms can be accessed via the Research Office website

The University of the South Pacific is already a world-class research institution in several domains. We have learnt from them that the purpose of quality research is to make an impact in terms of new knowledge, public policy/engagement or even open up new avenues for further exploration. The most impost step is to choose the right questions to ask, so as to increase the impact but also remaining achievable, with realistic assumptions and time frame. This book helps enormously in this regard as it sets out logical standard operating procedures for undertaking research in the humanities and sciences. Furthermore, it provides the necessary governance that helps the research teams maintain high quality and oversight in their endeavours.

Message from the DVC Research & Innovation,
Prof. Janusz Jankowski

Acronyms

AURC – Academic Unit Research Committee

DHoS – Deputy Head of School

DOES – Directory of Experts and Supervisors

DRP –   Directed Research Project

HoS –   Head of School

PGRP – Postgraduate Research Portal

PhD –   Doctor of Philosophy

SAS –   Student Academic Services

SRP –   Supervised Research Project

SRT –   Strategic Research Themes

UREC –University Research Ethics Policy

USP –   The University of the South Pacific
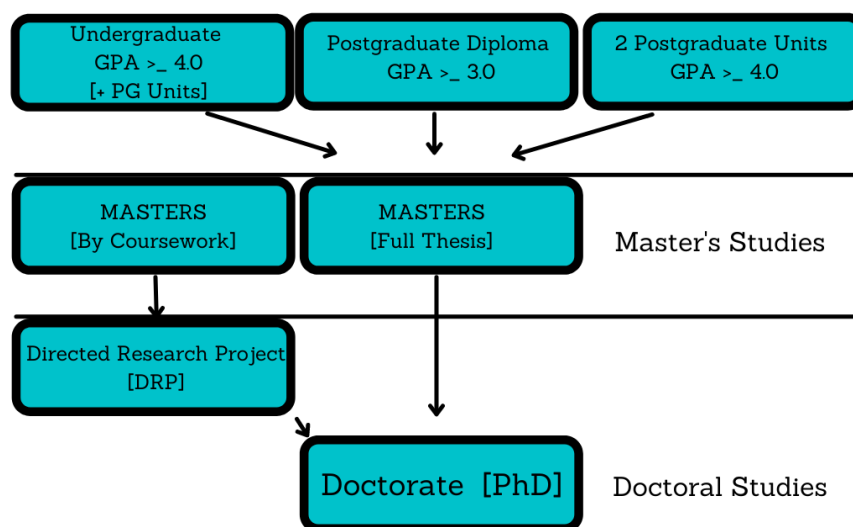
1. Postgraduate Research at USP

Research students provide the opportunity of new and innovative research in universities, in addition to the general research carried out by staff. It requires different skills and provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills in this academic field. New postgraduate research students must be prepared to unlearn and rethink many of the doctrines that have been part of his/her educational journey up to this point. Research, and the process of writing a research report or thesis, is often very different from the normal postgraduate diploma (or undergraduate) coursework that comprised that journey. This section is intended to provide information on all formal stages of your time at The University of the South Pacific. Additional requirements may apply in your subject area, and you should check this with your supervisor at your first supervisory meeting.

1.1 Postgraduate Research Pathways

The Master's research degree involves undertaking a piece of supervised research which has critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic; and successfully completing training in, and a demonstrated understanding of research methods appropriate to the field. A PhD degree entails the production of a written body of work that makes an original and substantial contribution to knowledge.

There are several pathways to postgraduate research study at USP. For more details follow the Master's and PhD degree programme regulations in the current USP Handbook and Calendar.

Postgraduate Research Pathways

1.2 Becoming A Postgraduate Research Student

1.2.1 Selecting a Research Topic and Supervisor

Before applying for admission in the research programme, you should decide on the general area(s) in which you are interested and should identify potential research supervisors. Deciding on your area of interest is critical, as this may become life-long area of expertise. By thoroughly investigating your options before you commence candidature, you can avoid some of the more common challenges that new students can face.

Before applying for admission, it is recommended that you discuss your proposed research project and how it matches the research interests of your Academic Unit. You may also explore research projects undertaken in the University's Strategic Research Themes [SRT].

Research projects undertaken in the University's areas of research strength have the advantage of having a concentration of resources and facilities, and a lively research culture. Additionally, it is important to note that not all research topics have the necessary scope for a postgraduate research degree. Others are too big to be completed within the timeframe for the degree and some topics may not be able to be supervised or resourced within in the University.

As for supervisors, search staff profiles and their research expertise on the Academic Unit webpages. It is important to find a supervisor whose area of research matches your own. Expecting someone to supervise you outside of his or her area of expertise is risky. All members of your supervision panel should be qualified to assess your work, so it should be related to their research. The Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy provides the criteria for the appointment of supervisors for postgraduate research candidates and the roles and responsibilities of supervisors. The Deputy Head of School Research & Postgraduate Affairs in the Academic Unit can assist in finding a staff member who may be able to help supervise your research at USP or even outside of USP. It is not uncommon for students to have a supervisor external to the University or researchers who hold adjunct position at the University.

Once you have been assigned or have identified potential supervisor(s), you should approach each one, introduce yourself and discuss your proposed research. Note that you will need to get a staff member's consent to supervise your research project. It is critical that you find a supervisor whose research interests cover your own. If you are unable to identify a potential supervisor, you may still submit your application of admission. The Academic Unit Research Committee (AURC) will assign you a potential supervisor depending on the availability of academics in your proposed area of research. Where possible, it is a good idea to talk to other members of the research group or school your proposed supervisors and their track record of supervision and to ask other students who

are supervised by these staff whether they are happy with the amount of support they have received.

1.2.2 Registration and Admission Procedures

Once you have chosen a supervisor, you can then apply for admission into the programme. You must enrol as a postgraduate research student at the beginning of your first semester of research and again at the start of each semester until you submit your thesis. It is the responsibility of all candidates to ensure that they are enrolled at the beginning of every semester and that all the enrolment details are correct.

Students who fail to enrol and have not formally applied for programme suspension will be considered to have withdrawn from the programme. A student who has been granted suspended and candidature and does not register in the following semester will also be considered to have withdrawn from the programme.

To enrol, you need to first complete an "Application for Admission" form which can be obtained from the Academic Unit Research and Postgraduate Affairs office or from the Student Academic Services (SAS). Complete the application form and either deliver it or send it to the Administrative Assistant in the relevant School.

For detailed and specific programmes, please refer to the Master's and PhD Degree Programmes in the current USP Handbook and Calendar. Note that you cannot be issued with a student identification card until you have registered, which means that you will not be able to borrow books from the library, gain access to University premises or, if you are funded, access your studentship benefits. Also note that only students who have fulfilled the admission criteria to higher degrees are eligible to be admitted for the degree of Master's or PhD. Refer to Admission regulations for Master's and PhD programmes in the current USP Calendar. In the absence of an approved research proposal accompanying your application, you will be given provisional entry into the Masters or PhD programme. If you receive provisional admission, you will be required to submit your research proposal to the AURC by the end of week 7 of the semester for full time students in the Master's programme; for part-time students, the proposal should be submitted by the end of week 14 of the semester. For the PhD programme, full time students' proposals need to be submitted by the end of the first semester; for part time students, the proposal should be submitted by the end of the second semester.

After admission, students need to develop a Research Proposal, submit, and have their Research Proposal approved, as explained in section 2.1. Students who wish to apply for University funding for their research should attach detailed project budget to their Research Proposal. It is important to note that, once your Research Proposal has been

approved, progress reports must be submitted at regular intervals so that postgraduate research students can continue to be registered.

While you are enrolled as a research student, you may not normally be registered for a course leading to any other qualification. Conversely, there may be shorter courses that you would benefit from attending. Your supervisor may indicate particular courses relevant to your research that you should or must attend. This could be training offered by the University's Research Office or Academic Unit or professional body, delivered on a national or regional basis.

1.3 Joint PhD (Cotutelle) Programmes

Students wishing to undertake their PhD programmes at USP and at another research-intensive university may do so as per the Joint PhD (Cotutelle) Programmes policy. 'Cotutelle' refers to a PhD degree program that is undertaken jointly with supervision at both USP and the partner institution. The PhD student (regional or international) must spend time in residence at both USP and the partner PhD student (regional or international) must spend time in residence at both USP and the partner institution during their candidature and, if successful, will be awarded a PhD degree jointly by both partner institutions. It is important to note that the University does not support 'dual awards' whereby the candidate receives separate degrees from each partner institution.

To establish a Cotutelle Agreement with an approved partner institution, the proposed supervisor should use the template from an existing agreement and seek approval from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation), by submitting the proposed agreement and completed Cotutelle Agreement Application Form. To establish a Cotutelle Agreement with a partner institution for which no earlier agreement exists, the supervisor should use the generic Cotutelle Agreement template wherever possible.

1.4 Postgraduate Research Programme and Candidature

One of the major challenges associated with undertaking a degree by research is the apparent lack of structure in the degree. Unlike an undergraduate degree and Master's by coursework, with defined subjects, assignments and examinations, the Master's by research and the PhD degree have only major output – the thesis.

The University has some major milestones and regular progress reporting requirements to help you navigate your research journey and obtain feedback on progress. These milestones and reporting requirements are outlined below.

1.4.1 Confirmation of Candidature

Your admission to a Master's by research or PhD programme is provisional until your research proposal and budget have been approved by the AURC. At the end of this period

of the relevant AURC shall decide whether the student's enrolment should be confirmed or cancelled or be granted an extension.

Students must submit their research proposal and budget to the supervisor(s). In some cases, the research proposal and budget may also be deliberated upon by the AURC or the Research Group. Once the proposal has the appropriate endorsements it must be submitted to the AURC via the Academic Unit Moodle portal and the Postgraduate Research Portal.

1.4.2. Semesterly Progress Reports

All research students are required to submit a progress report at the end of each semester throughout the entire duration of their candidature. The Progress Report serves to inform the School and AURC whether your progress is proceeding according to your plan and to identify and address, as far as possible, any impediments to your progress. Your progress report must be submitted before the specified deadline via the Academic Unit Moodle portal. Failure to submit your progress report may result in the termination of your candidature.

1.4.3. Mid-candidature Review [PhD only]

Students enrolled in a PhD programme must successfully pass a mid-term review through an oral presentation to the Academic Research Committee in the first six months of the second-year of their candidature. The mid-term review should demonstrate among other things:

- Strong analytical, problem-solving and critical thinking abilities
- Required breadth and in-depth knowledge of the discipline
- Required academic background for the specific doctoral research to follow
- Potential ability to conduct independent and original research
- Ability to communicate knowledge of the discipline

A candidate who has failed the mid-term review will be given a second opportunity to defend her/his candidature within the next six months of registration after which the candidate would be definitively confirmed into the PhD candidature or invited to submit a Master thesis within the followed semester.

1.4.4 Milestones

Upon the approval of their research proposal, all research students gain access to the Milestone Module on the PGRP. Students are encouraged to discuss the milestones with their supervisor(s) and update the relevant module on the PGRP soon after the approval of their proposal. The milestones act as a tracking and monitoring devise for the student's candidature and are assessed on quality and timeliness of submission/completion. While students and supervisors are at liberty to create milestone tasks they see fit for their projects, it is important to ensure that the list is not interminable.

1.5 Suspension of Studies

If for a temporary period, you are unable to pursue your research, you may apply for suspension of your student status. Relevant circumstances could include illness, accident, domestic crisis, or unforeseeable financial difficulty. Alternatively, it might be essential for you to concentrate temporarily on some other project (e.g., gaining some other qualification) which could not reasonably be deferred until after your postgraduate work was completed; or you might wish to take up temporary work which was likely to be important to your future career, and the opportunity for which was unlikely to recur.

Letters of application should be addressed to the Deputy Head of School Research, Innovation & PG Affairs of the Academic Unit, giving reasons for the request and the desired period of suspension. Master's students may apply for up to six months suspension of studies, and PhD students for one year, during the period of their candidature. Students will receive a response in writing from the Academic Unit. Should student's fail to enrol for the semester following their suspension, their candidature may be withdrawn.

Your scholarship benefits will also be placed on hold for the duration of your suspension. Research Office scholarship holders who discontinue their studies without permission of the scholarship provider will be required to repay any award payments to which they were not entitled. The scholarship will be terminated if the award holder does not resume study at the conclusion of a period of suspension or does not make arrangements to extend that period of suspension.

2.   The Research Process

A postgraduate research degree provides a unique opportunity to follow one's interest in an area of research, to focus on this for several years and make an important contribution to the development of your chosen research area. The focus is on your capacity for innovation, independent research critical thinking, time and project management, and problem solving. Students will also need to have, or to develop, excellent skills of organization and communication of information, this section discusses strategies that may be helpful for novice and expert researchers alike. In addition to studying this section, students are encouraged to attend the postgraduate orientation organized by the respective AURC at the beginning of their candidature.

2.1 Research proposal

Once you have enrolled into a research degree programme, the AURC will assign you a supervisor. Students are required to work with their supervisor(s) and develop a topic/proposal that could be expected to lead to an intellectually rewarding investigation and the timely submission of a quality thesis.

After you have identified your research area, the next step is to identify your Research Problem or Question. To do this, you will need to do a preliminary review of the relevant literature and existing theoretical frameworks to define your starting point. You need this to show how your work will fit into the existing body of knowledge of your chosen subject. Theoretical frameworks take the form of a set of propositions that can be used to explain relationships among concepts, representing observed phenomena, which allow generalizations beyond individual facts or situations. It is the careful evaluation of existing theory that provides the basis for extending knowledge: -

- Either by confirming or disproving certain aspects of the theory through empirical research.
- Extending the theory through the discovery of new relationships between theoretical concepts; or
- Better ways of representing the concepts and their relationships.

If you are doing applied research, you may need to review theories, proposals, and solutions from a number of disciplines since the purpose of applied research is to look for ways to increase the understanding of a real-world problem that needs to be solved. If you are doing basic research to expand knowledge, you should look for poorly tested hypotheses in previous studies, poorly drawn inferences, poorly-developed theoretical concepts, and conflicts between existing and established ideas about the phenomena you are investigating. In some disciplines, where theory is not   well developed, the

researcher may use the assumptions and conclusions of previous studies as a starting point. In either case, the general steps you should take in identifying your Research Problem/Question are as follows:

- Review the existing studies and theory in the relevant literature
- Formulate your Research Problem/Question in the context of the work reviewed
- Select a research strategy or method (e.g., survey, simulation, field study, laboratory experiment, analysis of the logic of a theory) which is suitable general approach to your research problem. Make sure you understand the strengths and weaknesses of the approach;
- Select appropriate research techniques (e.g., sampling, questionnaire design, validation) for the research method chosen in the previous step;
- Think about how you will present your findings to help avoid data collection/analysis problems and help clarify what you hope to achieve to those who will read your proposal; and
- Estimate dates of completion for major tasks such as collecting data, computerized analysis and testing, ethics committee approval, data analysis, and checking figures, tables, and references.

You should work closely with your proposed principal supervisor to develop the Research Proposal in a format that is acceptable to the University. Always ensure you are using the latest version of the forms and adhere to the deadline stipulated by your respective Academic Unit.

2.2. Ethics Clearance

Any research project dealing with human and animal subjects that is proposed to be undertaken under the auspices of USP, whether by full-time or affiliate staff or students, is required to have ethical approval before commencing. The application along with the full project will be submitted to the AURC. The AURC will evaluate the low-risk applications and issue the ethics clearance. The AURC will forward the application that is seen to be high-risk to University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) for evaluation and ethics clearance with its report.

Detailed information on the ethics clearance process at USP can be found in the Research Ethics Policy, specifically Human Ethics and Animal Ethics.

2.3. Research Permit

Research in the Pacific Island countries requires a research permit. If you are an international student, you must obtain a research permit prior to entry into Fiji. Further information on research permits for international is provided on the immigration website for the relevant country. Alternatively, students can enquire regarding the process with the USP International Office.

2.4. Thesis Writing

All the work that a student does for a higher degree will need to be written up clearly in the thesis (or dissertation) that will ultimately be read by the examiners. The examiners want to read something that is well-structured and coherent. The aim of writing is therefore to achieve clarity. You must be prepared to take your first draft and look at it critically, as though someone else had written it. It may be necessary to cut out whole sections or move paragraphs around. It requires great care and a lot of patience to read your own work and assess it critically.

Research students are advised to follow the document "Format and Style for the Presentation of Theses at The University of the South Pacific" as closely as possible, but they should speak to their supervisor(s) about requirements by their respective Academic Units. It is not uncommon for students to have a look at past theses in their discipline to gauge the discipline style. Students are also encouraged to have a look at the thesis examination forms to get an idea of the criteria examiners will be using to assess their thesis.

2.5. Submission and Examination of Thesis

Research theses are usually submitted after the supervisors are satisfied that the student work is of high quality and is ready for examination. Only on rare occasions will students submit their work for examination without their supervisors' approval. It is important that students adhere to the regulations and deadlines for submission of their thesis to graduate promptly. If students submit on time, the University will make every effort to ensure that the examination process is completed as soon as possible. Yet this depends on the availability of the external examiners and the time it takes the student to satisfactorily make any corrections required to the examined thesis.

2.5.1 Process flow chart for the Submission and Examination of Thesis

The process leading up to submission and examination of a thesis is a long one, and students and supervisors must ensure they have allowed ample time for the administrative process.

Student and Supervisor agree to a submission date

Submission of Extended Abstract at least 2 months before submission of thesis	• Student submits an Extended Abstract of the thesis via PGRP to the supervisor indicating the thesis is near ready for submission. • The Extended Abstract is recommended to be submitted at least two months before the thesis submission date.
Notification of submission	• Upon receieving the Extended Abstract, the Supervisor formaly notifies the Head of School (HoS) via the PGRP that the thesis is almost ready for examination.
Recommendation of Potential Examiners at least 2 months before submission of thesis	• The HoS with the help of the supervisor recommend and nominate potential Examiners at least 2 months before submission of the thesis to ensure prompt dispatchment to examiners. The HoS collects details of potential Examiners and sees that there are no potential conflict of interest and forwards these to the AURC
Academic Unit Research Committee (AURC) approves Examiners	• Necessary paperwork is prepared once the nominee are approved by the Committee • Examiners are appointed.
Student submits thesis on the recommended date with Statement of Originality	• Students must declare and sign the thesis before submission • The Principal Supervisor signs the supervisor's certificate declaring that the thesis is the student's own work. • Submit 2-3 ring bound copies of thesis to the Academic Unit Office of Postgraduate Affairs
Thesis sent to Examiners	• Dispatch thesis for marking to both internal and external examiners with Cover letter, Evaluation sheet and Guidelines for Examination of Research Thesis and Statement of Originality. • Duration for marking is no more than 3 months from date of dispatch
Examiners Report	• Examiners submit report to relevant Academic Unit, with the PhD oral defence organized if recommended by the examiners. • Honorarium payment to External Examier upon timely submission of report
Academic Unit Research Committee's consideration of Examiners' recommendations	• Reports and recommendations from Examiners are considered and forwarded to the Supervisor(s) and the student.
Correction of thesis by student	• Corrections are addressed and the corrections list is updated on the PGRP • The AURC will assess the corrections and deliberate on any further action on the thesis.
Deposit of Thesis Copies. School report submitted to the Student Academic Services for Consideration to graduate	• Once the thesis is approved, 2-3 hard bound copies and an electronic version copied onto a labelled CD are submitted to the Administrative Assistant at the relevant School. • 1 hard bound copy and a CD of the thesis are deposited at the USP Library and 1 hard copy kept by the School.

AWARD OF DEGREE

2.5.2. Deadlines for Submission

The University's regulations set limits on the length of time students should take to complete a degree and it is important that students are aware of these. Research theses can be submitted any time within the University Calendar year. If submission is made before the start of a semester, then re-registration and payment of fees for that semester are not necessary. The expected deadlines for completing and submitting the correction version of the thesis as well as applying to graduate is ideally 1-2 months before graduation.

2.5.3. Recommendation of Potential Examiners

Two months before the thesis is likely to be submitted, the Principal Supervisor should submit to the appropriate Head of School a list of potential examiners. The student should have a no part in compiling this list. Once the HoS has received the Supervisor's recommendations, the CVs of external examiners should be obtained, and all the information submitted to the Academic Units Research Committee. This should ensure that, when the thesis is eventually submitted, the names of the internal and external examiners are already agreed and that there is no delay in sending copies of the thesis to them for examination.

2.5.4. Submission for Examination

A student must hand in their thesis to the Academic Units Office of Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Affairs and make sure that it is accompanied by a "Statement of Originality", signed by both the candidate and Principal Supervisor. The student must supply ring-bound copies of the thesis for examination and should keep a copy for themselves. The supervisor will inform the student of the number of copies needed in advance.

There are rules governing the layout and format of a thesis. Notwithstanding this, candidates are advised to discuss with their supervisor[s] the detailed layout of their research thesis early in the candidature.

Incorporation of published work conducted during the period of submission is permissible and should be done explicitly in a form agreed to by the candidate and supervisor[s]. Once a thesis has been submitted, it is possible for students who have no other form of paid employment to apply for a 'Write-Up Scholarship' for up to three months. This scholarship is intended to help them prepare their research findings for publication.

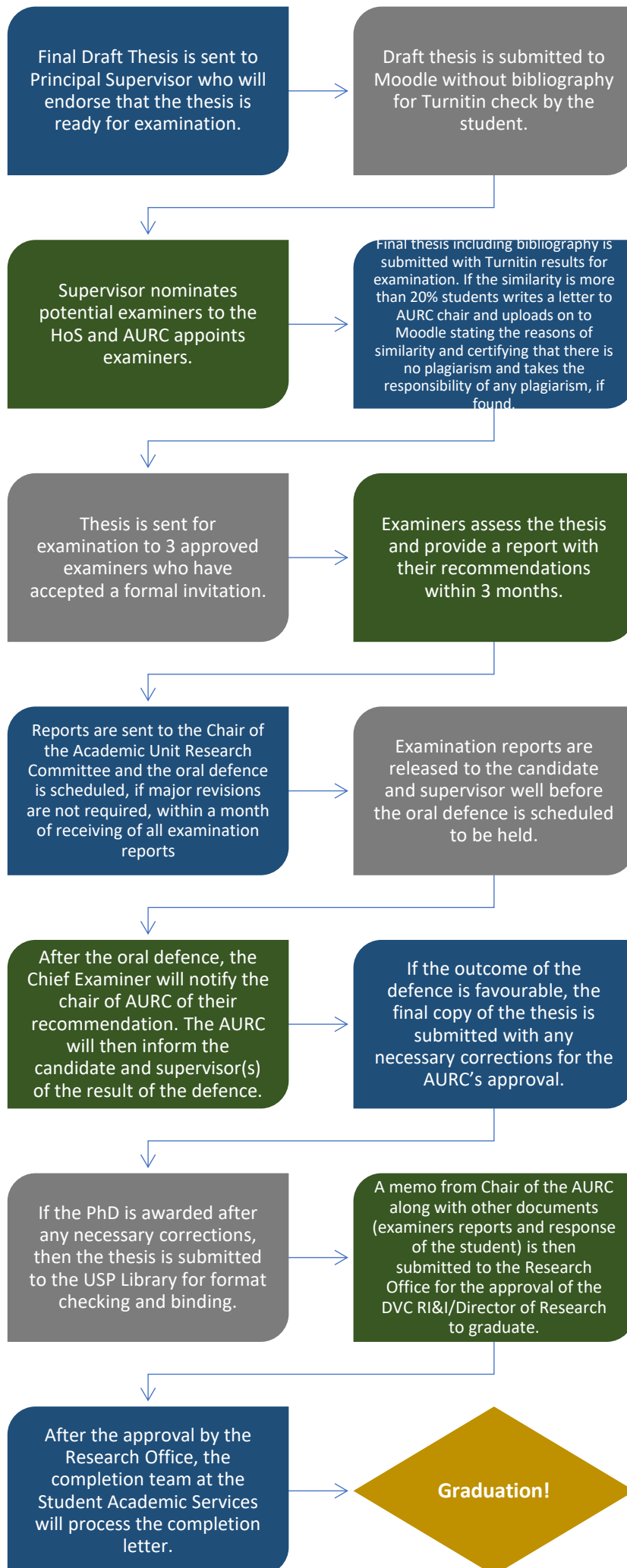### 2.5.5 Examination Process and Results

The return of thesis with reports from examiners is expected within two to three months from the date of sending the thesis. Details of examination and processing of examiners' reports are given below. During the examination period, students are not allowed to have

any contact with any of the examiners. In addition, the examiners should write independent (without conferring) reports and submit these to the Academic Units Office of Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Affairs.

A copy of the examiners' reports is normally (but not always) provided to the student as part of the feedback process. Amendments to the thesis as recommended by the examiners are to be completed by the student under the oversight of their supervisor and submitted to the Academic Units Office of Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Affairs. Although the written endorsement of the Principal Supervisor that corrections have been made is usually accepted, the internal examiner may be invited by the appropriate Academic Unit to review and check the corrections and amendments made to the thesis making sure that comments raised by all the examiners have been satisfactorily addressed. If this is found to be the case, a recommendation will be made by the appropriate Academic Unit for the award of the qualification. In the event of an unresolved difference of opinion between thesis examiners, the Academic Unit may recommend on arbitrator to be appointed. The arbitrator is given a copy of the thesis, an assessment form, and an examiner's instruction. The arbitrator's report is expected within one month of dispatch.

2.5.6 PhD Oral Defence

A PhD candidate is also required to make an oral defence as part of the thesis examination to the relevant Academic Unit, examiners, and members of the Academic Unit Research Committee. As a part of the oral defence, the student makes a formal presentation of about 45 minutes summarizing the research and outcomes, followed by questions. The examiners (at least two) will then have a closed session with the student and decide the result of the public defence and the thesis and communicate in writing the results to the AURC. The tentative timing of the oral examination, where practicable should be establishment once the examiners are approved and the thesis is submitted for examination.

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Final Draft Thesis is sent to Principal Supervisor who will endorse that the thesis is ready for examination.

→ Draft thesis is submitted to Moodle without bibliography for Turnitin check by the student.

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Supervisor nominates potential examiners to the HoS and AURC appoints examiners.

→ Final thesis including bibliography is submitted with Turnitin results for examination. If the similarity is more than 20% students writes a letter to AURC chair and uploads on to Moodle stating the reasons of similarity and certifying that there is no plagiarism and takes the responsibility of any plagiarism, if found.

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Thesis is sent for examination to 3 approved examiners who have accepted a formal invitation.

→ Examiners assess the thesis and provide a report with their recommendations within 3 months.

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Reports are sent to the Chair of the Academic Unit Research Committee and the oral defence is scheduled, if major revisions are not required, within a month of receiving of all examination reports

→ Examination reports are released to the candidate and supervisor well before the oral defence is scheduled to be held.

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After the oral defence, the Chief Examiner will notify the chair of AURC of their recommendation. The AURC will then inform the candidate and supervisor(s) of the result of the defence.

→ If the outcome of the defence is favourable, the final copy of the thesis is submitted with any necessary corrections for the AURC's approval.

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If the PhD is awarded after any necessary corrections, then the thesis is submitted to the USP Library for format checking and binding.

→ A memo from Chair of the AURC along with other documents (examiners reports and response of the student) is then submitted to the Research Office for the approval of the DVC RI&I/Director of Research to graduate.

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After the approval by the Research Office, the completion team at the Student Academic Services will process the completion letter.

→ **Graduation!**

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2.6 Transferable Skills

As a postgraduate research student, you will be expected to develop and acquire research skills and abilities related to the five groups listed below. Please note that the particular abilities related to the five groups listed below. Please note that the particular abilities and skills that comprise each of the five groups of abilities discussed below might be interpreted differently in the different disciplines or domains with which you are affiliated. Examples of how these attribute groups might be interpreted by a discipline or Academic Unit are provided below.

2.6.1 Research and Scholarly Thinking

Successful postgraduate researchers at the University will be able to create new knowledge and understanding through the process of research and inquiry. This might be understood in terms of the following:

- Be able to identify, define and analyse problems, and identify or create processes to solve them;
- Be able to exercise critical judgment and critical thinking in creating new understanding;
- Be creative and imaginative thinkers;
- Have an informed respect for the principles, methods, standards, values and boundaries of their discipline and the capacity to question these; and
- Be able to critically evaluate existing understanding of particular subjects and recognize the limitations of their own knowledge of them.

2.6.2 Information Literacy

Successful postgraduate researchers at the University will be able to use information effectively in a range of contexts. Most should be able to:

- Recognise the extent of information needed;
- Locate needed information efficiently and effectively;
- Evaluate information and its sources;
- Use information in critical thinking and problem-solving contexts to construct knowledge;
- Understand economic, legal, social and cultural issues in the use of information; and
- Use contemporary media and technology to access and manage information.

2.6.3 Personal and Intellectual Autonomy

Successful postgraduate researchers at the University will be able to work independently and sustainably, in a way that is informed by openness, curiosity and a desire to meet new challenges. This might be understood in terms of the following:

- Be intellectually curious and able to sustain intellectual interest;
- Be capable of rigorous and independent thinking;

- Be open to new ideas, methods and ways of thinking;
- Be able to respond effectively to unfamiliar problems in unfamiliar contexts;
- Be able to identify processes and strategies to learn and meet new challenges;
- Be independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning, and are committed to continuous reflection, self-evaluation and self-improvement; and
- Have a personal vision and goals, and be able to work towards these in a sustainable way.

2.6.4 Ethical, Social and Professional Understanding

Successful postgraduate researchers at the University will hold personal values and beliefs consistent with their role as responsible members of local, national, international and professional communities. For example:
- Strive for truth, honesty, integrity, open-mindedness, fairness and generosity;
- Acknowledge their personal responsibility for their own value judgements and behaviour;
- Understand and accept social, cultural, global and environmental responsibilities;
- Be committed to social justice and principles of sustainability;
- Have an appreciation of, and respect for, diversity;
- Hold a perspective that acknowledges local, national and international concerns; and
- Work with, manage, and lead others in ways that value their diversity and equality and that facilitate their contribution to the organization and the wider community.

2.6.5 Communication

Successful postgraduate researchers at the University will use and value communication as a toll for negotiating and creating new understanding, interacting with others, and furthering their own learning. This might be understood in terms of the following:
- Use oral, written and visual communication to further their own learning;
- Make effective use of oral, written and visual means to critique, negotiate, create and communicate understanding; and
- Use communication as a tool for interacting and relating to others.

2.7 Publication

Student undertaking their Masters by research degree at USP are not required to publish in academic journals, but this is encouraged. PhD students on the other hand, are required to have at least one [joint] ranked publication [journal or conference proceeding paper] accepted during their candidature. The University provides "Write Up Scholarships" for students who have submitted their theses for publication. Writing up part of the thesis for publication in refereed journals is a good practice for research students, since it develops the student's thinking and writing skills. This also helps

students to develop and organise their thought processes, encourages reading of the latest literature, helps explains problems and subsequently present results in a coherent manner. Students would also have the opportunity to respond to criticism from journal reviewers in a similar manner as the examiner's comments. It is however important to note that writing publications can be time-consuming, and they should not take unnecessary time away from thesis work.

2.8 Dealing with Difficulties

The research process can be intense and challenging one for many. Some of the greatest catastrophes in graduate research though it can be avoided by a little intelligent foresight.

2.8.1. Delays in your Progress

If you run into difficulties which cause you to fall behind in your research, it is essential that you take action as quickly as possible before too much damage is done.   The   first thing you should do is speak to one of your supervisors, who may be able to suggest a solution. If your supervisor cannot help, they should advise you what you should do next. Alternatively, you can approach the Deputy Head of School [DHoS] (Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Affairs) of your Academic Unit. You should keep written records [dated] to show that you have spoken to your supervisor about the problem, as this will be important if you need to apply for an extension of time at a later stage, or if you need to make an appeal or complaint. You should also refer to it in your progress report.

2.8.2. Difficulties with your Supervisor

If you and your supervisor[s] cannot establish an effective working relationship, it is important that you take action as quickly as possible, before too much damage is done to your research. In the first instance you should, wherever possible, talk to the supervisor concerned about the problem. If you are unable to talk to your supervisor or, if talking to your supervisor does not resolve matters, you should talk to your other supervisor[s]. If this is not possible or does not resolve matters, you should contact the Deputy Head of School [DHoS] (Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Affairs) of your Academic Unit, who will investigate. It is in everyone's interests for such problems to be sorted out within the Academic Unit and as informally as possible. If this does not prove possible, and you are still unhappy with your supervision, you can make a formal complaint as per the Student Grievance Policy. Research students also have the opportunity to request for a change in supervisor by filling in the Change in Principal Supervisor form and submitting to the DHoS (Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Affairs).

2.8.3. Research Misconduct

The University expects all researchers, including postgraduate research students, to maintain good scholarly standards. Research misconduct is a disciplinary offence and will be treated very seriously. If you are found to have committed any form of research misconduct, it is likely that you will be required to withdraw from the University or if you have already submitted your thesis, you may not be awarded a degree.

Research misconduct is behaviour, intentional or not, that falls short of good scholarly or ethical standards. Examples of behaviour that constitute research misconduct include plagiarism [defined as the presentation of the work of others as your own without appropriate acknowledgement], fraud, breach of confidentiality, and negligence. Conventions may differ between disciplines. Your supervisors will advise you on the relevant conventions that apply in your subject, and it is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with them. If you have any doubts at any time in the course of your research about how you should handle material, you should seek your supervisors' advice.

3. University, Supervisor, and Student Responsibilities

While the University expects Postgraduate Research Students to maintain professional research conduct at all times during their candidature, students also expect the University and Supervisors to play their roles and responsibilities. This section excerpts from the Postgraduate Research Candidature and Supervision Procedure which outlines the University, the Supervisor's, as well as the student's responsibilities.

3.1 Academic Unit Responsibilities

For every student enrolled into a research programme, the Academic Unit must ensure that there are supervisors identified and that those nominated, assigned, or appointed as supervisors can provide proper supervision by virtue of their qualifications, experience and their research interests. The Academic Unit Research Committee (AURC) must also seek assurance that those involved in supervision have sufficient time for supervision. The AURC must be satisfied that continuity in supervision can be maintained for the duration of candidature regardless of staff leave and other absences from the University.

The relevant section[s] of the Academic Unit must provide appropriate induction for new candidates. This should include a guide to the nature of research in the particular field, a description of the facilities available in the Academic Unit and elsewhere in the University [including library services, computing facilities, student support services], and the school programme of seminars. The resources and facilities available for the project should be discussed, and the procedures to be followed in accessing or utilising them should be explained.

3.2. Supervisor Responsibilities

In addition to providing appropriate academic support, supervisors are responsible for several administrative procedures associated with candidature. Responsibilities vary depending on the stage of candidature, although in practice these discrete stages may overlap. Some responsibilities described in the Postgraduate Research Candidature and Supervision Procedure apply only to the Principal Supervisor. Each supervisor is required to be familiar with the Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy and related procedures, as well as with the Postgraduate Research Candidature and Supervision Guidelines. The supervisors should provide guidance in all matters relating to good research practice. Each supervisor must be sensitive to the special needs of individual candidates and provide or advise on appropriate support. The Principal Supervisor is responsible for the supervision process in all cases.

3.2.1. Before Candidature

Where possible, intending applicants are encouraged to consult with academic staff members who may be able to supervise the proposed research topic. Where an applicant approaches an academic staff member to supervise, the staff member should assess and advise the Head of School on:

- Whether the applicant's background and capacities in relation to the proposed programme are appropriate;
- Whether the applicant's proposed research falls within their areas of expertise and experience;
- The suitability of the proposed topic for the research degree;
- Whether they have the capacity to supervise the applicant based on their current supervisory load and supervisor eligibility status;
- The likely cost of the research project and other resource needs, particularly if these are likely to exceed the normal costs of research projects;
- What additional supervisory arrangements may be necessary to cover any periods of absence by the Principal Supervisor from the University;
- Any third-party arrangement that may affect the candidate and the proposed research.

3.2.2. Early stage of Candidature

It is the responsibility of the supervisors to:

- Assist the candidate to develop, plan and structure a realistic programme of study and research. This will include advising candidates on developing the topic/proposal that could be expected to lead to an intellectually rewarding investigation and the timely submission of a quality thesis;
- Provide guidance about:
  - The nature of research and the standard of performance expected
  - Planning the research programme and submission of a research proposal

- o Relevant literature, sources, and other contacts
- o Appropriate research methodologies and requisite techniques for the particular field
- o Attendance at classes/courses where appropriate [e.g. computer analysis, statistics]
- Advise the candidate on:
  - o Safe working practices relevant to the field of research
  - o The relevant issues relating to research conduct [e.g., academic conduct, copyright, etc.]
  - o Ethical practice and ethics clearance process
  - o The University's Intellectual Property Policy
- Assist the candidate with obtaining ethical clearance if required, and ensure the necessary ethical approvals are in place prior to commencement of the research.
- Suggest ways the candidate can make the most effective use of time.
- Clarify the candidate's and the supervisors' respective expectations of supervision and the operation of the supervisory panel.
- Establish, in conjunction with the candidate, the basis on which the close, effective and regular contact between supervisors and candidate will be achieved. The supervisors and candidate are jointly responsible for initiating such contact. Normally there should be contact between the supervisors and candidate at least once a month even if a formal meeting is not always possible. This will facilitate the supervisors' role in advising the candidate on their research programme including the pace of progress and ensure that a reasonable timetable is set to permit the degree programme to be completed in the appropriate time.
- Advise the candidate on their rights and responsibilities in accessing and using the resources and facilities available from the School and the University. The resources and facilities available to the project and identification of any additional resources needed should be discussed in detail.
- Discuss with the candidate expectations with regard to the authorship of publications arising from the student's work [the University Guidelines on Authorship must be consulted].
- Seek to understand the differing needs of candidates from different backgrounds and to work with such candidates to make arrangements as necessary to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities regardless of cultural background, gender or disability.
- Identify whether the candidate requires any further education and training to ensure timely completion.
- Consider, and if appropriate recommend, requests to change various aspects of candidature [e.g., topic change, upgrades, etc.].

3.2.3. Middle stage of Candidature

It is the responsibility of the supervisors to:

- Require written work from the candidate on a pre-arranged and agreed schedule so that progress can be assessed at regular intervals.
- Carefully monitor the performance of the candidate relative to the standard required for the degree programme and ensure that inadequate progress or work below the standard generally expected is brought to the candidate's attention. The supervisors should help with developing solutions to problems as they are identified.
- Use the regular reporting procedures established by the University as the minimum means by which any difficulties and problems in performance discussed with the candidate during the year are noted. Supervisors should document the action taken or advice given.
- Provide constructive, detailed, and timely feedback on the content and drafts of the thesis, and as the thesis is being prepared ensure it does not exceed the upper limits for the length of the postgraduate research theses.
- Encourage the candidate (particularly of candidate if par-time or remote) to play at full and active role in the intellectual life of the Academic Unit and University.
- Facilitate meetings of the candidate with other researchers in the relevant field, attendance at conferences as appropriate (within the limits of resources available to the Academic Unit) and provide advice on the preparation of work for publication or other appropriate forms of dissemination.
- Assist candidates to develop research capabilities, knowledge of the field, and skills more broadly valuable in employment (e.g., writing and editing, problem solving, time management, use of software tools, etc.)
- Assist the candidate to publish during candidature, including meeting the requirement to have one output accepted for publication prior to submission of the thesis in the case of doctoral candidates.
- Fulfil other University determined obligations with respect to supervision
- Refer unresolved problems to the Head of School in the first instance.
- Initiate proceedings to terminate candidature only after all reasonable attempts to resolve problems have failed.

3.2.4. Late stage of Candidature

It is the responsibility of the supervisors to:

- At the time of submission, certify that the thesis is properly presented and is prima facie worthy of examination. Where such a certification cannot be given, advise the candidate accordingly.
- Following consultation with members of the supervisory team the Principal Supervisor should recommend to the Head of the Academic Unit the names and credentials of suitable examiners.

- Where necessary, advise the candidate on responding to the examiners' recommendations.
- Support the career aspirations of the candidate after completion of the thesis, through, for example, provision of references, and advice on publications.

3.2.5. General

It is the responsibility of ethe supervisors to:
- Be familiar with University policies and procedures relating to postgraduate research programmes and supervision of those programmes.
- Be aware of problem solving mechanisms and available support services should problems arise during candidature and ensure that the Head of the Academic Unit and Deputy Heads of Research are kept informed as necessary.
- Encourage collegial, supportive relationships that respect the conventional constraints of professional practice governing relations between candidate and a supervisor. Refer also to the Relationship between staff and students and between members of staff.
- Advise the candidate about any plans a supervisor may have for extended leave during the candidature and consult with the candidature and Head of Academic Unit and/or Deputy Head of Research about proposed arrangements for supervision during this leave.

3.2.6. Shared Responsibilities of the Supervisory Panel

The Principal Supervisor is primarily responsible for supervising the work done by coordinating the supervisory panel, providing the academic leadership within the supervisory panel, and providing the principal guidance and information on the candidate's research topic and its development. The Principal Supervisor has the primary responsibility for the conduct of the candidature, monitoring the progress of the candidate and reporting the aggregated views of the supervisory panel. The Principal Supervisor also carries the responsibility of coordinating communication between the members of the supervisory panel and the candidate, and for resolving any problems that may result from associate supervisors providing the candidate with contradictory advice. The Principal Supervisor is responsible for the administrative aspects of the candidature.

Secondary Supervisors are appointed to assist in the supervision of the candidature. The Secondary Supervisors will have specific expertise related to the candidate's research and will advise the candidate as appropriate on research related matters. Any Secondary Supervisors should be involved as soon as practicable in the development of the candidate's research plan and should maintain a level of communication with the candidate and the principal supervisor to allow adequate supervision whenever necessary. A Secondary Supervisors [who is a member of the University] will act as a

Principal Supervisor where the Principal Supervisor cannot or will not fulfil their role, for example during absences of the Principal Supervisor.

3.3. Responsibilities of the Candidate

Quality supervision arises from the positive interaction between supervisors and candidate. Within this interaction it is possible to identify a number of responsibilities of the candidate. These responsibilities vary depending on the stage of candidature, although in practice these discrete stages may overlap.

3.3.1. Before Candidature

It is the responsibility of the applicant to:

- Play an informed part in the process of the selection and appointment of the supervisors. Where possible, intending applicants are encouraged to consult with staff members who may be able to supervise the proposed research topic, before submitting an application. Preliminary discussions of this nature often assist applicants to focus their intended research topic and achieve a match with academic expertise of a potential supervisor.

3.3.2. Early stage in Candidature

It is the responsibility of the candidate to:

- Become familiar with, and abide by, University policies and procedures pertaining to the research programme, and postgraduate research studies in general.
- Complete a postgraduate research Induction Programme by attending a face to face or, where appropriate, an online orientation.
- Clarify with the supervisor's mutual expectations concerning supervision and the responsibilities of supervisors.
- Discuss with the supervisors the type of guidance and comment that would be must helpful and establish and adhere to agreed methods of working together.
- Discuss and maintain a mutually agreed schedule of meetings to ensure regular contact.
- Develop, plan, and structure a realistic program of study and research with assistance and advice of the supervisors. This will include selection of an appropriate topic that will lead to the timely submission of a quality thesis of examination.
- With the assistance of the supervisors, obtain ethical clearance if required, and notify the supervisors of any intellectual property issues; negotiate with the supervisor's appropriate recognition of contribution to any joint publications that may arise during and after the research project.
- Assist the supervisors and the University to identify distinctive needs including needs related to cultural difference, gender, disabilities and other equity backgrounds and to recommend appropriate support measures.

3.3.3. Middle stage of Candidature

It is the responsibility of the candidate to:

- Diligently proceed with the research as agreed between the candidate and the supervisors with a view to completing the thesis within the specified time.

- Maintain the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisors including, in particular, the presentation of any required written material in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussions before proceeding to the next stage.

- Submit timely and accurate progress reports and complete the requirements for the early candidature and mid-candidature milestones in association with the supervisors, at periods specified by the University via the Postgraduate Research Portal [PGRP].

- Adopt at all times safe working practices relevant to the field of research and adhere to the ethical practices appropriate to the discipline and more generally applicable.

- Utilise the resources, facilities and opportunities provided by the University to facilitate progress in the research.

- Take advantage of opportunities to become part of the intellectual community by attending and participating in seminars, meetings, electronic conferencing, and conferences at the local, regional, national or international level as appropriate.

- Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties and share the responsibility for seeking solutions including informing the supervisors of any personal or other difficulties that have slowed or may slow progress.

- Be aware of the mechanisms that exist for resolving supervisor-candidate difficulties. When necessary, candidates have a responsibility to take the initiative to seek appropriate alternative supervision and to apply for a change of supervisor.

- Be aware of the University grievance procedures, and if possible, seek negotiated solutions to any problems before recourse to those procedures.

- Refrain from embarking on any significant variation to the research topic unless agreed with the Principal Supervisor and in consultation with the supervisory panel and, if necessary approved by the AURC.

- Establish and maintain, if a part-time or remote candidate, suitable means of regular contact with the supervisors.

3.3.4. Late stage of Candidature

It is the responsibility of the candidate to:

- Ensure sufficient time is allocated for writing up the thesis and be aware of the requirements for content, style and standard presentation.

- Accept responsibility for producing the final copies of the thesis and ensuring that it accords with university requirements.

- Ensure that the thesis adheres to the principles of research integrity concerning plagiarism and research ethics as stipulated in the relevant University policies.
- Declare that the work reported in the thesis is the candidate's own, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis, and that any assistance in writing the thesis is appropriately acknowledged.
- With assistance from the supervisor, respond appropriately to examiners' reports and recommendations within the specified timeframe.

4. Postgraduate Research Resources

The University has a Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Affairs [RI&PGA) Office in each of the Academic Units who ensure that students are directed to useful recourses to make their research journey more efficient. The Academic Unit RI&PGA Office may also run training workshops throughout the semester. Additionally, the University Research Office runs generic research training workshops, holds consultations on data analysis throughout the year, and provides a number of sponsorships.

4.1. Postgraduate Research Portal

The Postgraduate Research Portal [PGRP] aims to encapsulate all postgraduate student processes. PGRP streamlines student research processes and allows students, supervisors and stakeholders to easily perform several tasks such as, but not limited to submitting proposals, monitoring progress, keeping track of write-ups, providing a feedback channel between students and supervisors, keeping track of students, monitoring student progress, etc.

Students are provided access to the PGRP when they enrol into a full research programme. You can use your USP student identification number and password to log into the PGRP. Upon the commencement of your programme, you will have access to only the proposal module on the PGRP. As soon as your proposal is approved by the AURC, you will gain access to all other modules on the PGRP. For detailed information on how to use the PGRP, a user guide and tutorial videos are provided online.

4.2. Scholarships and Funding Opportunities

Provided below are a list of sponsorships that University Research Office offers regularly:

Pacific Scholarship for Excellence in Research & Innovation (PSERI) – the PSERI award is a competitive scholarship and rounds are open in the final quarter of each year.

Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund [Sylff] Scholarships – the SYLFF awards are competitive scholarship awards for graduate research in any social science and humanities discipline which have significant implications for Pacific societies and cultures.

Postgraduate Regional Sports Research Scholarships (PRSRS) – these are full-time Masters by Research scholarships in the area of sports education and development. This is a collaboration between the Oceania National Olympic Committee (ONOC) and USP.

Research Tuition Only Scholarship - these are part-time Masters by Research and PhD scholarships for working students and provides tuition cover only.

Write-Up Scholarship – this scholarship supports students writing up their research for publications after they have submitted their Masters or PhD thesis for examination. Funding support us for a maximum duration of three months on a full-time basis.

ACIAR Pacific Agriculture Scholarship Support and Climate Resilience (PASS-CR) Programme, Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme - ACIAR in partnership with USP established the ACIAR-USP Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme in 2007. The Scheme provides the opportunity for partner country students to become involved in ACIAR-supported collaborative research projects while obtaining postgraduate qualifications at USP. The Program offers the opportunity to study either a Master's Degree or a PhD.

The Norway-Pacific Ocean-Climate Scholarship Programme (N-POC) - The Norway-Pacific Ocean-Climate Scholarship Programme (N-POC) is an ambitious partnership in research and PhD training between the University of Bergen in Norway and the regional University of the South Pacific (USP). Funded for 2021–2025 by Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the programme comprises 24 fully funded PhD scholarships at the USP within ocean and climate research, ranging from the natural sciences to the social sciences and humanities.

Relevant Information and Key Documents

- Masters by Thesis and PhD Programme Requirements and Regulations
- Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy
- Postgraduate Research Candidature and Supervision Procedures
- Joint PhD (Cotutelle) Programmes Policy
- Postgraduate Research Progress Report
- Research Ethics Policy
- Screening Questionnaire for Human Ethics
- Human Ethics Application Form
- Animal Ethics Application Form
- Presentation of Theses at The University of the South Pacific: Guidelines
- Thesis Examination Forms
- PhD Oral Defence Guideline
- Student Grievance Policy
- Change of Principal Supervisor Request Form
- Intellectual Property Policy