



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
INSTITUTIONAL OFFICE

®

RULES FOR THE CLASSIFICATION OF THESIS AND DISSERTATIONS

Reference number	7P/7.1.11.9
Accountable executive manager	Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Technology
Policy owner	Director: Research Support
Responsible division	Research Support
Status	Approved
Approved by	Council
Date of approval	First approved on 20 June 2014 Re-approved on 23 June 2016
Amendments	
Date of amendments	2016
Review date	2019
Procedures in terms of this policy	
Web address of this policy	http://www.nwu.ac.za/content/policy_rules
Address on the policy database	H:\HSC\2. Management\2.1.3 Policy management\Beleide\Raad Junie 2016\7P- 7.1.11.9_Classification TD_e.docm



RULES FOR THE CLASSIFICATION OF THESIS AND DISSERTATIONS

(including Terms of Reference for the Committee for the Classification of Thesis and Dissertations)

1 Introduction

As a pre-eminent University in Africa, driven by its pursuit of knowledge and innovation, with a unique institutional culture based upon the values the University espouses, the North-West University has adopted these Rules for the Classification of Thesis and Dissertations on 23 June 2016.

These Rules are approved by the NWU Senate to give effect to rules A.4.4.12 and A.5.4.12.

2 Principle points of departure

- 2.1 The generation and dissemination of scientific knowledge through research at postgraduate level form an integral part of the University's core business. The classification of theses and dissertations through which some or other restriction is imposed on the disclosure or dissemination of such knowledge should thus be regarded as an **exception**, which is permitted only in exceptional cases and after due consideration at a suitable level and in accordance with accountable norms and fixed procedures. All applications for classification and associated processes should therefore be tested against this principle point of departure.
- 2.2 Exceptional cases are motivated by the context of the study. Within the current context of scientific research, there are two main reasons for classification:
 - 2.2.1 The study may make use of **proprietary information owned by some entity**. For example, a commercial bank may supply information to form the basis of the study. In such cases, there will typically be some agreement between the university and the entity, specifying that such information must be kept confidential. Such an agreement will be entered into before the information is supplied, and will hence be available very early in the study process.
 - 2.2.2 The study may contain **information that is of value to the NWU**. It may for instance involve a discovery of some process that could be patented. The NWU would then benefit if the outcome of the study is kept confidential. Such value is usually discovered fairly late in the study process.
- 2.3 Each application for classification must be considered individually based on a motivated application to be prepared by the relevant project leader, supervisor or promoter ("the applicant"). Due to the many diverse fields of study and scholarly disciplines within which research is done, it would be undesirable to lay down rigid guidelines to serve as criteria for the classification. There are, however, a number of basic guidelines that should play an important role in the consideration of an application for classification. Should a classification of a particular thesis or dissertation clash with or have the potential to clash with:
 - 2.3.1 rights protected by chapter 2 of the Constitution ("the Bill of Rights"), and/or
 - 2.3.2 ethical codes applicable to the research, and/or
 - 2.3.3 the value system of the University,the application for classification should be refused or qualified.
- 2.4 The Director: Technology Transfer and Innovation Support must ensure that the Intellectual Property rights of the NWU are protected.

3 Classification categories

- 3.1 In light of the above principle points of departure, a thesis or dissertation is either considered classified or non-classified.

- 3.2 There is currently only one classification category, namely **Confidential**. Documents classified in other categories as specified in older versions of these rules will maintain their classification for the duration of the classification period.

4 The meaning of classification to confidentiality

Classification to confidentiality means:

- 4.1 that supervisors or promoters and examiners may not disclose to others the study material, discussions and conclusions as presented in the dissertation or thesis;
- 4.2 that officials in Academic Administration, which sends out the dissertation or thesis to the examiners may not disclose to others information with regard to the contents of the dissertation or thesis and that the library copy must be handed over to the Director: Academic Administration for safekeeping for the period of confidentiality;
- 4.3 that a member of the examination committee of the relevant faculty board or management committee with the necessary security classification may inspect the copy in safekeeping in order to be able to answer questions during meetings of the examination committee, faculty board if applicable or the Senate in respect of relevant comments of examiners;
- 4.4 that the confidentiality of the dissertation or thesis will be maintained for a period of two (2) years from the date of classification unless otherwise specified by a contractual agreement. After this period, the classification can be renewed for a further period, if so requested by the applicant. The classification period can last a maximum of five (5) years unless otherwise specified by a contractual agreement or matters relating to intellectual property rights.

5 Application procedure

- 5.1 In cases where the application is submitted early in the study process (2.2.1 above), the applicant submits the request for classification to the Committee in consultation with the relevant Research Entity/School director to the Campus postgraduate administration office. The application must be submitted on the prescribed application form, available in electronic format from the relevant campus postgraduate administration office. The application must also contain an approved title of the thesis or dissertation.
- 5.2 In cases where the application is submitted late in the study process (2.2.2 above), the application is submitted as above. In this case, it could happen that the dissertation or thesis is submitted before the Committee convenes to consider the application. In these cases, the applicant must personally ensure that the administrative department handling the submission and examination process is aware of the pending application. The dissertation or thesis will then be deemed to be provisionally classified, until the Committee can consider the application.
- 5.3 The Committee decides whether the thesis or dissertation should be classified. The Committee may determine its own internal procedures with the view to considering the application and can require the advice of the chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee that the proposed research be approved by the Research Ethics Committee before a final decision is made on the classification of the thesis or dissertation. The Committee may also require that a classified thesis or dissertation be provided with a dummy title.
- 5.4 The released title, with the name of the student, is submitted to the faculty board or management committee of the relevant faculty for the nomination of a promoter or supervisor.
- 5.5 The minutes of the Institutional Committee for the Classification of Dissertations and Theses should be tabled at the Institutional Higher Degrees Committee.

6 Institutional Committee for the Classification of Dissertations and Theses

6.1 Membership

Applications for classification are handled by a standing committee of the Institutional Committee for Research and Innovation (ICRI) consisting of:

1. The Institutional Director: Research Support
2. The Chairperson of the University's Ethics Committee
3. The Director of the Institutional Legal Office
4. The Director: Technology Transfer and Innovation Support
5. A member of the Senate (chairperson and convener)
6. The director of the Research Entity/School within which the research or subject field of the thesis or dissertation is located will be invited to the meeting.
7. A staff member of the relevant campus postgraduate administration office.

All these members are subject to the required fiduciary duty of confidentiality.

6.2 Appointment of members

The members are appointed by the Institutional Senate.

6.3 Appointment of Chairperson and acting Chairperson

The Chairperson is appointed by Senate.

6.4 Co-opted members, observers and visitors

See point 5 in the Membership list. No observers or visitors are allowed.

6.5 Voting rights of members

All members have voting rights.

6.6 Secretariat

Secretariat services are provided by Corporate and Information Governance Services.

6.7 Meeting arrangements

The following meeting arrangements apply:

Frequency	Twice per annum
Quorum	The quorum of the meeting will be half (50%) plus one of all the members, excluding vacant positions.
Notice	At least 14 days before the meeting date, the Secretariat electronically notifies of the time and place where the meeting is to be held. At least 2 days before an extraordinary meeting, the Secretariat electronically notifies, provides the reason for an extraordinary meeting, as well as the time and venue.
Agenda	At least 7 days prior to the meeting, the Secretariat provides the complete agenda pack electronically to all members.
Confirmation of Minutes	An ordinary meeting, after being constituted and opened, commences with reading and confirming (by means of the chairperson signing) of the minutes of the previous meeting(s). Any objection to the minutes is raised and disposed of before the minutes are confirmed. The minutes may be regarded as read if a copy of the draft minutes was provided to members prior to the meeting.

Decision-making process	<p>Matters are decided by means of general consensus. The Chairperson might however decide when a decision should be taken by means of a voting procedure.</p> <p>The Chairperson may decide that voting must be by secret ballot, provided that voting for persons must always be by secret ballot.</p> <p>The Chairperson has an ordinary vote, but must in addition exercise a casting vote in the event of an equality of votes on any matter.</p> <p>The number of votes in favour of or against any proposal is not recorded in the minutes, unless the Chairperson so decides.</p>
Conflict of Interest	<p>A member may not take part in the discussion of or vote on any matter in which the member has a direct financial or other interest, unless the members first discloses the nature and extent of the interest and obtains the leave of the meeting to take part in the discussion or to vote.</p>
Point of Order	<p>A point or order, clarification or information may be raised against any member, in which instance the ruling of the Chairperson is binding. The ruling of the Chairperson is binding and cannot be challenged.</p> <p>Should the above point of order, clarification or information be immediately challenged by a member, the ruling is put to the meeting for determination – without it being discussed, and the decision of the meeting is final.</p>
Disrespectful / Disorderly conduct	<p>Anyone attending a meeting who, after having been requested to refrain from disrespectful or disorderly conduct, continues to disobey a ruling from the Chairperson, must be requested to leave the meeting.</p> <p>If that person does not leave the meeting immediately, such a person could be removed from the meeting with the assistance of Protection Services.</p>
Apology	<p>An apology will be noted when a member electronically submits it to the Secretariat and/or the Chairperson, at least one day prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Members absent from the meeting without above mentioned apology are noted as “without apology”.</p> <p>The views of a member who is unable to attend a meeting may be submitted in writing but may not count as a vote of such member.</p>
Recording of meeting	<p>At the opening of the meeting, the Chairperson indicates that a recording will be made for minute purposes.</p> <p>The audio file is deleted after signed confirmation of the minutes at the next meeting.</p>
Round Robin Process	<p>The Chairperson may electronically submit urgent matters in between scheduled meetings. The Secretariat will assist in this process.</p> <p>At least two thirds of the members have to electronically confirm their involvement in the process by giving feedback, approval or non-approval. When a majority of members reaches agreement it is taken as a resolution. Such resolution is equivalent to a resolution of the committee and must be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting.</p>
Resources and Budget	<p>A centralised budget regarding the matters of this committee managed within the Department Corporate and Information Governance Services</p>
Records management	<p>All records of the committee (terms of reference, membership list, agendas, minutes, attendance register, correspondence, etc.) will be kept electronically (on <i>Share</i>) and hard copy and the hard copy sent to the Archives and Museum for permanent preservation.</p>

6.8 Reporting

This committee reports to the Institutional Committee for Research and Innovation and Senate.

6.9 Approval and review

The following documents guide the operations of this committee:

Document	Status	Authority	Date
Research and Innovation Policy	Approved	Council	20 September 2013
Policy for the Management of Research and Innovation Contracts and External Investment/Stakeholding	Approved	Council	23 November 2012
Rules for the Classification of Thesis and Dissertations	Approved	Council	20 June 2014
Rules for the Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (RERC) and Research Ethics Committees (RECs)	Approved	Council	20 June 2014
<i>The overall process for research and innovation is captured in the document "Quality Assurance process for Research at the NWU is available from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Innovation and Technology).</i>			

File reference for the terms of reference: 1.3.24.1

Updated: Augustus 2013, Prof LM Venter

Updated: 10 October 2013

Updated: 21 September 2015

Original details: (10935746) H:\HSC\2. Management\2.1.3 Policy management\Beleide\Raad Junie 2016\7P-7.1.11.9_Classification TD_e.docm
28 June 2016

File reference: 7P/7.1.11.9