



Central University of
Technology, Free State

24 April 2020

WELCOME
TO THE
GRADUATE
SCHOOL

Graduate School e-Newsletter



Dear Colleagues and Postgraduate Students

While there is a lot of uncertainty due to the COVID19 pandemic, the Graduate School wants to reassure you that we have taken steps to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of our activities as scheduled. We will provide the support and information you need. All training sessions up to June will be presented online. We anticipate minimal disruption during this transition.

In this edition, I will share some tips for staying healthy when working remotely and adapting to the "new normal".

Best wishes and stay Happy and Healthy!

Eleanor Nel
Research Officer: Graduate Studies



Academic writing programme for Masters' and Doctoral students

The facilitators are currently busy preparing PowerPoint sessions with audios to take place **online** for the upcoming weeks. The facilitators will respond to questions and provide further guidance during the allocated timeslots on the initial programme. Presentations and training material will only be available to the participants who are currently enrolled in the programme for the 1st semester and potential students who register for the programmes and training scheduled for the 2nd semester. Presentations will be kept short to avoid information overload and big file sizes.

The online academic writing sessions will commence on the **13 May 2020** for Masters' students and **15 May 2020** for Doctoral students. More info will follow via individual e-mails.

Adapting to the "new normal"

Working from home is all about boundaries and balance, whether you are an employee or a postgraduate student. It can be enriching and beneficial, but be mindful of not allowing bad habits to sneak in.



Here are a few hints that will help you shift to the "new normal".



Find a comfortable working space - to get into a working mindset, you will need to set up your working environment. Consider a room without a TV, ideally.

The fewer distractions, the better. Make sure you have a power supply nearby with internet access.

Be organised – Plan your activities, schedule time to work on projects and set goals for yourself to remain productive. Consider adding reminders to break up the day. Mini breaks help you avoid working through lunch or late into the evening.

Stay hydrated - it kickstarts your metabolism and helps you meet the goal of eight cups a day. It's a simple solution to a big problem.

Stay active - Move around at lunchtime even if it's only a ten-minute walk around the garden. To get a bit of fresh air, open some windows.

Keep in touch – Skype or make a video call where possible so that you get some human interaction during your day. Even if it's to chat during 'virtual lunch' - social connections are essential for your wellbeing.

Shut your laptop/desktop down by the end of the day – similarly, disable email on your phone, so you don't feel tempted to continue working from the sofa.

Be kind – to yourself and to others. Not everything can be done working from home. Even for the things that can be done from home, may take different techniques. Give yourself time to discovering your unique routine and ways of functioning.

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The role of the research value chain in training emerging researchers

On the 5th of March 2020, the Graduate School hosted a seminar on "*The development of emerging researchers.*" Profs Uli Holzbaaur and Ralf Härting from Aalen University for Applied Sciences in Germany shared an international perspective on emerging researchers. The research value chain, which aims to link new knowledge, discovery, and the transfer of research solutions to social and technological innovations, was central to the discussions.

Prof Ulrich Holzbaaur highlighted the importance of science and integrity in research. Science must be a reliable basis for decisions. He emphasized the importance of applying mathematical modelling as an essential methodology to give structure in solving real-world problems. He described the importance of general competencies that emerging researchers must hold, for example, problem-solving and project management. Emerging scholars must be able to reflect on the quality of their research, the vision of the project, reach targets in set timeframes, and apply proper team leadership throughout the research project. He made a simple example of statistical reasoning and the interpretation of probability to present accurate research results. He furthermore reiterates that researchers must familiarise themselves with the series of gateways to pass, for example, internal and external quality control. It is essential to understand the decision criteria of the stakeholders in various levels of gateways in the research value chain. He concluded by highlighting the importance for emerging researchers to understand the requirements of the research value chain and to convey it to students in the early stages of a research journey.

Entrepreneurial spirit in research and dealing with big data

Prof Ralph Härting's presentation focused on the steps in the research process and the development of new business models considering the rising of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). He advised emerging researchers to identify relevant research topics and methodologies by posing the question: *how can my research topic be promoted and transferred to the society and the economy?* He furthermore highlighted the importance of disseminating research results in listed international accredited journals and the application of knowledge to bridge the gap between science and its local and global impact. He shared relevant research focus areas and resources at Aalen University for Applied Sciences, for example, Big Data & Business Analytics and Industry 4.0, production digitization, and data security. He introduced the Aalen University of Applied Science's Innovation Centre, which serves as an interface between industry and applied science. The Innovation Centre aims to educate emerging researchers in science and provide opportunities for the establishment and development of research-oriented cooperation with industry to fast-track the application of scientific knowledge in the economy and society.

Research skills and competencies

Prof Deseré Kock from the Department of Business Management at the Central University of Technology, enlightened participants on the importance of research skills and competencies. She highlighted the importance of knowledge in the research fields. Skills can be taught, for example, analytical and problem-solving skills. She furthermore described the graduate attributes as characteristics and qualities that researchers must possess to be able to practice quality research.

Academics actively participated in these debates, and unanimously agreed that the Central University of Technology must keep on providing such platforms and spaces for idea sharing and the generating of new and relevant ideas to solve the developmental needs of the local and national economy. The outcome of this event coincides with the Central University of Technology's Vision 2020 to be *an engaged university that focuses on producing quality social and technological innovations in socio-economic development, primarily in the central region of South Africa.*

Academic Writing for postgraduate students

The Graduate School have had a fantastic start to 2020. We offer an Academic Writing Programme to Masters' and Doctoral candidates in the 1st semester of 2020 and a repetition of these programmes to a new group in the 2nd semester.

Scientific writing and publishable work that meets international standards are essential criteria for the assessment of a postgraduate study. We acknowledge that academic writing skills among postgraduate students cause a considerable problem and potential hindrance to meet these criteria. Hence, the objective of the Academic Writing Programmes is to enable participants to improve their academic writing skills effectively.

We started on 26 February 2020 with the first of a series of seven sessions on Academic Writing for Masters' candidates. Thirty-nine Masters' candidates enrolled for the programme. The first session focused on an introduction to academic writing. It provided an overview of a research dissertation, requirements for the scholarship, quality assurance, and characteristics of a good scientific text. The facilitator highlighted general problems with a thesis and the importance of reading for writing. The facilitator is Dr Mardi Delpont, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Communication Sciences at the Central University of Technology. She has supervised several Masters' students and published papers in academic journals. During her academic journey, she received various awards, including the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, the Kalie Strydom Prize for the best research in Higher Education, and the *Print Content of the Year Award* for an article in the *Get it* magazine.



Photos: Dr Mardi Delpont facilitating the Master's Academic Writing Programme



Photos: Dr Brenton Fredericks facilitating the Doctoral Academic Writing Programme

The Academic Writing Programme for Doctoral Candidates started on 28 February 2020. Twenty doctoral candidates registered to participate. The facilitator is Dr Brenton Fredericks, the Head of the Department for Communication Sciences at the Central University of Technology. He specialises in academic writing, language-related matters, and communication research. He has been involved in education and language teaching for 30 years, serving 15 years at the Central University of Technology in the Communication Sciences Department. Dr Fredericks is a campaigner of multilingualism at tertiary institutions.

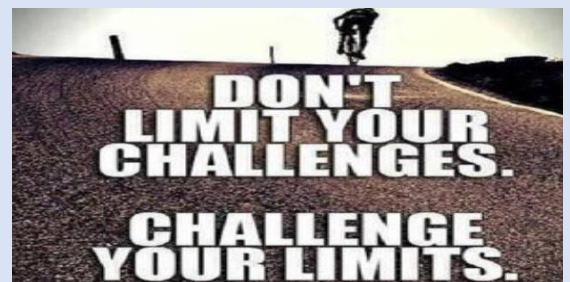
The first session presented an “*Introduction to Academic Writing*” and what it means when we refer to scholarly writing.

Dr Fredericks gave an overview of a research proposal and shared tips and guidelines on academic writing, active reading and planning, procrastination, and how to overcome writer’s blocks. He highlighted the importance of graduate attributes and how it contributes to the quality of a doctoral thesis.

We have a fantastic group of participants. We certainly are fortunate to serve such a committed and dynamic group of emerging intellectuals.



“I am all the richer for having embarked on such a journey. It has humbled me in more ways than I wish to acknowledge, instead of having made me proud in any form or way”.
Dr Brenton Fredericks



We aim to improve communication between the Graduate School, researchers, supervisors and postgraduate students to keep you informed about activities and opportunities offered by the Graduate School.



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