

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION WHILE STUDENT NUMBERS ARE INCREASING

Universities are responding positively to the government's call to increase numbers of postgraduate students, specifically doctoral students. Increasing the postgraduate cohort at universities presents new challenges in terms of resource allocation and staffing requirements. Postgraduate strategies attempt to deal with these challenges by increasing the resources and support provided to postgraduate students and the staff who support them while taking into consideration the relevant contextual challenges and values of the institution.

Postgraduate strategies also ensure that the needs of postgraduate students and supervisors are prioritised in the strategic directives of the university. It provides a link between the core functions of teaching and learning and research, and promotes collaboration between stakeholders. It is, however, not a postgraduate school/centre strategy as it focuses on the collaborative work between faculties and postgraduate support units while recognising the changing role of the postgraduate support units.

The aim of postgraduate strategies is to ensure that all postgraduate students are provided with excellent postgraduate education. While postgraduate strategies have a wide range of focus areas, typically focus areas include:

- the research culture in the institution;
- the research capabilities of undergraduate students and the transition to postgraduate studies;
- graduate attributes; and
- resources, including the number of staff who supervise and support students

Two examples of postgraduate strategies can be found below:

Durham University Postgraduate Strategy: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/graduate.school/staff/gsstrategy/>

University of Pretoria (2025 Strategic Plan): <https://www.up.ac.za/en/about-up/article/258177/strategic-plan-2025>

QUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2018

The Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference took place from 17-19 April 2018. The conference theme was 'Impact, Engagement, and Doctoral Education' and the conference had six parallel themes. The research writing theme included presentations on feedback, the results of a writing self-efficacy survey, post-PhD writer identity, writing in a second language, and co-authoring and publication skills development.

The most developed theme was professional development for higher degree candidates. As there is concern that PhD graduates in Australia are not guaranteed work in the academy, there was a strong focus on transferable skills development and employ-ability.

Research supervision was another well-developed theme, with sessions on supervisor learning, student-supervisor relationships, group supervision, and institutional supervisory capacity. The number of presentations on supervision courses suggests that the professional development of supervisors is becoming more structured and formalized.

There was a session on postgraduate students' health and wellness, with a keynote and presentations on mental health, and other sessions on the link between accommodating diversity and wellness. Technology and digital tools featured strongly, with presentations on digital research design, the affordances of research software, e-portfolios, online monitoring processes and online communities. Less-developed themes were: PhD examination, including oral defense; ethics in research and supervision, and practice-based and professional doctorates.

UNISA ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES PHD SYMPOSIUM, 20-21 AUGUST 2018

The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences hosted a PhD Symposium with the theme My PhD matters? Speakers from 13 public and private institutions from the UK, Israel, South Africa and the United Nations University discussed the value of the PhD and what needs to be done to ensure that one's PhD matters. The symposium was attended by PhD candidates and supervisors from 15 South African universities. The following points were raised:

- candidates must take ownership of their intellectual development, to develop the conceptual clarity and methodological mastery required at PhD level
- the value of PhD research can be enhanced through closer collaboration between academic institutions and industry
- PhD candidates must consider insights from indigenous knowledge, and research paradigms relevant to research problems situated within the African context
- universities must enable students to register across faculty boundaries and must allow the
- appointment of supervisors from different faculties

Multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary approaches to research problems are better suited to complex problems and supervisors and candidates are encouraged to develop their knowledge and skills beyond their disciplinary boundaries.

- there is a need for quality supervision by supervisors who develop continuously, who give critical feedback in a safe space and encourage their students to engage with their research problem on a deeper level, even if it sometimes requires more time to complete the study
- the importance of research integrity was emphasised

Professors Vernon Trafford and Shosh Leshem presented a workshop on doctorateness. They highlighted four key factors that contribute to doctorateness: synergy, conceptualisation, contribution to knowledge, and thinking like a researcher. They encouraged students to self-audit their work to ensure that they meet the standards of a doctorate.

ENHANCING POSTGRADUATE ENVIRONMENTS (EPE) WEBSITE

The EPE website was developed by six South African and six European universities through the European Union's Erasmus Plus programme. The website (<http://postgradenvironments.com/>) has more than 72 videos, workbooks, PowerPoints and posters designed to support postgraduate scholars and their supervisors on the stimulating and challenging journey of postgraduate education. These materials are licensed under Creative Commons, which allows anyone to download, use and adapt them as they see fit. Thus far, the website has been visited by over 8000 individuals from 25 different countries. The materials provide insights into all aspects of the postgraduate journey, from how to approach a potential supervisor, through to how to publish and to develop a career.

THE KNOWLEDGE, INTERCHANGE AND COLLABORATION (KIC) MOBILITY CALL

The KIC contributes to:

- internationalising South Africa's research platform;
- enhancing networking within the global science system;
- fostering collaboration in order to improve the quality of research outputs by researchers.

The call opened on 17 August 2018 and closes on 20 September 2018

Applications must be submitted electronically on the NRF Online Submission System at:

<https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>

Please note that KIC support is prioritised for researchers who have not been allocated travel support through other current NRF grant awards.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Professional Doctorate workshop

The Postgraduate Forum of Southern Africa (PGFSA) will be hosting a workshop on the Professional Doctorate on 16 November 2018 in Johannesburg. Invitations will be sent to all members by 15 September 2018.

Annual General Meeting of the Postgraduate Forum

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place at the end of the PGFSA Professional Doctorate workshop on 16 November 2018.

Postgraduate Supervision Conference Announcement

Stellenbosch University, in conjunction with the Postgraduate Forum for Southern Africa, will host the 7th Biennial Conference on Postgraduate Supervision at Spier Estate, Stellenbosch, from 26 to 29 March 2019.

<http://www0.sun.ac.za/chaec/conference.html>