

Higher Degrees Policy

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Responsible division	Research and Postgraduate Support
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HIGHER DEGREES POLICY

Against the background of the vision to discover new frontiers and opportunities that benefit society, thereby advancing our relevance and impact, the Council of the North-West University (“NWU”, “the university”) adopted this policy on 17 September 2026.

1 Interpretation and application

This policy must be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the –

- 1.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- 1.2 Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997;
- 1.3 Statute of the North-West University (“the Statute”);
- 1.4 relevant policies of the national government relating to higher degrees having a binding effect on the higher education sector;
- 1.5 Policy on the Awarding of Collaborative Degrees, and
- 1.6 NWU General Academic Rules.

2 Definitions

In this policy and related documents, specifically those referred to in paragraph 6 –

“**the A-Rules**” refers to the General Academic Rules of the NWU;

“**higher degrees**” refers to qualifications at master’s and doctoral level, equivalent to level 9 and 10 of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), offered at the NWU;

“**the Higher Degrees Committee**” (HDC) refers to the subcommittee of Senate that provides expert advice to Senate on matters relating to higher degrees, and

“**the Postgraduate Support Centre**” (PGSC) refers to a centre within the Research and Postgraduate Support (RPS) office.

3 Purpose and scope of the policy

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a unifying framework for the administration, governance and quality management of all higher degree programmes at the NWU.
- 3.2 This policy applies to all higher degrees.

4 Policy statement

It is the policy of the NWU –

- 4.1 to provide academic programmes at general, research and professional master’s and doctoral levels;
- 4.2 that these academic programmes be provided in areas of expertise as provided for in the research policy of the NWU, ensuring that adequate capacity to support such training is available;

- 4.3 that ownership of the academic programmes resides with the relevant academic units, in order to ensure effective coordination, monitoring, reporting and quality management of the student academic life cycle, and
- 4.4 that professional degrees will, where applicable, be aligned with the requirements and guidelines set by the professional bodies concerned.

5 Management and roles

- 5.1 Senate is responsible for the coordination, monitoring and implementation of this policy.
- 5.2 The HDC approves and monitors the implementation of the faculty higher degrees plans and the rules contemplated in paragraph 6.
- 5.3 The HDC provides expert advice to the senate on the development and implementation of planning associated with teaching-learning and research and innovation as reflected in the higher degrees plans and rules.
- 5.4 The successful implementation and execution of higher degrees programmes are monitored by the respective faculty boards.
- 5.5 The Higher Degrees Administration office provides centralised administrative support to master's and doctoral students, faculties and the HDC.
- 5.6 The PGSC provides higher degrees academic and graduate attributes support to master's and doctoral students, and professional development to supervisors.
- 5.7 Faculties are responsible for the management of the quality of master's and doctoral programmes offered within each faculty.
- 5.8 The chairperson of the HDC must submit an annual report to the senate.
- 5.9 The information relating to all higher degree programmes must be captured and made accessible in the NWU student information management systems.

6 Higher Degrees plans and guidelines

- 6.1 The senate must adopt and implement comprehensive NWU higher degrees rules and provide guidelines for the implementation thereof.
- 6.2 Each faculty must develop and implement a faculty higher degrees plan and guidelines in consultation with the senate which is consistent with this policy and the NWU higher degrees rules contemplated in 6.1.
- 6.3 The HDC (supported by the faculties) is responsible for the implementation and execution of the higher degrees plans and rules contemplated in 6.1 and 6.2.
- 6.4 This policy must regularly be revised by the research and postgraduate support directorate and submitted to council for approval at least once every five years.
- 6.5 The higher degrees plans and rules contemplated in 6.1 and 6.2 must be designed to bring about a higher degrees management environment in which –
 - 6.5.1 the interests of higher degrees students and their supervisors or promoters are maintained at the highest level;
 - 6.5.2 higher degrees students and their supervisors or promoters are treated in a fair and transparent way, guided by an agreement and code of conduct provided for in the Higher Degrees Manual;

- 6.5.3 the roles of higher degrees students and their supervisors or promoters are clearly defined; and
- 6.5.4 the decision-making processes that deal with the governance and administration of higher degrees students are effective and clearly defined.

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