UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Professional (Sub-specialties) MPhil Part II (minor dissertation)
Guidelines for candidates, supervisors and examiners

In the case of sub-specialties, the MPhil minor dissertation is one of two components of the MPhil degree. This dissertation carries one third of the weight of a full master’s dissertation in terms of its credit weighting, i.e. 60 credits which approximate 600 hours of work.

The dissertation must be the result of independent work of the candidate conducted under the guidance and direction of a supervisor(s) and should demonstrate evidence of an ability to undertake research, to interpret results adequately and to review the relevant literature comprehensively and critically. Although the research need not necessarily be original, the findings must be seen to advance scientific understanding. A case report is not acceptable for the dissertation, as it cannot meet these requirements. A systematic review is acceptable as long as standard reporting guidelines are adhered to. The topic, study design and scope of research will depend on the particular disciplines and must be agreed on in consultation with the supervisor(s). The topic must be approved as being suitable for MPhil dissertation by the Departmental Research Committee (DRC).

The dissertation may be presented in one of two formats:
I: Publication format;
II: Monograph format.

As disciplines differ in their requirements, it is important that the format chosen is acceptable to the discipline and appropriate College within the CMSA.

Research protocol

Candidates intending to register for the MPhil Part II are required to submit a full research protocol for approval to their respective DRC. The candidate must then obtain UCT Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HREC) approval prior to conducting their research. Studies that involve the audit of clinical records or services also require formal HREC approval. Research taking place in a provincial or local authority health facility, such as public sector hospitals or clinics, must also be submitted to the Provincial Government for approval, after the UCT Research Ethics Committee approval has been obtained. Approval to access public sector facilities for research is needed for all provincial and local authority facilities. There are five points where approval for research can be applied for - the three teaching hospitals, the local authorities and "all other province". Teaching hospitals and the local authorities approve research projects in-house. "All other province" approvals are done via the Directorate: Health Impact Assessment (Sub-directorate: Research) at provincial head office. If research crosses these boundaries, up to five approvals may be needed. Further details can be found at http://www.capegateway.gov.za/other/2011/3/phrc_approval_guidelines_november_2010.pdf. The Provincial Health Research Committee does not approve research proposals itself, but oversees this approval process by reviewing difficult applications on referral.

The research protocol should specifically and accurately outline the scope and content of the dissertation and must include the title of the proposed dissertation, name of the supervisor(s) and their brief curriculum vitae(s). This full research protocol together with a copy of the REC approval letter and completed Form D1 must be submitted to the postgraduate administration office, for approval by the Professional Masters Committee Chair and the Board of the Faculty of Health Sciences, prior to commencement of the research. If the title, aims, objectives or any other aspect of the research change following initial submission, an amendment must be submitted to HREC.
Timelines

Submission of the research protocol for approval should generally be made within the first 12 months of the subspecialist programme. Heads of Departments or Divisions should meet with their subspecialist trainees at least annually to review progress towards their research project. Unless otherwise stipulated by your Division / Department or constituent College of the CMSA, the research project should generally be completed ahead of the Certificate examination. The exact timelines are provided by the CMSA.

Supervisors

The importance of identifying a supervisor as early as possible cannot be overemphasized. The supervisor should be someone who can relate to the candidate’s research project, be available for frequent and regular discussion and advice, and someone with whom the candidate can develop a good working relationship. Where specialised equipment and/or laboratory work is required for the study, the supervisor should assist in facilitating access to appropriate facilities.

The primary supervisor may be based outside the candidate’s home Department, Faculty or University. In such a case, an internal (co-)supervisor will also be required in addition to the primary supervisor, to serve as a guide and link to UCT faculty and discipline-specific procedures. Primary supervisors have ongoing responsibilities to the candidate and the University until the dissertation process is complete. The supervisor and student must complete form D3 (supervisor appointment form) and D2a which describes the contractual memorandum of agreement (MOU) between supervisor and student.

In order to assist a candidate with a master’s research topic the supervisor should hold a master’s degree or equivalent (such as a Fellowship of one of the constituent Colleges of the CMSA), and have relevant research experience. If the primary supervisor does not hold such a higher qualification, then a secondary supervisor who has a higher degree will need to be appointed in addition to the primary supervisor.

The dissertation

Submission of the dissertation should include the following:

The title page should contain the candidate’s name, dissertation title and the name of the university. It must also state the degree, e.g. Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Neonatal Medicine, Pulmonology, Cardiology, etc.

The Table of contents

The declaration page should include a statement to the effect that the research reported is based on independent work performed by the candidate and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree to any other university. It must also state that this work has not been reported or published prior to registration for the abovementioned degree.

The abstract should summarise the study rationale, methods, results, discussion and conclusion in fewer than 500 words.

Acknowledgements. This section should acknowledge the support or input from supervisors and briefly describe the role of actual or potential co-authors. In a dissertation derived from work started by others, e.g. analysis of data collected for another project, the candidate’s contribution must have been made after his/her registration for the degree and therefore under supervision.

List of Tables
List of Figures
Abbreviations
The remainder of the dissertation may be presented in one of two formats:

I: Publication-ready format

II: Monograph format.

I: Publication format:
The dissertation must include a manuscript in publication-ready format and should be structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context
In this section the student should put the research in perspective by providing the relevant background, research setting and rationale of the research. This should not be an full literature review, but the candidate may need to enlarge on the introduction in the publication-ready manuscript to facilitate a clear motivation of how their research contributes to advancing scientific knowledge with particular referance to the research setting. If there are aspects of the methodology that merit more detail than was afforded in the submitted paper, a subsection titled “methodological aspects” should be included. References quoted in this chapter should appear at the end of the chapter, not at the end of the thesis.

1.2 Ethical considerations
In this section the student should discuss how the ethical considerations were addressed and state the relevant HREC approval number(s).

Note: The word count for part 1.1 and 1.2 combined should not exceed 2000 words.

1.3 Author guidelines of the Journal for which the paper has been formatted
Unless specially motivated, the journal chosen should allow for at least 3000 words excluding abstract, tables, figures and references. The “Instructions to Authors” of the journal must be appended. The journal chosen for publication must be appropriate to the subject matter of the dissertation – the reason for choice should be motivated here. The journal must also be listed in the citation index of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) or accredited by the South African Department of Education:

Chapter 2: Publication-ready manuscript

In this section, the study must be presented in the form of a manuscript of an article that has been formatted according to the requirements of the journal described in Chapter 1. The manuscript does not need to have been submitted to a Journal for publication. A manuscript that is already published at the time of submission is also acceptable as long as it was published during the period of registration for MPhil and the candidate is the first author. Manuscripts that have already been published need to be submitted in the format that they were submitted for publication and not in the final journal print format.
II: Standard monograph format:

Some disciplines and constituent Colleges of the CMSA require a standard monograph format, which should be 16,000 to 20,000 words in length, and presented in a comprehensive and scholarly style.

The dissertation must contain the following:

a) A structured and comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the subject matter and methods of the study. The literature review must show that the student is sufficiently acquainted with, and is able to conduct a critical appraisal of the relevant literature. Where relevant, the student should demonstrate a good understanding of evidence-based medicine. The review should summarise and interpret the existing knowledge in the field with relevance to the research setting and should identify knowledge gaps and the rationale for the dissertation.

b) Material and methods of the study must be fully described and factually presented and must evidence familiarity with the laboratory and/or clinical methods used

c) Results, discussion and conclusions.

Appendices (relevant to both formats)

All other relevant supporting documents should be appended, including:

- Questionnaire/data capture instrument(s)
- Consent forms and related participant information sheets
- Technical appendices and relevant additional tables not included in the main manuscript. These should be accompanied by a brief narrative.
- Ethics approval letters and other relevant permissions

Language and writing

Clear, grammatically correct English is essential. Supervisors may assist candidates in developing scientific communication skills but they are not required to do detailed editing or correction of spelling, grammar, or style. They may refer candidates elsewhere for this, at the candidate’s own expense. Candidates who may have difficulties are encouraged to seek help from the writing support facilities on main campus (see: http://www.ched.uct.ac.za/adp/writing/).

Candidates should refer to the document D4, Guidelines on the Layout and Style of the Dissertation or Thesis. As long as the dissertation is readable and internally consistent, any of a number of styles is acceptable. For a publication-ready manuscript, references should be formatted according to the instructions to authors for the journal selected, and candidates should use the same style throughout their dissertation. For a monograph format manuscript, the Harvard style for referencing is recommended. In this style, referencing is by first author in parentheses in the text and the bibliography is listed alphabetically (rather than using numerical superscripts in the text). For reference management, Refworks can be downloaded from the ICTS or UCT library website.

It is suggested that candidates look at previous examples of Master’s dissertations in the library for appealing layouts. Master’s dissertations are available in the Health Sciences Library. A search will need to be done to obtain a list of titles and authors. This search can be done using search words (e.g. dissertation, health, health sciences, etc.). The librarian should be asked for assistance. Some of these dissertations are available online at http://srvrhldig001.uct.ac.za/R/R3CAKv8FM3PHV23A363D7j4F947AN4AXGRBTHIpm2l62RSUXDm-029437func=collection&collection_id=1526 but this site does not yet differentiate MMed, MPhil and MSc dissertations within the Faculty of Health Sciences, so candidates will have to open each dissertation to identify whether it is relevant to their minor dissertation.
Submission of dissertations

On completion, the dissertation should be submitted to the Faculty Postgraduate Office. The candidate should inform the Faculty Officer one month in advance of the intention to submit, using **Form D8 (Intention to submit)**. Supervisors will be requested by the Faculty Postgraduate Officer to submit a letter supporting submission, and clearly specifying whether the dissertation will be submitted in a “Submitted publication” or “Monograph” format, so that the appropriate instructions are sent to the examiners. This letter should be supplied by the primary supervisor. If this supervisor is external, the internal supervisor must be kept informed at every stage of the process.

The candidate must submit 2 copies of the dissertation, in temporary binding (e.g. plastic ring) and an electronic copy in a universally readable format (e.g. pdf) on a compact disc. The candidate must clearly state which of the formats has been chosen (“Publication format” or “Monograph format”), so that the appropriate instructions are sent to the examiners. Specific submission requirements may be set by individual disciplines or constituent Colleges of the CMSA, and registrars are obliged to ensure that their research projects and dissertations meet these specific requirements.

**UCT Dissertation Submission deadlines:**
1. March 15th for June graduation
2. August 15th for December graduation

*Note on fees:* To avoid attracting fees, dissertations need to be submitted before the beginning of the first quarter (first day of academic year), and before the start of the second semester (mid July) to qualify for a 50% fee rebate.

Examiners

The full dissertation will be submitted for examination through the Postgraduate Office of our Faculty to two external examiners (nominated by the supervisors and HOD).

It is the supervisors’ responsibility to submit names of three potential examiners to the Faculty Officer when the candidate is ready to submit. Of the three examiners nominated, two are invited to examine, and one is held as an alternate. Usually, all examiners should be external to UCT, and appointment of examiners from outside South Africa is encouraged. However, where the submitted publication has been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed DoE-accredited journal, only one examiner is required: Internal examiners may be considered in this setting with appropriate motivation from the supervisor(s). These nominations need to be approved by the Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Affairs on behalf of the Faculty Board and submitted to the Faculty Board for ratification via a Dean’s Circular.

The examiners will be well briefed regarding the specific requirements and criteria for submission and examination of the minor dissertation. Such criteria will clearly explain the difference between the minor dissertation and a Master’s degree by dissertation alone, and between the monograph and the “submitted publication” format of dissertation. Details required for each examiner are: academic qualifications, postal and/or physical address, telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address, and one paragraph description of their standing in the relevant field.

*The candidate may not be informed of the identity of the examiners.* After the outcome of the minor dissertation has been finalised, the examiners’ identities are made known if the examiners have indicated that they do not object to this.

Publication agreement

The university has a moral responsibility to publish all research undertaken when publication is stated as an anticipated output. A candidate who fails to submit a manuscript to a journal for publication within 1 year of submission of their thesis, must accept that their supervisor(s) are entitled to publish their data on their behalf, with the student as co-author as long as this is noted in the MOU.