

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCES
**GUIDELINES FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS
MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL STUDIES 2016**

CONSIDERING POSTGRADUATE STUDIES?

1. EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

- Different universities offer different programmes that cater for different needs. Explore all possibilities.
- Before committing yourself, discuss your intended studies with the head or senior member of the department.
- Since postgraduate studies involve research, identify and explore a research interest in advance.
- Success depends on having the time and capacity for postgraduate studies.

2. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- *Why postgraduate studies?* Make sure that you pursue postgraduate studies for the right reasons.
- *Do you have sufficient time for postgraduate studies?* Full-time master's and doctoral programmes are based on a 45-week academic year, i.e. 1 800 hours per year between end-January and mid-December. Part-time studies have a longer duration and require working after hours.
- *What may compromise the successful completion of your studies?* Consider and weigh up all factors.
- *How long will the studies take?* Master's students are expected to complete their studies in two years and doctoral students in three years, unless a longer period is specified in faculty regulations. However, postgraduate studies always take longer than anticipated and planned.
- *Are there short cuts?* There are no short cuts. Postgraduate studies are demanding and require in-depth knowledge, extensive reading, theoretical engagement, intellectual independence, critical thinking, insight, independent research and the ability to document your findings – and often repeating this process.
- *Is residency essential?* The University of Pretoria is a residential university and this Department does not provide distance learning, also considering that the master's coursework components involve some contact tuition with compulsory class attendance. The research relevant supervision also requires regular personal contact between supervisor and student.

GETTING STARTED

3. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

The Department of Political Sciences offers the following master's and doctoral programmes:

- **DPhil (International Relations) or DPhil (Political Science):** These are **thesis** based research degrees, including an oral defence of the thesis.
- **MA (International Relations) or MA (Political Science) based on research:** These are **dissertation** based research degrees.
- **MA in International Relations or in Political Science based on coursework:** These structured programmes include a **coursework component (50%)** and a **research component (50%)** in the form of a **mini-dissertation**. **(please note that these coursework programmes are currently unavailable)**
- **Master of Diplomatic Studies (MDIPS) and Master of Security Studies (MSS):** These structured programmes include a **coursework component (66,6%)** of four modules and a **mini-dissertation or research relevant output (33,3%)** The total **research component (50%)** includes the research methodology module.

NB: Please enquire in advance about the availability of the programmes – some may be suspended. **The MDIPS is currently a closed programme for institutional partners.**

4. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Formal requirements

- **DPhil (International Relations) or DPhil (Political Science):** A master's degree with specialisation in the Political Sciences. An average of 70% is required in this degree. In the case of a coursework master's degree, the research component must comprise at least 50% of the degree; a minimum mark of 70% is also required for the research component. In addition, prospective students may be required to submit a qualifying essay, to sit for an examination or to do additional work/modules to enable them to reach the desired level of study. An acceptable level of proficiency in English or Afrikaans is required. An approved research proposal is also required.

- **Research MA (International Relations) or MA (Political Science):** An honours degree with specialisation in the Political Sciences. An average of 70% is required in this degree. In addition, prospective students may be required to submit a qualifying essay, to sit for an examination or to do additional work/modules to enable them to reach the desired level of study. An acceptable level of proficiency in English or Afrikaans is required. An approved research proposal is also required.
- **Coursework MA (International Relations) or MA (Political Science):** An honours degree with specialisation in the Political Sciences. An average of 65% is required in this degree. In addition, prospective students may be required to submit a qualifying essay, to sit for an examination or to do additional work/ modules to enable them to reach the desired level of study. An acceptable level of proficiency in English or Afrikaans is required. An approved research proposal is also required. **(currently unavailable)**
- **Coursework degrees (MSS / MDIPS):** An honours degree in Political Sciences or directly related fields (or a related university degree with sufficient relevant work experience in, respectively, the security field [for MSS admission] or in the diplomatic field [for MDIPS admission], with the approval of Senate). An average of 65% is required in this degree. In addition, prospective students may be required to submit a qualifying essay, to sit for an examination or to do additional work/modules to enable them to reach the desired level of study. An acceptable level of proficiency in English is required **(enquire about availability)**.

4.2 Additional requirements

- Prospective students with a **foreign** entry-level qualification obtained at a non-South African tertiary institution must have their qualifications evaluated and certified by the **Centre for the Evaluation of Educational Qualifications (CEEQ)** at the **South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)** (see <http://www.saqa.org.za>) **prior** to applying for admission. Applications without the SAQA accreditation are not considered.
- Prospective students with non-English language **foreign** entry-level qualifications **must** complete a language proficiency test **prior** to applying for admission. Other applicants **may** be required to complete the test. Where proof of language proficiency is required, applications without the test results are not considered. The following tests are acceptable: Local applicants – the Test of Academic Literacy for Postgraduate Students (TALPS) of the University of Pretoria. This test is written at the University of Pretoria and a small fee is payable in advance. Direct enquiries to the Unit for Academic Literacy at (+27 12) 420-4834/2334. You can also take an Online Test at <http://www.icelda.sun.ac.za>. Applicants unable to write TALPS at the University of Pretoria or online – either the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test (at <http://www.ielts.org>) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (at <http://www.ets.org>).
- The postgraduate programmes are **discipline specific** (or discipline related in the case of the MDIPS / MSS). The admission requirement is an entry-level qualification in the *Political Sciences* (i.e. **either** in *International Relations/Politics* **or** in *Political Science*). If the entry-level degree is not discipline specific (e.g. in *Politics*, *Political Studies* or in a **directly** related field of specialisation), the department will decide – based on the content of the entry-level degree – for which field of specialisation (i.e. *International Relations* or *Political Science*) you qualify. If the entry-level qualification does not comply with the standard of competence in the discipline as determined by the department, a candidate may be admitted, provided that specified additional study assignments and/or examinations are completed. If an MDIPS / MSS application is based on a related university degree with sufficient relevant work experience, attach a one page CV in support.
- Prospective students with an entry-level qualification in a discipline **other than** the *Political Sciences* – e.g. in History, Philosophy, Sociology, Law, Public Administration, Development Studies, etc. – are as a rule **not** admitted to the postgraduate degree programmes. Prospective students may be admitted, provided that they first obtain the required **entry-level** qualification or equivalent standard of competence in the discipline.
- A research proposal is required for the research master's or doctoral degrees. See the *Appendix*. Applications for research degrees (MA or DPhil) **must** include this research proposal.
- Admissions for the DPhil and MA by research are furthermore subject to:
 - the **feasibility** of the research, informed by a research theme; and
 - the **availability** of a supervisor with the specialised knowledge and capacity to provide supervision.

5. INFORMATION

- Prospective students are advised to consult the relevant university and faculty yearbooks.
- The regulations on postgraduate studies appear in the General Regulations of the University of Pretoria and in the postgraduate yearbook of the Faculty of Humanities (obtainable from faculty or at <http://www.up.ac.za>).
- Additional academic information can be obtained from the Programme Manager, listed in the yearbook. Information on or assistance with non-academic matters is provided by the Client Service Centre (CSC) (Tel: 012-4203111 or csc@up.ac.za) and/or by faculty Student Administration (and **not** by this department).
- Foreign students must also contact the university's International Department for assistance.
- If library access is required, contact the Department of Library Services (<http://www.library.up.ac.za>).

6. APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION

- Prospective postgraduate students have to apply for admission to the University of Pretoria and to the specific degree programme. Make the application at Student Administration of the Faculty of Humanities or on-line (at <http://www.up.ac.za>) (and **not** at this department).
- As a general university rule the closing date for **applications** is end-September. If dependent on SAQA accreditation and/or the completion and final results of entry-level qualifications, applications are considered until the end of the academic year prior to admission (early-December). Since the 45-week postgraduate academic year and postgraduate activities start in January, it is essential that admitted students register by then. Late applications are dealt with at the discretion of the Department but, as a rule, are not considered.
- Application forms are available at Student Administration, at the Client Service Centre (CSC) or on the UP-website (<http://www.up.ac.za>). Submit the completed application form and supporting documentation (including a research proposal in the case of research degrees) to Student Administration who will forward it to the Department for a final decision. Incomplete applications are referred back to applicants. Direct all subsequent enquiries regarding submitted applications to Student Administration (and **not** to this department).
- Prior to application, prospective students may approach the Head of Department (or the Programme Manager) to explore the possibilities of postgraduate studies. In the event, provide supporting documentation.
- Except for the MDIPS / MSS degrees, the Head (or Acting Head) of Department approves admission (and registration). Admission to the MDIPS / MSS degrees is approved by a departmental admissions committee chaired by the Programme Manager. No other staff member can approve or authorise admission.
- After registration, the Head (or Acting Head) of Department (in conjunction with the Programme Manager in the case of the MDIPS / MSS degrees) appoints a supervisor for the research component.

7. REGISTRATION AND RENEWAL OF REGISTRATION

- Registration takes place after admission, at Student Administration (and **not** at this department). Students register for one year of study and must renew their registration for each subsequent academic year. This renewal of registration is conditional on satisfactory progress as confirmed by the Head of Department.
- Students for the research master's or doctoral degree must submit a **research proposal** as part of their formal application. After admission and registration, this research proposal is finalised in conjunction with the designated supervisor and approved by the relevant departmental and faculty committees.
- Coursework students (including MDIPS / MSS students) register only for coursework modules in their first year of study. On completion of these, they register for the mini-dissertation (or other research relevant outputs).
- Annual renewal of registration must take place before or on the closing date (i.e. mid-February for coursework degrees and end-March for research degrees). The renewal of registration forms are signed by the Head of Department (or the MDIPS / MSS Programme Manager).
- The academic year runs from January to December. If studies are incomplete by the end of the academic year, renewal of registration and the payment of tuition fees for a new academic year are required. Accordingly, if the required research output has not been submitted on time for examination and the result (including that of the defence of the thesis in the case of doctoral students) has not been finalised by mid-January, the student has to renew registration and pay for another academic year.
- Master's students are expected to complete their studies in two years and doctoral students in three years, unless a longer period is specified in faculty regulations. Renewal of registration after the specified period is permitted only under special circumstances where the Head of Department and/or the postgraduate committee approve a limited fixed extension of this period in terms of the set procedures. The student has to **apply** for extension at Student Administration, which has to be recommended by the Head of Department in conjunction with the supervisor and/or the programme manager in the case of the MDIPS / MSS programmes, **before renewal of registration**. This extension is not granted automatically but is conditional on satisfactory progress as confirmed by the Head of Department and on the assurance that studies will be completed in the fixed extension period. The mere probability of or intention to make progress during the fixed extension period are not sufficient grounds for granting extension. Extension is a conditional privilege and not a right. Furthermore, if the examination of the research relevant output is not concluded by mid-January, the fixed extension period will extend into and require the renewal of registration for a subsequent academic year.
- Students will only receive supervision on the provision of proof of registration / renewal of registration.

GENERAL ENQUIRIES:

Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria
Departmental Secretary: rina.dutoit@up.ac.za Tel. +27 012 4202464

APPENDIX: GUIDELINES FOR THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1. NATURE AND SCOPE OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

The **recommended book** (listed in the Library catalogue) that covers most aspects of postgraduate research, including the research proposal, is:

- Mouton, J. 2001. *How to succeed in your master's and doctoral studies: A South African guide and resource book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

2. LIBRARY FACILITIES

Registered students have full access to the university's library facilities. Prospective students can obtain permission and pay a fee to use the library facilities.

3. FORMAT OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The research proposal (written in **either English or Afrikaans**) must be **typed** (12 pitch) at **1½ spacing** on **A4 format paper**. Its recommended **length** (excluding the *Title page, Abstract* and *Bibliography*) is:

- **Master's Dissertation (or Mini-dissertation): 2 000 words** (approximately 6-7 pages)
- **Doctoral Thesis: 3 000 words** (approximately 9-10 pages)

Keep to the length restrictions and **comply** with all language and technical requirements. Text editing and proofreading must be done prior to submission. Keep a master copy of the submitted proposal.

4. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The research proposal gives an indication of your ability to undertake postgraduate studies incorporating a feasible research component, including reporting on it. More specifically, it 'frames' the study by delineating its nature, focus and scope. As such, the research proposal indicates:

- **What** the research is about (theme / topic / problem).
- **Why** the research will be done (aim and objectives / answer to a puzzle or question / research thesis).
- **How** the research will be done (research design / research methodology / research structure).
- The **subject matter** of the research (literature / data sources).

5. STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

In principle the research proposal **should** cover the following aspects (use these headings in your proposal):

Title page with personal details

- Student number (if available)
- Full first names and surname
- Degree programme
- Postal address
- Contact particulars: E-mail address (if available); telephone number(s); and/or fax number(s)
- Date of submission

1. Topic

- Formulate a **provisional title** for the mini-dissertation, dissertation or thesis.
*The purpose is to formulate a concise but descriptive **working title**. If a main and a subtitle are used, the main title usually indicates the core aspects whereas the subtitle serves as a qualifier. It may be necessary to indicate the time-span of the topic. Preferably, do not phrase your title in a question form. The title also provides an indication of the scope of the research and serves as a basis for deducing the rationale and relevance of the study. It could also denote the type of study undertaken.*

2. Abstract (excluded from the final version submitted to faculty)

- Provide a **brief summary** (250-300 words) of the planned research.
The purpose of this overview is to summarise the research proposal by indicating the rationale, problem, methodology and structure of the research. It is also included in the application for ethical clearance.

3. Identification of the research theme

- Identify the research theme by **contextualising, stating the purpose** of and **justifying** the study.

The purpose of this section is to indicate in broad terms **what** the research is about and **why** it is undertaken, thus to contextualise, to state the purpose of and to justify the study. With the provisional title as a point of departure, this section contextualises the topic by indicating the origins of / reasons for the research; the background to the research; where the research field fits into the discipline; the **purpose statement** (aim of the study) and the academic and practical relevance of the research. **Note:** In the case of a doctoral **thesis**, also indicate the **originality and contribution** of the research. **Limit the length** of this section to essentials. Students tend to 'over-elaborate' this section by including unnecessary background information of a detailed and descriptive nature.

4. **Literature overview**

- Provide a provisional **overview of literature**, including previous and related **research** on the topic. *The purpose of this section is to provide an **overview** of literature and research material on the topic, indicating that you are sufficiently familiar with the most recent literature, documentation and/or research reports; that you are aware of previous and related research: that you have developed initial ideas about the research; that you understand and have clarified the conceptual, theoretical and methodological foundations and framework of the research; and that there is a niche for your research. This overview will enable you to develop an **academic argument** about why the topic matters and why the proposed approach and means to study it are appropriate and rigorous.*

5. **Formulation and demarcation of the research problem**

- Formulate a **research problem**, i.e. problematise the topic by formulating it as a problem to be solved.
- Formulate a **research question**, i.e. a meaningful question worth pursuing, inspired by the problematisation of the topic. If appropriate, formulate sub-questions to augment the main question.
- Formulate a **research argument**, i.e. an argument in the form of an explicit **thesis statement** that you are going to defend. Depending on the research design and the type of research, formulate **explanatory propositions** or **hypotheses** in response and as provisional answers to the sub-questions.
- List the specific **objectives** of the study (also used to complete the application for ethical clearance).
- **Demarcate** the research problem (and therefore the study).

*The purpose of this section – having identified the research theme and done the literature overview – is to indicate in more specific terms **what** the research is about and **to what end**. **Firstly**, it involves the '**research puzzle**' or problem that interests you and that you 'want to solve'. This inspires a **what?** and/or a **why?** question that in turn can be **historical, exploratory, descriptive, causal, predictive** and/or **evaluative**. This section transforms research theme and topic into a statement of the research problem and a specific research question. **Secondly**, the **research question** is not merely a rephrasing of the working title in question form, but a more incisive question that embodies and addresses the 'research puzzle behind the topic'. The main research question may be subdivided into secondary sub-questions. However, be realistic and avoid too many questions since you have to answer all the questions that you pose. Two to four sub-questions should be sufficient. **Thirdly**, clearly state the **thesis** (or **defendable argument**) of your research. Although not all research writing is argumentative, the thesis as a research argument draws attention to what you want to say, resolve or prove. In the **fourth** place, formulate **propositions** (or hypotheses) – subject to analysis and assessment (or verification / falsification) – as provisional responses or tentative answers to, or assumptions about the research questions. In the **fifth** place, list the specific **objectives** of the research. These objectives, that should be evident in the Structure of the Research, are also listed in the application for ethical clearance. **Finally**, conclude by **demarcating** the research problem using criteria such as the key **concepts**, the **object** (or unit of analysis), the **scope** and the **time frame** of the study. The formulation and demarcation of the research problem should be clear and unambiguous since it forms the **critical core** of your research proposal. Pay particular attention to this section and make sure that there is a logical correlation between your working title, the aim and objectives of your study, your research problem, question(s), argument and proposition(s). Students often err by not aligning the 'what and why' of the different sections.*

6. **Research Methodology**

- Select and describe an appropriate **research design**.
- Indicate your **approach** to and **method(s)** of research.
- In the case of **survey research**, specify your **research method** with reference to:
 - method(s) of data collection including particulars of sampling, respondents, questionnaires and structured interviews (attach the questionnaires and interview questions as an appendix); and
 - method(s) of data processing and data analysis (statistical or otherwise).

*The purpose of the **research design** is to indicate what **type of study** will be done (e.g. a critical literature study, a case study, a comparative study, an empirical survey based study, etc.) and what*

kind of **evidence** (or data) is required or will be used. If not survey research, it is essential to indicate the most important and recent primary and secondary data sources. The data sources must be available in the public domain, accessible and in a language that you understand. Also, indicate whether experts in the field will be interviewed.

The purpose of the **approach(es) and method(s) of research** is to indicate your research process and the kind of tools and procedures you will use, namely **how** you will do the research. Accordingly, you should clarify the meta-theoretical, methodological and/or theoretical approaches and specific research methods that you will use.

8. **The structure of the research**

- Outline the **structure** of the mini-dissertation, dissertation or thesis – chapter-by-chapter. Provide each chapter with an appropriate title and give a brief description of its content.
- It is recommended (but not essential) that you have at least five or six chapters. In the case of a **qualitative, descriptive-analytical study** include an introductory chapter (based on this research proposal); a literature-based chapter covering the theoretical, analytical or conceptual framework (or alternatively, an extended critical review of the literature); a background chapter (if applicable – if not, consider more main chapters); at least one or two main chapters covering the core issue and/or case study/studies; and a concluding evaluation. In the case of a **quantitative or qualitative empirical analysis**, if based on survey research and interviews, the structure differs. In this case, include an introductory chapter (based on this research proposal); an extended review and critical analysis of the literature; a chapter outlining the research design and survey method; a chapter presenting and analysing the research data; a chapter interpreting the research data; and a concluding evaluation.

*The purpose of this section is to provide an indication of the **overall structure** of the mini-dissertation, dissertation or thesis. As a planning and organising device, this section provides coherence to your study by indicating its 'line of reasoning', execution and documentation. Do not merely indicate the chapters. Provide each chapter with a proper working title, followed by a brief description of the aim or purpose of the chapter, its content and sub-topics.*

9. **Bibliography**

- The bibliography (using the Harvard-format) **only** includes the sources actually referenced or cited in this research proposal. It does not include any additional sources. List the sources in alphabetical order.

GENERIC ASSESSMENT CRITERIA - HUMANITIES RESEARCH PROPOSALS

A research proposal should provide a succinct but sufficiently detailed plan that outlines the way in which a clearly stated research problem will be addressed. It should meet the following criteria:

- Sufficient **clarity** of the research problem.
- The research problem and the way in which it will be addressed must be presented in the form of a **logical and coherent argument**.
- Sufficient **survey of the established field**, e.g. evident in the literature overview.
- **Critical engagement** in an established debate.
- **Feasibility** of the research within the duration allowed.
- Appropriate level of **innovation / contribution** to the field of study:
 - Originality is not an absolute requirement for a master's dissertation (or mini-dissertation); the latter should not, however, merely regurgitate or collate existing insights. Research at master's level should demonstrate the candidate's ability to work independently.
 - Doctoral studies should show evidence of originality and the precise nature of the contribution to the field should be stated explicitly in the research proposal.
- The proposed study **tests requisite research skills** at the appropriate level.
- **Bibliographical references** must be provided that includes the most important texts/sources in the field