

POSTGRADUATE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2023 – 2025)

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CONTEXT, RATIONALE AND AIMS

The University's 2033 Strategic Framework states that our purpose is to make a "positive impact on society through creating and advancing global knowledge and fostering graduates to be leaders with integrity". In this context, the strategic objective for our postgraduate research efforts will be "to produce socially engaged postgraduate thinkers and innovators equipped to use knowledge for change in the country, in Africa and across the world". There are multiple rapid and radical changes occurring in the higher education landscape, globally, continentally and nationally, and it is imperative that we reconceptualise our postgraduate offerings to respond with agility to these developments. The process of curriculum transformation should enrich the student experience, strengthen the quality of postgraduate research, and accelerate and increase throughput. It is essential that these learning-teaching activities are properly resourced, and are of mutual benefit to staff and students, revitalising and invigorating the knowledge project for the present and future.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR POSTGRADUATE CURRICULA AND PEDAGOGIES

1. Include academic staff (particularly supervisors) in joint design and implementation.
2. Identify disciplinary-specific and transdisciplinary (generic) requirements.
3. Integration of content (theory) and form (processes and skills).
4. Ensure articulation between levels of programme offerings (university-wide, faculty-based, school / department or disciplinary).
5. Structure components sequentially and developmentally.
6. Articulation between levels of study, particularly masters and doctoral studies.
7. Include formative assessment to demonstrate research competencies.
8. Flexible modes of delivery (block release / monthly workshops / online).
9. Articulation with the world of work (broadly defined) and socio-political challenges.
10. Align with and anticipate national developments (accreditation and degree structures).

INSTITUTIONAL PATHWAYS

Implementation, June – September 2023.

Report to Senate Postgraduate Studies and Research Committees end 2023.

The first phase of this process will be initiated through parallel threads of preparatory work in 2023:

- 1) mapping existing postgraduate support across the institution; 2) initiating curriculum design and

pedagogical processes through stakeholder forums; 3) consolidating appropriate resources in online platforms, in national pockets of good practice, and through international partnerships; 4) developing systems and financial modelling to ensure that the appropriate architecture is in place.

The research office will co-ordinate these streams of work, but it is imperative that there is a high level of participation from disciplinary experts who are the drivers of the academic project. To ensure joint-ownership of an integrated comprehensive programme, the survey needs to be distributed widely and the stakeholder forums should target those actively engaged in curriculum innovation. Informed by the outcomes of these processes of institutional engagement, a trial implementational phase in 2024 will pilot elements such as a cohort system or forms of recognition for learning modules (such as digital badging or co-curriculum notation on academic transcripts). By 2025, the requisite realignment of university systems should enable the launch of new postgraduate curricula and structured degree programmes.

POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT SURVEY

There are a range of innovative postgraduate support activities across the university, including the GOLD programme and faculty programmes that are relatively well-documented and in some instances, credit-bearing or subject to various forms of recognition. Beyond these more formal offerings there many creative projects, generated organically by staff in response to students' learning needs beyond dyadic supervisor-student interaction. This survey aims to consolidate both formal and informal offerings to ensure that available resources are shared and learning opportunities are made available to all students.¹

STAKEHOLDER FORUMS

While it essential to build on and strengthen existing practices, it is important not to be overly constrained by existing structures and practices that are evidently not fit for purpose. Stakeholder forums will explore best-case scenarios and generate alternative models. Participation in these forums will be by targeted invitation, creating non-hierarchical interdisciplinary clusters of academics in each faculty. In addition, forum/s will be facilitated with critical postgraduate support units, e.g. CLTD, Postgraduate Affairs, Library, International Office. Student participation will be facilitated by the Postgraduate Student Association and through faculty networks.

¹ The results of this survey will be combined with the findings from the survey of supervision practices conducted by Dr Liz Brenner in 2022. See ***Supervision at Wits report: Summary document for discussion***, Diane Grayson, Brett Bowman and Gerrit Wissing (G-SC-TLC-2023-032).