



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

DOCTORAL DEGREES BOARD

PHD PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

In terms of Faculty policy all new PhD candidates are required to present a formal seminar in their respective departments to an audience at which the Head of Department (or designated alternate) and the Supervisor must be present. The seminar must be based on a written research proposal (see below) which must be submitted to the Supervisor and Head of Department before the seminar is given. The purpose of this seminar is to confirm that the candidate is appropriately prepared to carry out studies leading to a PhD degree. This will best be done by demonstrating:

- an adequate understanding of the current literature in the field,
- a clear definition of the hypotheses proposed, bearing in mind that in most fields of research it is not possible to pursue research without first establishing an hypothesis
- a clear definition of the key questions to be addressed in the context of the proposed hypotheses
- a clear knowledge of the experimental procedures to be used and the methodology to be used in analysing the results

After the seminar has been presented, the candidate may be required to incorporate in the written research proposal, any relevant issues which arise from the seminar. He/she must then sign and submit the written proposal to the Supervisor and Head of Department for endorsement and certification that the seminar has been held. The written research proposal must satisfy the criteria listed hereunder. If satisfied, the Head of the Department and Supervisor will endorse the proposal document and submit it to the Faculty Office in order that it may be referred to the core Committee of Assessors (CoA). If necessary the CoA may require the candidate to attend an interview.

The document must be submitted within 6 months of first registration for a PhD and should satisfy the following criteria:

- Be approximately 10 pages long
- Candidates should note that the purpose of the proposal document is to make a case for the research to be undertaken. It is not a progress report.
- The document should include:
 - A summary of the essential background literature
 - An explanation of the need for the research to be done
 - The hypotheses / objectives of the research
 - The key questions to be addressed in the research
 - The approach to be taken in doing the project, viz. experimental procedures, methodology for analysing results, etc.

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

Once the seminar has been presented and the proposal document submitted to the satisfaction of the Faculty, the Doctoral Degrees Board will be asked to confirm the candidate's registration.