

# Postgraduate Handbook

A Comprehensive Guide for PhD and Master's Students  
and their Supervisors

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# Contents

|    |   |     |
|----|---|-----|
|    | Preface   | v   |
| 1  | Factors to Consider When Deciding to Obtain a Postgraduate Qualification                                  | 1   |
| 2  | Philosophical Background of Knowledge and Some Adult Learning Theories: Simplification of the Terminology | 9   |
| 3  | Postgraduate Programmes: Variety, Depth, Credits and Enrolment  | 19  |
| 4  | What is Research? Research Questions, Research Designs and Types of Variables                             | 27  |
| 5  | Reliability and Validity of Quantitative Research Instruments   | 39  |
| 6  | Writing a Research Proposal: From Title Through Research Question and Conceptual Framework to Methodology | 49  |
| 7  | Postgraduate Thesis, Dissertation or Research Report: Different Formats and Flow From Title to Conclusion | 69  |
| 8  | Research Integrity: The Obvious and the Less Obvious Dimensions   | 79  |
| 9  | Professional Doctorate Degrees: How Do They Differ From Conventional PhD Degrees?                         | 93  |
| 10 | 'Guys! Let Me Tell You About My PhD Supervisor': Postgraduate Supervision Practicalities and Approaches   | 97  |
|    | Index   | 109 |

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# Preface

This postgraduate handbook is intended for postgraduate students and their supervisors. As postgraduate studies are more dependent on self-directed active learning than on teacher-driven passive learning approaches, it is critical for one to know clearly why one wants to embark on postgraduate studies. This is because in general, postgraduate programmes are aimed at moulding postgraduate students into resourceful people who can think critically and can work independently. Having a clear motivation for undertaking postgraduate studies tends to have a bearing on the level of dedication and personality attributes of individual postgraduate students. The first chapter therefore focuses on reasons why one may want to pursue postgraduate qualifications.

In order to make an informed decision in terms of choice of postgraduate qualification to pursue, it is necessary to know the different types of postgraduate studies that are offered by various institutions of higher learning. Clarity of what postgraduate studies are is important because sometimes there is confusion which leads to wrongful exclusion or inclusion of some students as postgraduate students. For instance, at some universities some programmes meant for postgraduate students may leave out students studying for postgraduate diplomas yet they are actually postgraduate students. Therefore, the book gives a comprehensive overview of types of postgraduate programmes.

One challenge that is experienced by many postgraduate students is ability to successfully complete postgraduate studies within the stipulated periods for specific programmes. Some postgraduate students drop out, others fail and others take a prolonged period of time to complete their studies. There are various factors that could be attributed to failure to complete or long completion periods, and in most cases it is due to a combination of a number of factors. One of the major factors is lack or inadequacy of research skills, data analysis skills and writing skills not only on the part of postgraduate students, but on the part of supervisors as well in some cases. The book covers topics related to research methodologies, writing skills and student-supervisor relationships.

