WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA



Addressing Gender Disparity and Fostering Equity in University Education

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Handbook for PhD Researchers

Revised 2025----------

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Welcome to the PhD Programme at WUA

Congratulations on obtaining a place to conduct your PhD research at the Women's University in Africa (WUA). A very warm welcome to you and it is our privilege to have the opportunity to work with you as we help you to advance your professional career and as we deepen and enrich our research culture. We hope that you will find your time at WUA intellectually stimulating and your experience personally fulfilling.

This handbook aims to provide an introduction to the PhD programme and it broadly lays out the journey of a PhD researcher from registration, proposal development, fieldwork, write up, thesis submission, to examination and graduation. The primary purpose of the PhD programme is to provide research training and career development enabling candidates to reach highest standards of scholarship, engage with existing literature and debates on their chosen subject, develop independent critical theoretical and analytical insights and plan, research and successfully write a doctoral thesis. Successful PhD candidates become specialists in their area of study and they are eligible to enter the academe or other fields that are consistent with their predilections.

This handbook should be read together with the Regulations for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree Programme which is available at the Admissions Office. The Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre is committed to helping you to get to know how things work, what is expected of you and important deadlines that you must meet. The supportive Centre is a relatively small outfit dedicated to developing a creative environment for doctoral and postdoctoral research through the provision of opportunities for participation in research workshops, methodology and skills training and professional development during your period of study at WUA. We greatly value your intellectual curiosity and we look forward to working with you as you widen your research knowledge, skills and experience.

1.2. PhD Programme Structure

1.2.1. Fulltime Students

The fulltime PhD programme at WUA follows a three-year format at the minimum. The programme consists research training and further development and submission of a detailed, ethically sound and acceptable research proposal in the first year after which students may apply to proceed to conduct primary research or fieldwork during the second year. The third year is for writing up the doctoral thesis. Students should work with the target of submitting the thesis by the end of the third year. Extensions beyond the third year up to the end of the fourth or fifth year at the latest should be justified in writing by the student and supported by the supervisor(s).

1.2.2. Part-time Students

For part-time students, the PhD programme follows a six-year standard with the possibility of extending to not more than 8 years at the latest.

1.3. Bodies involved in Administering the PhD

The PhD programme is administered under the guidance and control of the University Senate. The University Senate gives final approval to degrees and it monitors the implementation of high standards of conduct and performance.

Below the Senate is the Higher Degrees Committee of the entire University and it has appointed PhD holding representatives from the faculties. The Higher Degrees Committee exercises responsibility with respect to reviewing PhD applications and recommending those candidates eligible for admission, receiving and deliberating on students' and supervisors' progress reports, appointment of examiners and reviewing examiners' reports.

The day to day operation of the programme is supervised by Director of Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre. Nevertheless, the essence of the WUA experience remains the work of the research student with the PhD supervisor(s).

1.4. Supervision

Each candidate is assigned a **principal supervisor** and the relationship between the student and supervisor is the core of the PhD programme and both parties have responsibilities. The supervisor will help the student to develop the PhD thesis through discussion and the review of draft materials or chapters presented by the student. The supervisor has primary responsibility for inspiring the student advance towards successfully finishing the degree programme.

There is also an **associate supervisor** who further supports the work of the PhD student by offering an additional perspective to the candidate. The associate supervisor will not be as involved in the student's work as the principal supervisor. However, the associate supervisor may take up responsibility for supervision when, for various reasons, the principal supervisor is unable to continue supervising the student or when the principal supervisor is on official leave of absence.

The Research, Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre will ensure that all new PhD research students meet their supervisors as early as possible.

1.4.1. Responsibilities of Research Students

PhD research students are adults whose responsibilities include the following:

- ✓ Maintaining regular contact with the principal supervisor;
- ✓ Developing and submitting to the supervisor a research work plan which is consistent with the normal expectations of the University;
- ✓ Agreeing with the main supervisor on a schedule of meetings and maintaining progress in fulfilling the schedule;
- ✓ Submitting written material to the principal supervisor in time to allow comments and discussion before proceeding to the next stage;
- ✓ Taking note of the guidance and feedback from the supervisor(s);
- ✓ Taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development;
- ✓ Familiarising themselves with the University PhD and General Regulations and policies such as the Policy on Intellectual Property and Other Income Generating Projects, and Ethics Policy;
- ✓ Recording details of each supervision in a **Logbook** including what was discussed and agreed upon with their supervisor;
- ✓ Arranging to meet with the Research Programmes leader who intern engages the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre if the student feels that there are challenges in establishing an effective working relationship with the main supervisor or associate supervisor. The Research Programmes Leader will provide advice on any grievance procedures to follow.

1.4.2. Responsibilities of Supervisors

The principal supervisor's responsibilities are as follows:

- ✓ Agreeing on a schedule of supervisory meetings with the student;
- ✓ Providing advice and support to the student on the preparation of a research work plan during the first year;
- ✓ Approving a research plan developed by the student;
- ✓ Maintaining regular contact with the student and signing off a student's entries of supervisory meetings in the logbook;
- ✓ Providing constructive comments on the student's written work within one month of it being given to the supervisor;
- ✓ Advising the student on expected ethical standards in conducting research;
- ✓ Completing an annual report on the student's progress for consideration by the Higher Degrees Committee and Senate;
- ✓ Ensuring that the student is made aware if there is lack of progress or if the work submitted is below the standard that is generally expected;
- ✓ Encouraging the student to present research findings at seminars or conferences and to publish some of these before submission of the final thesis;
- ✓ Nominating external and internal examiners for the student's viva
- ✓ Briefing the student on the procedures involved in the viva or oral examination.

1.4.3. **Change of Supervisors**

In circumstances where the supervisor feels that he/she is no longer able to supervise the student for one reason or many reasons or where the student finds it difficult to continue with the principal supervisor, the following things should be taken into account:

- The supervisor and the student must have worked together for a minimum period of six months;
- The supervisor and the student must reach a mutual agreement on the need for change;
- A formal request should be submitted to the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre by either party by completing the requisite form; and
- The Higher Degrees Committee will make the change and inform the Senate.

In addition to the foregoing Introduction, Section 2 below presents the 'The Roadmap for a Doctoral Researcher and Key Milestones' and finally Section 3 provides a staff directory and biographies of PhD Supervisors at WUA.

2. THE ROADMAP FOR A DOCTORAL RESEARCHER AND KEY MILESTONES

2.1. Activities upon Arrival

Upon arrival at WUA, the following activities should be carried out:

- ✓ Provisionally registering as a PhD student so that you become a member of the University who can receive tuition, use the Library and other University facilities;
- ✓ Working out a schedule of regular meetings with the supervisor, at least once a month;
- ✓ Preparing an overall research plan with objectives, activities and a timetable for your research; and
- ✓ The research plan should include the proposed title of the thesis which is endorsed by your supervisor and approved by the Higher Degrees Committee and Senate.

2.2. Year One

2.2.1. **Research Methodology and Skills Training**

PHD PROGRAMME TAUGHT COURSES

	TOPIC	FACILITATOR	DATE
1	The Research Process – conceptualizing research problem		
2	Literature Review Concept		
3	Qualitative Research: Philosophy, Paradigm, Epistemology, Ontology and Methodology		
4	Generating the Research Proposal		
5	Literature Review Framework		
6	NVIVO Skills Training		
7	Quantitative Research: Philosophy, Paradigm, Epistemology, Ontology and Methodology.		
8	Generating Publishable Research Articles		
9	Information Literacy skills		
10	Referencing Softwares		
11	Data Analysis: SPSS		
12	Mixed Methods Research: Approaches: Mixed Methods, research designs,		
13	Research Ethics & Research Integrity, Intellectual Property, Lone Working		
14	Final Overview		
15	Transferable skills Ongoing		

You must discuss training needs with your supervisor at the beginning of each year and especially at the start of the first year. This should help you to identify areas for further development and training.

The University offers Taught Courses over the first three months of enrolling in the programme and Skills Transfer seminars for PhD students during the first half of the first year. After which the skills transfer ,seminars fortnightly and these are compulsory. The course focuses on how to construct a literature review and debates in philosophy of social science research and their influence on research methodology and research design. The sessions will cover a variety of qualitative and quantitative and mixed methodology approaches. The qualitative methodological approaches include, *inter alia*, phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, historical, case study, and action research. Methods: interviews, observations and Focused Group Discussions among others. Quantitative Research approach include: Descriptive, Correlational, Causal-

Comparative/Quasi-Experimental, and Experimental and Survey Research. Quantitative research methods broadly include questionnaires, structured observations, and experiments. Quantitative research designs include experimental, surveys, pre post facto, correction, descriptive and inferential statistics, the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, regression analysis and so on. The mixed methods approach combines the characteristics of both quantitative research and qualitative research in the same study and include: Convergent Parallel design, Explanatory Sequential design and Explanatory Sequential Design

2.2.2. **Research Proposal Development and Submission**

During the first year, the student, in close consultation with the supervisor, is expected to develop a research proposal which includes the following segments:

1. **Title of the thesis**
2. **Introduction**
    - Introduction
    - Context or background
    - Statement of the research problem
    - Purpose or Aim of the study
    - Objectives of the study
    - Research questions or hypotheses
    - Justification for the study
    - Importance of the study
    - Assumptions of the study
    - Delimitations/scope of the study
    - Limitations of the study
    - Brief indication of the theoretical framework and research methodology to be used
    - Brief reference to ethical and legal issues involved
    - Summary
    -
3. **Literature Review:** Traditional or narrative, systematic, meta-analysis and meta-synthesis. Critical, argumentative , scooping reviews
    - Introduction
    - Debates on the subject of study
    - Gaps in existing knowledge and how the study adds to, develops or challenges existing literature in the field;
    - Theoretical and conceptual framework of the study
    - Summary

4. **Research Methodology and Methods/Design**
    - Introduction

        Philosophy

- Site(s) of the study
- Research design or methods
- Data generation procedures or data collection instruments
- Triangulation of data sources
- Data analysis or interpretation procedures
- Ethical issues and how they will be handled
- Summary

The complete research proposal must be submitted with the written consent of the supervisor to the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre for consideration and approval by the Higher Degrees Committee and Senate.

2.2.2.1. Defence of the PhD Research Proposal

The student will be invited to a pre-fieldwork viva to defend his/her research proposal before a panel of the Higher Degrees Committee. The Higher Degrees Committee may arrive at any one of the following decisions:

- Pass and proceed to conduct fieldwork; or
- Pass subject to minor revisions or clarification to be submitted and validated in writing by supervisor before proceeding to conduct fieldwork; or
- Fail with major revision and additional viva at the next assessment point.

Upon approval by the Higher Degrees Committee, the student proceeds to fully register for the PhD degree programme. Students whose full research proposals have been approved may apply using appropriate forms to proceed and conduct fieldwork. The completed application form, signed by the student and the supervisor, should be submitted to the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre.

2.2.3. Ethical Review

Every PhD research student whose research involves human research participants will require ethical approval before the research proposal is submitted to the Higher Degrees Committee. Each student needs to complete an ethics clearance and informed consent forms for consideration and/or approval by the Research Ethics Committee of WUA. The ethics clearance and informed consent forms may be collected from the office of the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre and ethics clearance certificate issued by the Research Ethics Committee should be attached to the full PhD proposal for submission to the Higher Degrees Committee. The aim is to ensure that ethical issues are dealt with in the research design. Research that involves medical issues may require clearance by the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe upon payment of a fee by the student concerned.

Most research funding bodies require evidence of ethical scrutiny by the University and this entails filling out the ethics clearance and informed consent forms which are scrutinised by the Research Ethics Committee. If the Research Ethics Committee is satisfied an ethics clearance

certificate will be issued subject to certain terms and conditions. The student should complete the relevant ethics forms with help from his/her supervisor.

2.2.4. Monitoring of Progress

Students will be monitored through a half-year report and an annual report. The reports will assess quality of written papers and the pace of advancement. The forms for half-year and annual reports are available from the office of the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre and should be filled in by the student in coordination with, and approval by, the supervisor(s).

The completed report forms provide the Higher Degrees Committee with a guide on the student's progress. The forms may also be used to indicate any challenges or difficulties that the supervisor or the student may be facing.

2.2.4.1. Student's Report

The student's half-yearly and annual progress report should provide the following details:

- ✓ The current stage and status of research;
- ✓ Issues that the student may be experiencing in carrying out research;
- ✓ An indication of whether non-academic factors have impeded the student's research progress;
- ✓ How many times the student met with the supervisor and whether that was satisfactory;
- ✓ Whether the student received adequate, appropriate and constructive feedback and advice;
- ✓ The courses of training the student participated in during the year and whether this was adequate;
- ✓ Funding arrangements;
- ✓ Research objectives for the following half-year or full year;
- ✓ The quarter (i.e. first, second, third, or fourth) and year when the student expects to submit the thesis;
- ✓ Any other things that the student wishes to bring to the attention of the Higher Degrees Committee.

2.2.4.2. Supervisor's Report

The principal supervisor is required to complete a half-yearly and an Annual Report which provides specifics on:

- ✓ Whether satisfactory progress is being made vis-à-vis the student's research work plan;
- ✓ Whether the student was in regular contact;
- ✓ The quarter and year during which the supervisor expects the thesis to be submitted;

- ✓ Whether there is any risk that the student may not meet the deadline for submitting the thesis;
- ✓ Whether any non-academic factors impeded the student's progress;
- ✓ Any other challenges that the student may be experiencing and possible solutions to address the challenges.

2.2.4.3. **Half-Yearly and Annual Review Meetings and Approval of Registration**

The Higher Degrees Committee will meet half-yearly and annually to consider all reports submitted by supervisors and students. If there is satisfactory progress, the committee will make a decision on the student's registration for the following academic year.

2.2.5. Unsatisfactory Progress

If the student's progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory, the Higher Degrees Committee has two options for a decision:

- ✓ The student may be offered provisional registration for a specified period at the end of which the student must fulfil stipulated requirements such as completing a chapter or chapters in order to be fully registered; or
- ✓ The student may be refused permission to register in the following academic year.

2.2.6. Appeals

If a student has been refused permission to re-register, he/she will receive a letter from the Office of the Director of the Research, Innovation Postgraduate Centre informing him/her of the procedure to be followed for appealing the decision and the fee to be paid for processing the appeal.

2.3. Year Two

2.3.1. **Fieldwork and application procedure**

Upon successfully completing the first Annual Review, the student may be allowed to proceed to conduct field research after completing an application form. The application form is available from the office of the Director of the Research, Quality Assurance & Postgraduate Centre. The completed application form should be submitted by the student to his/her supervisor who will make a recommendation that the student is ready for fieldwork. The Higher Degrees Committee will make a decision on the application.

The Director of the Research, Quality Assurance & Postgraduate Centre will write to inform the student of the decision.

Before the student proceeds to carry out fieldwork, he/she must ensure that the following things are in order:

- The thesis title and research proposal have been approved;
- Where necessary ethical approval has been secured;
- The student has received notification in writing from the office of the Director of the Research, Quality Assurance & Postgraduate Centre that approval to carry out fieldwork has been granted.

2.3.1.1. **Contact with the supervisor**

During fieldwork, the student should maintain regular contact with his/her supervisor to inform the supervisor of progress.

2.3.2. Application to extend period of fieldwork

If a student wishes to extend the period of fieldwork beyond one year, he/she needs to inform the supervisor. If the supervisor supports the request, the student should complete the application form which is available from the office of the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre. The supervisor is supposed to support the application in writing and submit it to the Director for consideration by the Higher Degrees Committee. The Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre will notify the student of the decision of the Higher Degrees Committee.

2.3.3. Return from fieldwork

Upon return from fieldwork, the student should inform the office of the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre in writing.

2.4. Years Three and Four

2.4.1. Thesis Writing

After completing fieldwork, the student should see the supervisor and agree on a write up framework and timeline. The onus for writing up field findings is on the student buoyed up by the supervisor's constructive comments at regular meetings.

PhD students who are at the stage of writing up are required to present one or two draft chapters at a seminar during the third and/or fourth year. Seminars help PhD candidates to get

constructive comments and suggestions from other researchers. The office of Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre arranges the seminars.

The draft chapters presented can be further fine-tuned for presentation at local or international conferences and submitted for publication in edited books and/or refereed journals. This is particularly important and it is required of all students.

2.4.2. Notice of Intention to Submit Thesis

As already pointed out in Section 1.2.1., PhD students should produce the first full drafts of their theses before the end of the third year. The extension into the fourth year is meant to enable the students who have complete drafts to tie up odds and ends in their theses in readiness for final submission and examination. The move to the fourth year requires the recommendation of the supervisor after completing an appropriate form obtainable from the office of the Director of the Research, Innovation Postgraduate Centre.

The student should complete an Application for Entry to the PhD Examination form obtainable from the office of the Director - Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre. The form should be signed by the student and the supervisor and it should be submitted at least three months prior to the final submission. The student is required to write a one-page summary or abstract of the thesis which must accompany the Application for Entry to the PhD Examination form.

2.4.3. Submission of Summary or Abstract

The one-page summary should, with clarity and precision, articulate the compass of the research and the distinct and significant contribution that the thesis is making to knowledge of the subject. The summary or abstract should state the problem that was investigated, the method(s) of investigation and outline the main arguments of the thesis and its major conclusions.

The summary may be single spaced and on A4 size paper. The summary must not exceed 300 words.

It should contain the following details:

WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA

THE NAME OF THE DEGREE PROGRAMME e.g. DEVELOPMENT STUDIES DEGREE PROGRAMME

THESIS TITLE e.g. AN ANALYSIS OF HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICTS IN SOUTHEASTERN ZIMBABWE

NAME OF THE CANDIDATE e.g. REHEMA MAPINDUZI & STUDENT REGISTRATION NUMBER e.g. W253545

SUMMARY

2.4.4. Preparation of Thesis for Examination

In order to submit the thesis for examination, the student must be fully registered and must pay the requisite examination fees. Information about the amount of fees payable may be obtained from the Office of the Deputy Registrar Academic.

Three copies of the thesis, which are in spiral binding, should be submitted to the office of the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre in person.

The thesis must not exceed +\- 10% of 80, 000 words in length or either a qualitative or quantitative study and +\- 10% of 120000 for a mixed method study excluding he bibliography and appendices.

2.4.5. Presentation of Thesis

Before submission, the student should check that:

- All chapters and sections in chapters are there and in correct order;
- The Table of Contents is present and page numbers correspond to the chapters, headings and subheadings;
- All figures, diagrams and tables are present and that they have appropriate titles and legends where necessary;
- Organisations and individuals who helped in the research are appropriately acknowledged;
- The text has been checked for typographical errors and all errors have been corrected;
- References are cited using the Harvard University style of referencing;
- Font size 12 Times New Roman
- All pages are correctly numbered; and
- The bibliography lists authors cited in the thesis in alphabetical order.

2.4.6. Submission and the Viva

As stated above, a student intending to submit a thesis for examination should, with the approval of the supervisor, submit his/her intent to submit the thesis together with a summary or abstract at least two months before the submission. This period enables the appointment of examiners and setting a date for the viva.

2.4.6.1. Appointment of Examiners

The supervisor has the duty to recommend two external and one internal examiner to Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre who will present these to Higher Degrees Committee who recommend to senate for approval of the thesis and to set a date for the viva. Permission for two internal and two external examiners is possible if there are compelling reasons. Examiners must not be connected to the student or have any prior influence on the thesis.

2.4.6.2. Examiners' Assessment Options

In examining a PhD thesis, the decisions of the examiners ordinarily crystallise into five options:

I. **Straight pass** which means the student is ready to graduate and become a doctor;
II. **Pass with minor revisions** which takes three to six weeks of correction to the satisfaction of the supervisor. This may among other things include either correcting a few typos or references before binding;
III. **Pass with Moderate corrections** which takes six weeks (one and half months) to three months to the satisfaction of the internal examiner and endorsed by the Higher Degrees Committee. This may include addressing moderate inconsistences, miss alignments and omission in literature, methods or results.
IV. **Moderately Sever corrections which** takes three to six months. This may involve the addition of a few pages to capture additional literature and/or revised data analysis. The revised thesis may be checked by one of the examiners but there is no need for a second viva. The student is not a doctor until after effecting the revisions recommended to senate by higher degrees for approval after which the candidate passes and proceeds to graduation;
V. **Major corrections** which may take a year to one and half years i.e. 12 to 18 months during which substantial revisions are made in response to the detailed report of the examiners. There is need for a second viva. It is essential for the student to closely work with the revisions with the supervisor; and submitted to higher degrees to recommend to senate after which the candidate passes and proceeds to graduation
VI. **That the student be downgraded and be awarded an MPhil or traditional Masters of Science Degree** after effecting any necessary corrections
VII. **Fail,** in which case the candidate is not allowed to revise and re-submit the thesis for examination.

2.4.6.4. Post-viva Approval Process

Following the viva, the reports written by the examiners will be approved by the Higher Degrees Committee and the Senate. Once the viva reports have been approved, the student

will receive the formal recommendation made by the examiners and full reports from the Office of the Deputy Registrar Academic.

2.4.6.5. Submission of Final Version of Thesis

The Office of the Deputy Registrar Academic will provide the student with information relating to the deadline for submitting the revised thesis and when the hardbound thesis should be submitted. The final thesis, together with a soft copy on a compact disc, will be placed in the University Library. The thesis will be available for public consultation except in a few cases where the sensitivity of the data may warrant restricted access. The student should discuss restricted access with the supervisor before the thesis is submitted and inform the Office of The Deputy Registrar Academic accordingly.

2.4.6.6. Graduation

Graduation ceremonies are held in October of each year. Successful PhD candidates eligible for graduation will be informed of specific graduation dates and what is expected of them by the Office of the Deputy Registrar Academic. However, in order to graduate the student must have completed all corrections to the thesis and must not owe the University fees or Library fines.

2.4.6.7. Unsuccessful Candidates

The theses of PhD candidates who do pass their examination will be retained by, and become the property of, the University.

2.5. Further Information

2.5.1. Changing to Part-Time Status

If a student wishes to transfer from fulltime to part-time or from part-time to fulltime, he/she should complete the relevant form which is available from the office of the Director of the Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Centre. The change in status will be effected in the next academic year. The student should send the completed form to the supervisor who will decide on the recommendation to make to the Director of the Innovation, Research, and Postgraduate Centre. The Higher Degrees Committee and Senate will decide on the change of registration. The Director will inform the student of the decision.