



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Centre for Postgraduate Studies



2015 Orientation and Workshop Programme

Postgraduate Research and Writing

This programme is intended to introduce postgraduate scholars to aspects of the research and academic writing process that are pertinent to a successful postgraduate experience. The programme also provides a forum for postgraduate scholars to meet with one another across disciplinary and programmatic boundaries. The programme does not duplicate what is done at department or faculty level, but rather offers opportunities for enrichment and an arena for deliberating research design decisions and learning the art of academic writing.

The programme runs over the entire year in the form of a series of **postgraduate studies workshops**. The core workshop programme on research design and academic writing will be run twice per annum, offering scholars two opportunities in the year to join the programme.

The core of the programme consists of four two-hour workshops on four Tuesday afternoons each term. This will be supplemented with occasional one-day workshops and evening sessions on specific issues, as determined in conjunction with scholars who attend the programme.

All postgraduate scholars at Rhodes University are encouraged to complete at least the four core workshops on research design and the four core workshops on academic writing once during the course of their postgraduate studies. But they are free to rejoin programmes should they wish to revisit issues and/or continue to deepen their engagement with the topics.

The sessions offer postgraduate scholars the opportunity to engage with members of the academic staff on a wide range of contextual, theoretical and practical issues relating to research.

Contextual sessions will require postgraduate scholars to consider questions such as “How is my study located in the research landscape in South Africa, Africa and the wider world?” “Am I reviewing the best literature, and where do I find relevant contextual literature?” “What does my study mean for the field in which I am conducting research?” “How can research contribute to the development of social policy, citizenship and community well being?” “How can / does research contribute to innovation and why does this matter?”

Theoretical sessions will require postgraduate scholars to think about questions such as “How does the history and philosophy of science influence our research design decisions?” “What is knowledge and how can it be known?” “How can research be conducted ethically?” and “How does one work critically with theory in postgraduate studies?” Theoretical sessions will also provide insight into the “theory of method” and how our research design decisions are shaped by intellectual histories.

Practical sessions will introduce scholars to some of the more practical aspects of research such as “How do I design a good research question?” and “How do I conduct a good quality literature review?” as well as “How do I ensure validity and quality in my research design and conduct?” Additionally, these sessions will introduce scholars to diverse research practices, and to working with specific methods and approaches – the research interview, and the survey, conceptual analysis, as well as to tools such as the use of Nvivo software for coding qualitative data. Academics contributing to the sessions on methods are experts in their use.

Academic writing workshops will be oriented towards understanding the academic writing process, and will help you develop strategies to 'get started' with your academic writing. The workshops will also show you how to generate arguments through your writing, and how to make claims based on evidence and analysis. The academic writing workshops will provide you with tools for relating your reading to your writing, and show you how to avoid plagiarism and ensure that your writing is professionally produced. Academic writing is not the same as everyday writing, and in the sessions we will discuss what makes academic writing a unique practice, with its own characteristics and forms of expertise, which we all need to learn. The programme is not about 'grammar' or 'language learning', but focuses very specifically on the practices of academic writing.

POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR SERIES

Postgraduate scholars have requested a 'student led' seminar series. Postgraduate scholars are therefore invited to offer short seminars on their work or on chosen thematic areas and/or research issues during brown bag lunch times on workshop days – these will be advertised on the website on a weekly basis; the programming will be student driven. All are invited to share their work and obtain feedback on it in an open forum. Seminars can be advertised via the Centre for Postgraduate Studies communications infrastructure. Please contact Professor Heila Lotz-Sisitka and/or Varonique Sias on cpgs@ru.ac.za should you be willing to contribute to this process. A working group will be established across faculties and in communication with the Postgraduate Students Liaison Committee to facilitate inter-disciplinary scholarly dialogue amongst postgraduates.

SEMESTER 1: FEBRUARY – JUNE 2015

Date	Title	Venue and Time
Session 1 17 February	Postgrad Welcome Function Introducing Research at RU (DVC: Research, Dr Peter Clayton, and Faculty Deans) Introduction of the Centre for Postgraduate Studies and the 2015 Postgraduate Orientation Programme Introduction of the Academic Writing Programme and first semester Academic Writing Circles (this will run every Thursday lunch time at the ELRC; max 10 people)	Senior Common Room, Main Admin Building 17h00 – 18h30
Session 2 24 February	Research Design Decisions Workshop 1 (RD 1) Knowledge, research contexts and questions: understanding knowledge in relation to your research context and questions. The session will include discussions on literature reviewing. (Light refreshments will be provided)	Eden Grove Red 16h00 – 18h00
Session 3 3 March	Orientation to the RU Library & practical literature review work	Library Foyer 14h00 – 16h00
Session 4 10 March	Research Design Decisions Workshop 2 (RD 2) History and Philosophy of Science: implications for research design decisions (Light refreshments will be provided)	Eden Grove Red 16h00 – 18h00



Session 5 17 March	Research Design Decisions Workshop 3 (RD 3) Research practices: Working with data, texts, concepts and theory in research (Light refreshments will be provided)	Eden Grove Red 16h00 – 18h00
Session 6 24 March	Research Design Decisions Workshop 4 (RD 4) Research Quality: ethics, quality and validity in different research designs (Light refreshments will be provided)	Eden Grove Red 16h00 – 18h00
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Session 7 21 April	Academic Writing Workshop 1 (AW1) Understanding the writing process and starting out with generative writing (Light refreshments will be provided)	Eden Grove Red 16h00 – 18h00
Session 8 28 April	Academic Writing Workshop 2 (AW2) Reading and Writing – making sense of literature and developing your voice amidst the academic voices of others (Light refreshments will be provided)	Eden Grove Red 16h00 – 18h00
Session 9 5 May	Academic Writing Workshop 3 (AW3) Developing your arguments and making claims in your study (Light refreshments will be provided)	Eden Grove Red 16h00 – 18h00
Session 10 12 May	Academic Writing Workshop 4 (AW4) Editing and presenting your written work for peer review (Light refreshments will be provided)	Eden Grove Red 16h00 – 18h00
Session 11 9 June	Rhodes University Academic Writing Indaba Public lecture on Monday 8 June 18h00 – 19h00	Education Department New Lecture Venue (tbc) 08h30 – 17h00

THE PROGRAMME IN DETAIL

Session One (17 February)

Welcome Function and Introducing Research at Rhodes University

In this introductory session to the postgraduate journey at Rhodes University, the DVC of Research and Faculty Deans, or their representatives, will welcome postgraduates to Rhodes and outline plans to develop and support research at the university. This will allow postgraduate scholars to begin to see where and how their own work might fit in with the work of others and how they might get support.

The Centre for Postgraduate Studies is a newly-established entity at Rhodes University offering support for postgraduate studies. The programme and activities of this Centre will be introduced, and scholars wanting to participate in the programmes can begin signing up for the workshops.

Session Two (24 February; repeated on 4 August)

Research Design Workshop 1

Knowledge, Research Contexts and Questions

Producing research is about producing knowledge. Some of the most critical questions for researchers involve what knowledge is, and how that knowledge can be known. The session will look at some of the main orientations to knowledge, and will consider the implications for research design. Producing knowledge is also related to context, as knowledge gains meaning and significance in particular places and times, and in relation to specific questions that are worth investigating. Researchers try to answer questions about the world around them. However, identifying the question that needs to be asked in a particular context or in relation to specific problem can be very difficult. This session will guide participants through some of the considerations relating to the identification of a



research question and the sub-questions that can help to answer it. Conducting a good literature review is important to assess the existing state of knowledge on a particular question, and it may also help with the refining of research problems and questions. The session will therefore also focus on how to conduct a literature review in order to assess the quality and scope of existing knowledge in a particular field or research context, and identify areas for further research.

Preparation for the session: Prepare to share a short (2 minute) mental summary of your research interest area that addresses the following questions: What knowledge are you intending to produce, for whom and why? What is the problem that you are researching, and what is worth researching (possible research question)?

Session Three (3 March)

Orientation to the Library

Apart from the Department or Centre in which your research is located, the Library will probably be the place that you visit most during your time as a postgraduate scholar. The new Library at Rhodes has been designed to provide optimal support for research. It includes a designated space for senior postgraduate scholars and academics, the Research Commons, and specialist research libraries such as the Cory Library and the International Library for African Music (ILAM). Library staff are highly trained to support postgraduate scholars and their research. In this session, which will be held in the Library Meeting Room, Level 4, librarians will introduce postgraduate scholars to the wide range of facilities and resources on offer. Note: It is also possible to obtain specialist assistance from your Faculty librarian with conducting your literature review.

Preparation for the session: visit the RU library website and familiarise yourself with some of the services on offer in the library before the visit. In this way you will be better prepared and able to ask pertinent questions during the visit.

Session Four (10 March; repeated on 11 August)

Research Design Workshop 2

History and Philosophy of Science

Science is not a neutral practice, nor did it emerge from nowhere. It has developed over centuries via various forms of methodological and philosophical ideas and perspectives that differ in their historicity, scope,

longevity and orientation. There are ancient sciences and modern sciences, and sciences that have been described as postmodern and/or postcolonial. There are sciences described as 'Western' or 'indigenous', as 'positivist', 'hermeneutic' or 'realist'. Increasingly we are also finding sciences that are interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary, and there is more talk about marginalisation in science, which has implications for scientific practice. All of these ways of describing scientific practice have historical roots, and make philosophical and methodological claims, which are often also political (even if they don't appear to be so). This workshop will explore the scope of the scientific practice that is being undertaken by scholars attending the programme, and work with researchers to trace some of the historical and philosophical dimensions of this practice. An understanding of the history and philosophy of science is critical for defensibly working with any particular methodological approach. It can also help researchers to be more self-conscious regarding their own research practice, orientation, or politics of method, which are often taken for granted.

Preparation for the session: Bring a half-page/two paragraph description of the history and philosophy of the scientific area that you are working with to the session, and see if you can find one paper on the history and philosophy of science that you think is worth discussing with others.

Session Five (17 March; repeated on 18 August)

Research Design Decisions Workshop 3

Research practices: Working with data, texts, concepts and theory in research

Some research teaching makes a distinction between qualitative and quantitative research – arguably not a very useful distinction because a lot of research draws on both forms of data. Some researchers work with concepts and texts instead of 'data'. In this session we will examine forms of



research practice and will consider how one works with data, concepts, texts and theory in research. The session will not focus on specific statistical techniques or specific qualitative research methods, but will rather engage scholars in thinking about what they are trying to achieve when they work with data, concepts, texts or theories in their studies. They will be encouraged to examine these different research practices in relation to their research question and discipline, and to consider ways of going about research. The session will introduce a range of research practices, including data generation approaches, and will also include a discussion on data management, data analysis and making sense of the data through using/contributing to theory. We will introduce you to some of the data analysis tools that are available at Rhodes University (e.g. Nvivo for qualitative data analysis).

Preparation for the session: Bring an example or some start-up ideas related to a research practice of your choice (e.g. questionnaire use, survey tool, interview schedule, concept analysis etc.) that you are working with in your research, and a paper that discusses this research practice that is worth sharing with others.

Session Six (24 March; repeated on 25 August)

Research Design Decisions Workshop 4

Research Quality: Ethics, Quality and Validity in different research designs

Regardless of whether research involves human respondents or non-human animals, it needs to be conducted ethically. This session will explore ethical guidelines for conducting defensible research. It will also consider ethical conduct as a key feature of quality in research. Additionally the session will discuss different orientations to ensuring validity, credibility and trustworthiness in research. These criteria are often dependent on the type of research design, the research paradigm being worked with, and the context in which the research is being conducted. Theoretical perspectives informing the research also shape validity or trustworthiness concerns, as do issues such as the internal coherence of a study.

Preparation for the session: Bring any ethical protocols that are relevant to your area of study or your particular research project to the session for discussion. Bring a reading to the session that is helpful for thinking through how you might approach ensuring quality, validity and/or trustworthiness in your study.

Session Seven (21 April; repeated on 29 September)

Academic Writing Workshop 1

Understanding the writing process and starting out with generative writing

Research needs to be disseminated so that it can be scrutinized by other members of the academic communities in which it is produced. Although some dissemination takes place via the form of oral conference and seminar presentations, postgraduate scholars are typically required to produce first a written proposal arguing for the research they want to conduct and then a dissertation, thesis or report describing what they did, why they did it and what emerged from the research process. Writing can be difficult, even for experienced academics, and many scholars find that they need to extend their registration for a degree because of problems with writing up their research. In this session we will examine some of the features of academic writing, which is a specialised practice that we all need to learn. We will also explore some practical ways of using generative writing as a strategy for developing academic writing skills, as this helps with one of the key dimensions of scholarly writing, namely communicating meaning, and developing your own 'voice' via the writing process.

Preparation for the session: Bring along your 'favourite reading' or a piece of academic writing that you find 'excellent'. Try to work out why it is that this piece of academic writing is helpful to you.

Session Eight (28 April; repeated on 6 October)

Academic Writing Workshop 2

Reading and Writing – making sense of literature and how to develop your voice amidst the academic voices of others

A key feature of academic writing is the process of writing up your work in relation to the written work of others who have produced research texts that



influence your field of study. This is a complex process as it requires researchers to assess written texts in relation to their own focus, context and research question. The scope of existing academic texts can sometimes be overwhelming; making it difficult to sift out what is most useful to you in a systematic and coherent manner. This workshop will focus on practical approaches to reviewing and assessing existing academic texts in relation to your academic project, and will share ideas on how you might strengthen your own academic perspectives and work in relation to the academic voices and texts of others in your field.

Preparation for the session: Bring along what you consider to be two 'seminal texts' in your academic field that are relevant to your research. Try to work out a) why they are seminal texts, and b) how exactly they are relevant to your research / research question.

Session Nine (5 May; repeated on 13 October)

Academic Writing Workshop 3

Developing arguments and making claims in your study

A third important process in developing academic writing competence is the process of framing your arguments and making claims in your study. This involves a process of integrating research findings generated through data analysis with insights gained from the field of research. To make a contribution to knowledge you need to be able to formulate an argument and make claims. Different disciplines have different approaches to this work, and in this workshop we will explore some of the dimensions of academic arguments, and how you might go about making claims in your study.

Preparation for the session: Depending how far you are with your academic work you may be able to produce a mind-map or short summary that outlines the key argument that you are producing in your research. If you are not that far in your study, you may want to select a good academic paper or thesis from your field of study and produce a mind-map or summary of the argument that the author is putting forward. Ask yourself: what claim/s is the author making to support his/her argument, and how is this being done?

Session Ten (12 May; repeated on 20 October)

Academic Writing Workshop 4

Editing and presenting your written work for peer review

A fourth process that is important in developing academic writing competence is ensuring that your manuscript is well edited, proofread and presented in a professional academic style. This workshop will focus on the differences among feedback, editing and proofreading, and will also look at some of the dimensions of presenting academic work in a professional academic style (e.g. quality of referencing, use of appendices, technical presentation of a dissertation etc.).

Preparation for the session: Bring along 2-4 pages of your own written text. During the session we will go through a process of reviewing this text from the perspective of feedback, editing, proofreading, and developing a professional-academic presentation style.

Session Eleven (9 June)

Rhodes University Academic Writing Indaba

This will take the form of a one day academic writing 'indaba' or conference involving academics and postgraduate scholars from across the university community. We will also invite national and international experts in the area of academic writing to share their expertise with the Rhodes University community. Those participating in the RU Postgraduate Orientation programme workshops could collaborate in panel presentations and/or describing experiences of academic writing, sharing what they have learned from the programme in relation to their own academic writing work.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION AND SIGNING UP FOR WORKSHOPS

The programme is run by the newly established Centre for Postgraduate Studies at Rhodes University. All sessions will be led by Professor Lotz-Sisitka, who will work with a range of invited academics and researchers to deliver the programme and workshops.

The Centre for Postgraduate Studies is temporarily located in the Environmental Learning Research Centre building (Room 10).

The venue for the workshop sessions will be the Eden Grove Red. Some sessions may also be run in the library or in other venues.

NOTE: All scholars wanting to participate in the programme must sign up for the programmes in advance, due to catering requirements.

NB: It would be most advantageous to sign up for the four research design workshop sessions as well as the four academic writing workshop sessions as these are designed for continuity together comprise a coherent unit.

The programme will be repeated in the second semester, and if demand is high, it will be repeated again and/or extended to include other activities. We will also run the programme in larger venues should the demand necessitate this.

The programme will be run in the form of workshops [not talk shops], so scholars must be prepared to bring their work into discussions with others, and to participate in activities that will facilitate further development of their work.

Please fill in the registration form for the workshops, and indicate which of the workshops you wish to attend (the registration forms will also be available on-line; visit the RU postgraduate studies portal for more information). Indicate clearly which workshops you plan to attend and on which dates. NOTE: If you are not able to make the workshop, please inform cpgs@ru.ac.za immediately. When communicating with us, be sure to be specific regarding which of the workshops you are referring to if booking and/or withdrawing from a session.

Sign-up for the workshops on-line at:
<http://goo.gl/forms/T3XjMlqzuf>