



**GUIDELINES FOR A
CODE OF PRACTICE
FOR MASTERS BY
RESEARCH**

**Compiled by:
The Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board**

October, 2003



Table of Contents

Chapter 1.	Responsibilities	
	4.1 Responsibilities of the student	2
	4.2 Responsibilities of the supervisor	3
	4.3 Responsibilities of Departmental staff other than the supervisor	4
	4.4 Responsibilities of the Extern	6
	4.5 Responsibilities of the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board	6
Chapter 2.	Admission, Review, Submission and Examining	7
Chapter 3.	Current Regulations for the Degree of Master	13

DGSC = Departmental Graduate Studies Committee
IFGSB = Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board

Chapter 1

Responsibilities

To deliver highly competent Masters graduates requires significant effort on the part of all involved in the education process. The following is an outline of the responsibilities of those involved.

4.1 Responsibilities of the Student

It is the responsibility of the student to maintain a professional relationship at all times with the supervising academic members and other university staff. The Masters student is responsible for the progress and completion of her/his Masters study. After registering as a Masters student it is the responsibility of the student to:

1. Prepare and Submit a Masters thesis of original research, in consultation with the supervisor(s) and the DGSC.
2. Be familiar with the University's Masters Regulations (Ref. Postgraduate Calendar, Part II) and departmental guidelines and written information pertaining to Masters studies.
3. Students are expected to observe the Health and Safety regulations that apply to their department. In the case of laboratory research, the student must follow the standard guidelines for Good Laboratory Practice and should make themselves aware of Health and Safety Regulations pertaining to their own particular laboratory procedure.
4. Be aware of the University's administrative requirements pertaining to all steps in the Master's process (e.g. dates and deadlines for thesis submission, etc.)
5. Agree to a schedule of meetings, which will ensure regular contact with the Supervisor.
6. Develop competence in written and communication skills.
7. Take the initiative in identifying problems and seeking solutions to these.
8. Satisfactorily pass any coursework that may be required by the Department/DGSC.
9. Document the progress of work as agreed with the supervisor and present written or other material in sufficient time as requested.
10. Present written or other reports in sufficient time as may be required by the DGSC/department.
11. Satisfy the requirements of the department/programme at the "Early Review" and the "Mid-Term Review", for which details will be set out by the Department at the beginning of the programme (or available in the Departmental Graduate Study Handbook).
12. Submit a final draft for approval not less than one month before the submission date.

4.2 Responsibilities of the Supervisor(s)

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to maintain a professional relationship at all times with the student and to:

1. Give guidance about the selection of a thesis topic, research methods/techniques used, about the planning of the research programme, presentation of the research proposal to the DGSC, about literature searching and where necessary, appropriate courses to attend and the standard expected.
2. Give advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of work so that the thesis may be completed within the scheduled time
3. Familiarise the student with any reviews required by the DGSC.
4. Encourage the student to show research initiative and self-motivation in order to pursue independent research with confidence.
5. Establish and maintain a schedule of regular meetings with the student. Such meetings to be held at the request of either the supervisor or the student and would normally be expected to take place every two weeks during the Teaching Year and at least every month during the Summer Recess. In certain circumstances e.g. external research locations, less frequent meetings may be considered appropriate. The supervisor should keep a record of all meetings.
6. If a supervisor is to be on leave for a period greater than two/three weeks, the supervisor should ensure that adequate supervisory arrangements are made.
7. Request regular written work, interim reports or research results as appropriate and return such reports and draft chapters, with comments, within two weeks.
8. Ensure that the student is made aware of inadequate progress by specifying the problems and the suggesting ways of addressing them. If the supervisor feels obliged to recommend a candidature be terminated because of unsatisfactory progress, he must make this recommendation to the DGSC who will inform the student accordingly.
9. Advise the DGSC of the progress of the student at the Early Review.
10. Undertake the Mid-Term Review with a nominee(s) of the DGSC.
11. Ensure that the work reported in the Theses is the student's own. The student should be made aware of any concerns that the supervisor has about the originality of the work.
12. Encourage where appropriate publication of the research results. Ensure agreement is reached with the student on authorship of publications and acknowledgements of contributions.
13. Ensure that the student is aware of the standard of work that is generally accepted.
14. Seek to ensure that research projects sponsored by industry grants or contracts should not impose unreasonable restrictions on dissemination and publication of work done as part of a Masters thesis or compromise the independence of the research. Where a confidentiality agreement exists between a Department and a sponsor, the implications should be made explicit to the student. Submission of the thesis should not be delayed by the Department/Sponsor's interest in the confidentiality of the student's own work.
15. If the research leading to the Masters is done in laboratories in which several

candidates, technicians and post-doctoral fellows contribute to the project, clear delineation of the contribution made by the candidate is essential in a thesis and work done by others should be explicitly defined and acknowledged appropriately.

16. In the event of a student not carrying out their work to the satisfaction of the supervisor (s), that a written warning be given to the student by the Chairman of the DGSC.
17. To approve the submission of the thesis for examination. (See Stage 4, Chapter 2)

4.3 Responsibilities of Departmental Staff other than the Supervisor.

1. It is the responsibility of the Department to ensure that an adequately constituted and resourced Departmental Graduate Studies Committee (DGSC) exists. Membership of the DGSC is normally confined to full-time academic members of the Department and, where possible, should rotate.
2. The DGSC agrees with the supervisor(s) and the student an appropriate group of courses that the student must take.
3. The DGSC shall produce a Departmental Graduate Handbook and issue it to all intending applicants. The departmental handbook should contain details on requirements and procedures relating to all graduate matters administered at departmental level and in particular, include:
 - A statement on the facilities and resources available to Master students within the department and within the University, including the library, computing, technical and laboratory facilities.
 - A brief biography of academics and their research interests including most recent publications.
 - Departmental policy on the timing and mode of presentation of reports, reviews, seminars and examinations by which the student is assessed.
 - Departmental policy regarding coursework and the minimum number of courses that a student must pass, as part requirements for the degree.
 - Departmental requirements regarding demonstration and tutorials by graduate students.
 - Departmental policy regarding interlibrary loans.
 - Department policy on student costs for attendance at conferences.
 - Departmental calendar (seminar dates etc).
 - Departmental guidelines regarding thesis content and standards expected.
 - A statement on the University's policy and guidelines on intellectual property.
 - Procedures by which the student or the supervisor(s) may make representations as appropriate as significant difficulties arise (grievance procedures).
 - Requirements for student training in health and safety issues.
4. The likelihood of a student's success is enhanced by proper selection and admission procedures which include monitoring that:
 - The student is suitably qualified for admission and has satisfied the

Department, Faculty and the IFGSB with regard to the admission requirements.

- The proposed research project is appropriate for the degree.
 - The department is the most appropriate in which to conduct the proposed research.
 - The proposed research project is feasible in terms of time, departmental facilities, departmental equipment, departmental technical staff, departmental administration support, source and consumable materials and funding for the expected duration of the research project.
5. The DGSC should ensure that appropriate supervision is available to the student at all times and that:
 - The proposed supervisor(s) is appropriately qualified, sufficiently expert and interested in the research area to offer the student proper advice.
 - Supervisors should normally be permanent members of academic staff. Temporary academic members may co-supervise with a senior academic who is a permanent academic member.
 - The supervisor(s) should not advise a greater number of graduate students than would compromise the quality of advice to any student.
 - The workload (undergraduate, graduate, administrative) of the supervisor(s) is such as to allow sufficient time to give proper supervision.
 - Ascertain that alternative supervisory arrangements be made if the need arises, e.g. when a supervisor is on leave of absence.
 - Where a change in research direction occurs, appropriate supervision adjustments are made.
 - Joint supervision is encouraged where the research spans different areas or disciplines.
 6. The Department should ensure that mechanisms are in place to promote regular contact between academics, support staff and graduate students and include:
 - Departmental seminars
 - Training in safety procedures
 7. The DGSC should ensure that explicit information is given to the student regarding minimum requirements for continuation in the postgraduate programme, with particular regard to the Mid-term evaluation.
 8. In case of a dispute between a student and a supervisor, it is the responsibility of the DGSC to attempt to resolve the issue by:
 - a) discussion with the parties involved.
 - b) writing to the parties concerned giving an opinion in the situation and requesting a written response.
 - c) referring the issue to the Head of Department or IFGSB.
 9. Any disagreements between the DGSC and the Head of Department that cannot be resolved in the normal way within the Department should be referred to the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board.
 10. The intern examiners should be nominated by the Head of Department following consultation with the DGSC and will normally include the supervisor. One of the intern examiners shall be the relevant Professor, or subject to the agreement of the Head the nominee of the Professor.

11. The extern examiner shall be nominated by the Head following consultation with the DGSC and the relevant Professor and the supervisor.

4.4 Responsibilities of the Extern

It is the responsibility of the Extern to ensure that:

1. The thesis is assessed by standards appropriate for the Masters degree.
2. A report on the thesis is forwarded to the Examinations Office within the stated deadline.

4.5 Responsibilities of the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board

It is the responsibility of the IFGSB to ensure that best practices are implemented and University standards are attained university-wide and within faculties, schools, departments and centres of the university and to ensure that:

1. There are clear admission requirements and procedures for the particular degree.
2. Admission requirements of the university are adhered to.
3. There are clear guidelines for examiners outlining in particular the university's expectation for the degree.
4. There are clear guidelines for the submission of thesis and the examining thereof.
5. The university's examination standards and requirements for the particular degree are adhered to.
6. The university's administrative procedures assist students to complete their degree as expeditiously as possible.

Chapter 2.

Admission, Review, Submission and Examining

The following are the proposed stages towards the Masters degree. The student is required to complete these steps to the satisfaction of the appropriate body.

- Stage 1: Admission
- Stage 2: Early Review: Research Proposal Stage
- Stage 3: Mid-Term Review
- Stage 4: Thesis Submission
- Stage 5: Thesis Examining

Stage 1: Admission

A Standard Postgraduate Studies Application Form is lodged by the student with the *Postgraduate Admissions Office*. This application form should include a provisional title for the thesis and a short description outlining the nature of the work.

In the case of the Non-UCC applicants the following documentation should accompany the application form:

- Birth Certificate
- Academic Transcript
- Proof of conferring for all degrees held
- Two Referees Reports (indicating their potential for Postgraduate Study)

Once the student is accepted and a supervisor appointed, the application form is signed by the Head of Department/Section/Programme. The *Postgraduate Admissions Office* forwards same (with supporting documentation) to the appropriate Faculty. After Faculty approves the application, it is then forwarded to Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board for review. Notification of approval/rejection of the application by the IFGSB is then sent to the Academic Board. The *Postgraduate Admissions Office* informs the student of the result of the application, together with details regarding registration, fees and the rules governing submission of the Masters Thesis.

It is essential that each approved application contain the following details. These are recorded by *Student Records and Examinations Office* on the Student Database.

- Number of Years (/months) approved*
- Provisional Title of Thesis
- Commencement Date
- Name of Supervisor (s)

*The department specifies the number of Years/Months for which the student is approved.

The following are the Regulations in each of the Faculties regarding the length of time of a Masters degree by Research:

Faculty of Arts: The minimum number of years for a full-time student is one year. However the norm for a full-time student is a maximum of two years from the date of first registration.

Faculty of Commerce, Law, Science, Food Science, Engineering, Medicine: A candidate for the MSc Degree must pursue postgraduate research for at least one year full-time from the date of first registration or at least two years part-time from the date of first registration after obtaining the primary degree or qualifying examination.

Extensions

Current regulations state that the minimum number of years for a full time student undertaking a Master's degree by Research is one year from the date of first registration for the programme. The maximum number of years allowed is four years or in the case of the Faculty of Arts, five years, unless shorter periods are specified in the regulations. The number of years for part-time students is determined on a pro-rata basis. Students who do not complete within the maximum number of years (unless shorter periods are specified in the regulations) and require an extension, must complete the application form for a change in registration available from the Postgraduate Admissions Office. This is forwarded to the DGSC who make a recommendation to the relevant Faculty and the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board for approval/non-approval. *Student Records and Examinations Office* to be informed by IFGSB of all such approvals.

Stage 2: Early Review: Research Proposal Stage

The student is required to present a Research Proposal not later than 3 months after registration (1 term) for a one-year masters or 6 months after registration (2 terms) for a two-year masters to the DGSC, in consultation with the supervisor. This should include a defined research topic, research methodology and a proposed time schedule to completion. (Students will be informed at the outset of the programme, the exact requirements of the Department in the Departmental Graduate Study handbook). The purpose is to ensure that the student has a defined and viable research topic and a research schedule. In the event of unsatisfactory progress, the supervisor and the DGSC should recommend ways of improving progress. The DGSC keeps a copy of this Research Proposal plus a copy of the response to the student.

Stage 3: Mid Term Review

During the second half of the programme, a mid term review is undertaken by the supervisor and a nominee(s) of the DGSC who report to the DGSC. The form of review may differ across departments and may include an actual presentation by the student, together with an interview. The purpose of this review is to ensure that the student is complying with the Research Proposal, has sufficient knowledge of the fundamentals of the chosen research topic (including literature, methodologies, data etc.), and to assess the likelihood of the student completing the Masters successfully within the time-scale allowed. In the event of unsatisfactory progress, the supervisor and the DGSC or his/her nominee, should recommend ways of improving progress. For details of exact requirements, see the Departmental handbook on Graduate Study. The DGSC keeps any documentation put forward by the student plus a copy of the report to the DGSC made by the supervisor and a nominee(s) of the DGSC. This report should be made available to the student.

Stage 4: Thesis Submission

Each Departmental Graduate Study Handbook should set out:

- the submission dates and
- directions on format, layout and presentation of theses for Masters Degrees.

Students submitting a Masters degree by Research should notify the supervisor of his/her intention to submit at least one month prior to the date of submission. It is also the responsibility of the Master's Degree student to notify the Student Records and Examinations Office of his/her intention to submit at least three months prior to the proposed date of thesis submission. Submission of the thesis shall be approved by the Supervisor and the Head of Department.

Submission Approval

The supervisor may decline to give approval on any one of the following grounds:

- (1) The student has not been adequately supervised as a result of failing to consult the supervisor sufficiently in the course of preparing the thesis.
- (2) The presentation of the thesis is compromised by excessive grammatical, typographical and similar mistakes.
- (3) The referencing system fails to meet the standards required in the discipline.
- (4) The thesis contains plagiarised material.
- (5) The data, arguments or evidence provided are inadequate for the purpose of the thesis, or are not organised satisfactorily.
- (6) The methodology used is inadequate. This may include a failure to address issues of bias in the presentation of results or a failure to adopt a satisfactorily critical attitude to the material presented or discussed.

If the supervisor considers that a thesis is sufficiently inadequate, on any of the above criteria the supervisor may withhold approval.

Submission Approval Withheld:

The supervisor must submit a report to the DGSC giving the academic reasons for refusing permission to submit the thesis for examination. The DGSC should ascertain if there are any other circumstances that should be taken into consideration before reaching a decision on further action. It may choose to seek further opinions on the merits of the work. It should consult with and take advice from the Head of Department and the relevant Professor on the circumstances that have arisen.

The DGSC may either confirm or reverse the decision to refuse permission to submit the thesis for examination. The decision should be taken in the best interests of the student. The DGSC should appoint a member of staff other than the supervisor to advise the student of the circumstances surrounding the decision. If the student is still dissatisfied there is a right of appeal to the President.

Stage 5: Thesis Examining

An Examination Board should be constituted for Masters degrees. The Examination Boards should involve at least two intern examiners and at least one extern examiner approved by Academic Board on the recommendation of Faculty.

In the case of a Thesis being presented by a member of the University staff, one of the Intern Examiners shall be replaced by a second Extern Examiner.

The intern examiners should be nominated by the Head of Department following consultation with the departmental graduate studies committee and will normally include the supervisor. One of the intern examiners shall be the relevant Professor, or subject to the agreement of the Head the nominee of the Professor.

The extern examiner shall be nominated by the Head following consultation with the departmental graduate studies committee and the relevant Professor and the supervisor. One of the intern examiners other than the supervisor shall be nominated by the Head to act as Chair of the Board. Each examiner shall prepare a written report on the thesis. The Chair of the Board shall have responsibility for preparation of a joint report in the event of an agreed recommendation on an award.

In the event of a dispute between the Examiners, this will be reported to and considered by the IFGSB.

Externs:

The NUI shall notify Student Records and Examinations Office when Externs are officially appointed. Details of Extern Examiners shall be recorded on the Student Database.

Once Masters Theses are submitted, they are forwarded to the relevant External and Internal Examiners. The *Student Records and Examinations Office* informs the Extern of requirements expected of the Masters degree and the deadline for receipt of extern examiners report.

The examiners submit a joint report to the Students Records and Examinations Office. This report is in turn submitted to the IFGSB.

Chapter 3

Current Regulations for the Degree of Master by Research (As in the University Calendar 2003/2004, Part II)

Admission

1. To be eligible for consideration to undertake a programme of study for a Master's Degree by Research, a candidate must have obtained a standard of at least Second Class Honours in an approved primary degree or possess such other qualifications as the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board may recommend to Academic Board.
2. All applications should be made to the Admissions Office in the first instance.
3. All applications for admission to a programme of study and research for the Degree of Master shall be considered by the relevant faculty, following recommendation of the Head of Department in which the programme is to be pursued, after consultation with the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee.
4. The candidate's application, if accepted by the faculty, shall be submitted to the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board for approval. The provisional title of the thesis and a short description outlining the nature of the work must be provided to the Board when the student is being recommended for acceptance as a candidate for the Master's Degree.
5. The period of study shall be determined by the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board in accordance with the provisions applicable to the particular programme. If the application is approved, the student shall register for the Master's Degree for the duration prescribed, as a minimum.
6. A candidate who wishes to obtain a Master's Degree by research must:
 - (i) pursue a programme of supervised research for at least the equivalent of one year full-time from the date of first registration for the programme
 - (ii) must submit a thesis upon the work done during such programme which shall be assessed by Intern and Extern Examiners. The candidate may also be required to pass an examination on the subject matter of the thesis.
7. The Academic Board is empowered to withdraw the acceptance of any candidate, following consideration of a report from the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board.

General

8. In the case of the Faculty of Arts, the length of a Master's Degree thesis should normally be approximately 40,000 words.

9. A candidate for a Master's Degree by research will normally submit his/her thesis at the earliest opportunity following the end of the prescribed period of study. Permission to submit the thesis shall be approved by the Supervisor and Head of Department. Except where shorter periods are specified in the regulations for specific degrees, a candidate for a Master's Degree shall be allowed a maximum of four years or, in the case of the Arts Faculty, five years, to complete the degree from the date of acceptance. Candidates who do not submit their thesis within the prescribed number of years from the date of first registration for the programme for which they have been approved will require approval for extensions from faculty and Academic Board.

Supervision

10. The Academic Board, on the nomination of the Head of Department following consultation with the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee and on the recommendation of the faculty, will assign a member of staff to supervise the candidate's research. The name of the Supervisor should be forwarded when the candidate's name is submitted by faculty to the Academic Board. The Academic Board, on the recommendation of the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board, may arrange for joint supervision of the thesis. In the case of joint supervision, one of the Supervisors need not be a member of the University staff.

11. Unless permission is given to the candidate by the Academic Board, on the recommendation of the faculty, to work elsewhere under the general direction of the Supervisor, the research for the degree will be carried out in the department mainly responsible for the subject area concerned but, where the research is inter-disciplinary in nature, there shall be due co-operation between the main department and the other department(s) involved.

12. The candidate's research must be carried out, and the thesis for the degree must be prepared, under the direction of the Supervisor. The Supervisor should assess the progress of the candidate and, if he/she arrives at the view that the candidate is unlikely to achieve the degree for which he/she is registered, this should be notified to the Head of Department who, following consultation with the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee, should communicate with the candidate without delay.

Examination

13. In all faculties, Examination Boards for Masters Degrees by Research will involve at least two Intern Examiners and at least one Extern Examiner approved by Academic Board on the recommendation of faculty.

14. The Intern Examiners shall be nominated by the Head of Department following consultation with the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee and will normally include the Supervisor. One of the Intern Examiners shall be the relevant Professor, or subject to the agreement of the Head, the nominee of the Professor.

15. The Extern Examiner shall be nominated by the Head of Department following consultation with the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee and the relevant

Professor and the Supervisor.

16. One of the Intern Examiners other than the supervisor shall be nominated by the Head to act as Chair of the Board.

17. In the case of a thesis being presented by a full-time/part-time member of the University staff, one of the Intern Examiners shall be replaced by an additional Extern Examiner.

18. It is the responsibility of the Master's Degree student to notify the Student Records and Examinations Office of his/her intention to submit at least three months prior to the proposed date of thesis submission. Once notified, the Student Records and Examinations Office will forward a form to the Head of Department requesting the name(s) of the Extern(s) and Intern Examiners. The Head of Department will submit the completed form to the relevant faculty for approval at the next faculty meeting.

19. Three copies of the thesis (gum or spiral bound) together with the completed submission form for the thesis should be submitted to the Student Records and Examinations Office. Copies are forwarded to the Internal Examiners and the Extern for examination. A leaflet giving full information on the format, layout and presentation of theses for a Master's Degree is available from that office. The thesis must include a summary of the content, not exceeding 300 words in length, submitted in CD/diskette format. Candidates must be registered students in the academic session in which the thesis is presented. Theses can be submitted any time during the academic year up to the end of the first week of October. Submission of the thesis should be made at least two months in advance of the meeting of the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board at which the Examiners' Reports are considered. The Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board meetings will be held on:

8th October 2003

12th November 2003

21st January 2004

18th February 2004

5th May 2004

16th June 2004.

20. The submission form for the thesis shall contain all the information required for processing the thesis, including the final title of the thesis and shall be signed by the Supervisor and the Head of Department. Where a candidate considers that such signatures for entry have been withheld unreasonably, he/she may appeal to the President of the University.

21. Work for which a Degree of this University, or elsewhere, has already been obtained will not be accepted as the main work for a Master's Degree. A confirmatory statement to this effect must accompany the submission.

22. Examiners' Reports must be received in the Student Records and Examinations Office at least 10 working days prior to a meeting of the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board. A candidate's conferring is dependent on receipt of the Examiners' Reports. Conferring ceremonies are normally held in June (Degrees in the Faculty of Medicine and Health only), September and December.

23. The Chair of the Examiners Board shall ensure that the Examiners consult with one another. Each Examiner shall prepare a written report on the thesis. Where the examiners are in agreement, the Chair shall submit a joint report to the Student Records and Examinations Office for consideration by the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board.

24. Where the Examiners are not in agreement, separate reports shall be made. Copies of such reports will be submitted for consideration to the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board with a view to a recommendation to Academic Board on the award of the degree or otherwise. The Academic Board, on the recommendation of the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board, shall then appoint an additional special Extern Examiner, if necessary.

25. The Degree of Master shall be awarded in accordance with the decision of Academic Board following receipt of the recommendation of the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board.

26. If the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board recommends that the Master's Degree be awarded, the candidate must re-submit a hard bound copy of the Master's thesis, embodying any changes prescribed by the Examiners, where recommended. A recommendation by the Interfaculty Graduate Studies Board to Academic Board, for the award of the degree shall not be made until the revised thesis, incorporating the recommended changes, and confirmed by the Supervisor, has been lodged with the Student Records and Examinations Office.

27. Unless candidates indicate otherwise, a copy of the thesis will be lodged in the University Library. Candidates will be asked to agree that a copy of their thesis, deposited in the Library, will be available for consultation under conditions laid down by the University.

28. All theses shall remain the property of the University.

29. In the case of Interdisciplinary Programmes, the Chair of the Board of Studies may assume the role of a Head of Department and the Board of Studies may assume the role of the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee, where appropriate, and where approved by faculty.