



The MMed minor dissertation is one of three examination components of the MMed degree. This minor 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. In order to register as a specialist in South Africa, the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) requires all specialist trainees who register for training after 1 January 2011 to have completed a relevant research study.

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 but an unusual case series may, in some circumstances be accepted. A full systematic review following the format recommended by the Cochrane Collaboration is acceptable. The topic, study design and scope of research will depend on the particular discipline and must be agreed on in consultation with the supervisor(s).

The dissertation may be presented in one of two formats:

- I: Publication-ready 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 MMed Part III are required to submit a full research protocol for approval to their respective Departmental Research Committees (DRC). The candidate must then obtain approval from the UCT Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HREC) prior to conducting their research. Studies that involve the audit of clinical records or services also require formal REC approval. Any primary research that is 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; Groote Schuur Hospital, Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, Tygerberg Hospital, 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](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. The protocol should be structured according to the guidelines in Form FHS015, available at <http://www.health.uct.ac.za/research/humanethics/forms>. 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 18 months of the registrar programme (this varies between disciplines). Heads of Departments or Divisions should meet with their registrars 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 by the end of Year 2. For a number of constituent Colleges, the dissertation must be submitted 6-months before writing the Part II examination. Often the research component of specialist training is only initiated after successful completion of the Part I examination.

## Supervisors

The importance of identifying a dissertation supervisor as early as possible cannot be overemphasized. The supervisor should be an individual 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 retain 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, 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 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. In a manuscript from a

potentially multi-authored project, the candidate must be first author

**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. A manuscript that has already been published can be included if the candidate's contribution was made during his/her registration for the degree and under supervision. The body of the dissertation must be structured as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature review**

This section must contain 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 hence the rationale for the dissertation. This chapter should end with a clear statement reflecting the aims and objectives of the research reported in the publication-ready manuscript. References quoted in this chapter should appear at the end of the chapter, not at the end of the thesis. This chapter should be between 3 000 and 4 000 words.

### **Chapter 2: Publication-ready Manuscript**

The method and results of the study must be presented in the form of a manuscript of an article for a named peer reviewed journal, meeting all the requirements set out in the "Instructions for Authors" of that journal, including the word count and referencing style. Unless specially motivated, the journal chosen will need to allow for at least 3000 words excluding abstract, tables, figures and references. The "Instructions to Authors" of the journal must be appended. The co-authors should be listed in the appropriate order, and each of their contributions to the manuscript stated. The journal chosen for publication must be appropriate to the subject matter of the dissertation and listed in the citation index of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) or accredited by the Department of Education:  
(<http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/medical/index.php?html=/libs/accredjnl.htm&libid=24>)

Important note: The candidate need not have submitted the article for publication, nor is the acceptance of the article for publication a requirement for passing the degree. However, the norm is to publish the study with the supervisor(s) as co-author(s), and candidates are strongly encouraged to submit their manuscript for publication either before or shortly after examination of the minor dissertation. Submitting the manuscript for publication before submitting the minor dissertation has the advantage that addressing the peer reviewers' comments improves the standard of the manuscript included in the dissertation. A candidate who fails to submit a manuscript for publication within one year of examination of the minor dissertation must accept that their supervisor(s) may publish their data with him/her as co-author.

**For a full systematic review**, Chapters 1 and 2 are combined in the publication-ready manuscript.

### **Appendices**

Append all supporting documents including:

- Questionnaire/data capture instrument(s)
- Consent forms and any related participant information sheets

- Technical appendices, including, if considered necessary, any additional tables not included in the main manuscript for the examiner to have available. These should be accompanied by a brief narrative.
- Official Ethics approval letter from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee and any other approvals required (e.g. Provincial Government).
- Instructions to Authors of the chosen journal

## 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.

A recommended structure for the body of the dissertation is as follows;

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature review**

(see guidelines above)

### **Chapter 2: Methods**

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

### **Chapter 3: Results**

### **Chapter 4: Discussion and conclusions**

### **Appendices**

(see guidelines above - omit the instructions to authors)

## 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 websites.

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/R3CAKV8FM3PHV23A363D7J4F947AN4AXGRBTHIPM2L62RSUXD M-02943?func=collections&collection\\_id=1526](http://srvrhldig001.uct.ac.za/R/R3CAKV8FM3PHV23A363D7J4F947AN4AXGRBTHIPM2L62RSUXD M-02943?func=collections&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 "Publication-ready" 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-ready" or "Monograph"), 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 15<sup>th</sup> for June graduation
2. August 15<sup>th</sup> 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. All examiners must all be external to UCT, and appointment of examiners from outside South Africa is encouraged. 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 "publication-ready" 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 (drawn from their CV if need be.)

*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.