

What is doctorateness?

What are the differences between a Masters and a Doctoral degree?

Postgraduate School

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From Office of the Director

This year is speeding to an end with only a few weeks remaining, and lots that has to be done. The students doing structured degrees are currently busy with final assessments. With the December graduation we have 120 postgraduate students obtaining their degrees – 36 PhD's and 80 Masters. Many students are also busy finalising their dissertations or theses to be handed in on 30 January 2014.

By way of preparation it is good to evaluate the criteria used in the assessment process. One important difference between Masters and Doctoral degrees is in its evaluation. The focus of this newsletter is on the concept of doctorateness as an important measuring tool/criterion for success in doctoral degrees. Many successful Masters students consider the next step towards a PhD and are unsure how the PhD differs from a Masters degree. This newsletter will endeavour to highlight the differences.

Our researcher development programme is winding down and there are two workshops left – *Research Paradigms* presented by Prof Brigitte Smit from UNISA and *Scientific Writing for Academic Articles* presented by Selene Delpont from the University of Stellenbosch. We want to encourage you to reserve the following dates for next year – 7- 8 February & 25 - 26 July 2014. We will have a social get-together on the Friday afternoon and a workshop on Saturday – focusing especially on those postgraduate students who are unable to attend any workshops during the week. For the Saturday morning we envisage an Orientation session; Proposal Writing; Writing the literature review, Plagiarism and How to successfully use the internet to search for academic sources. These presentations will be done by UFS staff and excellent external presenters.

Furthermore good progress has been made with our electronic resource centre. Video clips of presentations should be available on the postgraduate website before the end of November. We will keep you posted as soon as strategic communication notified us that the resources are ready.

Our best wishes for the remaining few weeks of 2013.

Henriette

What is doctorateness?

'Doctorateness' is a rather elusive concept, and is a quality rather than a state or tangible thing. It can be defined as both the qualities that one would expect a PhD student to develop over the course of a thesis, which although not formally examined are a necessary part of the successful completion of a thesis, as well as the common features that define a doctoral degree in relation to other types of degrees, taking into account the variation in doctoral degrees between different subjects, institutions and countries. Thus the idea of doctorateness is worth examining both to highlight aspects of the process of writing a doctoral thesis, particularly research and methodology, and the differences between the Masters and Doctoral degree for students who are looking at making this progression.

Much of the theory about doctorateness is based on the work of Prof Vernon Trafford and Dr Shosh Leshem, who in their 2009 paper 'Doctorateness as a threshold concept' (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14703290903069027>) identify several 'scholarly components' of a successful doctorate:

- Contribution to knowledge
- Stated gap in knowledge
- Explicit research questions

- Conceptual framework
- Explicit research design
- Appropriate methodology
- 'Correct' data collection
- Clear/precise presentation
- Full engagement with theory
- Cogent argument throughout
- Research questions answered

Doctorateness thus results from specific critical research features being present in a doctoral thesis. These components are mutually independent, which combine to form a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts for a successful doctoral student; "Doctorateness is a jigsaw puzzle that can only be fully appreciated when all the components are present and fitted together" (Trafford and Leshem, 2008: 51-52).

Furthermore, doctorateness can also be seen as a reflection of the mix of qualities required of a doctoral student, including intellectual quality and confidence, independence of thinking, enthusiasm and commitment, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities. These attributes, along with a fully developed understanding of the research process, are necessary components of a successful thesis, and this more developed knowledge of the research process is one of the main differences between the Masters and Doctoral degrees.

What are the differences between a Masters and a Doctoral degree?

For a **Masters** degree, common criteria include:

- technical competence
- evidence of scholarly research
- critical ability
- understanding of relevant theoretical issues
- lucidity and coherence
- a dissertation should have a theme or 'thesis', which should be sustained, thus presenting a unified, cumulative argument

For a **Doctoral** degree, the general criteria applied in assessing Masters dissertations are applied, but much more rigorously. The thesis is subject to critical assessment, specifically against the basic requirement that a doctorate be:

- an original contribution that extends the frontier of knowledge

The thesis will commonly also include:

- a greater sense of perspective, and often coverage of a wider field, than a Masters dissertation; systematic knowledge of the field of study
- an awareness of theoretical problems directly or indirectly relevant to the topic
- an extensive as well as intensive knowledge of the subject

- mastery of the skills and methods of research, and the student should be able to conceive, design and implement research

Furthermore, the doctoral student is expected to be far more independent than the Masters student, and each doctoral degree is academically unique due to the absence of a prescribed curriculum, and the topic being specific to each individual candidate.

In terms of the research process, the undergraduate degree can be seen as having research informing practice, the Masters degree develops research skills, while finally the Doctorate involves research leading practice. Thus as well as the obvious differences in length of study and workload, the main differences between the Doctoral and Masters degrees can be seen as the need to provide an original contribution, and the fully realized mastery of the research process that develops over the course of the Doctoral thesis.

Useful links:

Doctorateness – an elusive concept?

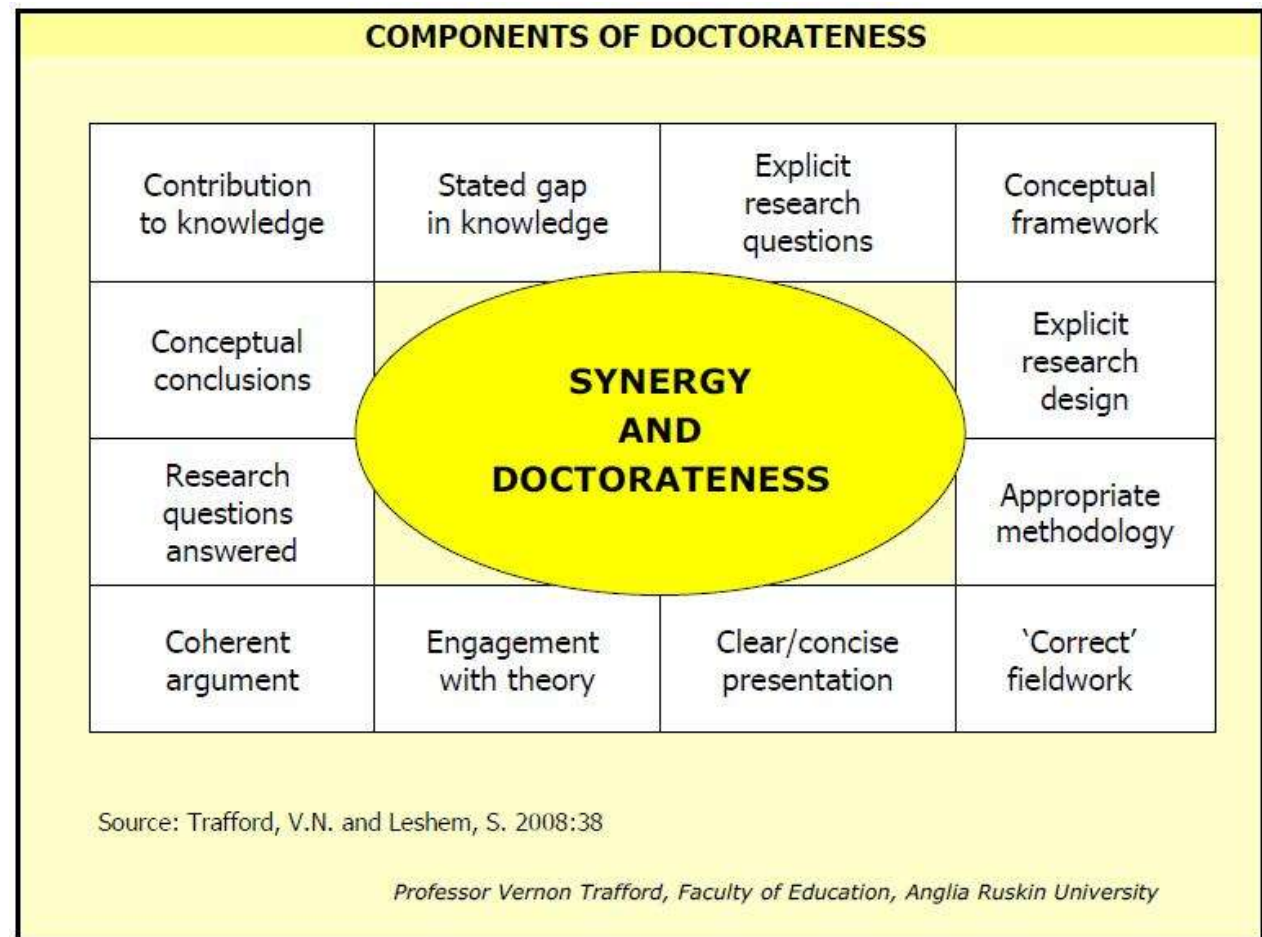
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/doctorateness.pdf>

The Nature of Doctorateness

[http://www4.lu.se/upload/utvecklingskonferensen/Doctorateness Trafford 090924.pdf](http://www4.lu.se/upload/utvecklingskonferensen/Doctorateness%20Trafford%20090924.pdf)

Doctorateness as a threshold concept

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14703290903069027>



UPCOMING SCHOLARSHIP CALLS:

1. Commonwealth Split-Site Doctoral Scholarships - **Closing date Friday, 29 November 2013.** <http://csc.do-it-online.org.uk/csc/ElectronicApplicationSystem.htm>
2. FoodBev SETA Bursary Grant - Research and Innovation **No closing date** www.foodbev.co.za
3. UFS/NRF Free-standing and Innovation Honours Scholarship Call for 2014 **Closing date 31 January 2014** [Further details and application form can be found at http://postgraduate.ufs.ac.za/content.aspx?id=12](http://postgraduate.ufs.ac.za/content.aspx?id=12)
4. <http://www.fsw.vu.nl/en/privacy/index.asp?Referer=/en/international-relations/savusa/skill-programme/index.asp>
5. FoodBev SETA Bursary Grant - Research and Innovation **No closing date** www.foodbev.co.za
6. [New Zealand Development Scholarships for Postgraduate Study](http://www.aid.govt.nz/funding-and-contracts/scholarships/eligible-countries/africa) **Closing date 2 December 2013** [Further details can be found at http://www.aid.govt.nz/funding-and-contracts/scholarships/eligible-countries/africa](http://www.aid.govt.nz/funding-and-contracts/scholarships/eligible-countries/africa)



Dr Priscilla Mensah: Deputy-Director of the Postgraduate School

Priscilla Mensah joined the Postgraduate School in October 2013 as Deputy-Director. Prior to this she served as Deputy-Director: International Academic Programmes, Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Rector, University of the Free State. She welcomes the opportunity this position provides to advance graduate education, training and scholarship at the University. She is a recipient of the 2013 HELM (Higher Education Leadership and Management) LEAD Fellowship.

Priscilla holds MSc and PhD degrees in Chemistry from the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Her MSc dissertation investigated the inhibitory role of urinary albumin in kidney stone disease. The focus of her doctoral research was the development of physicochemical methods for analyzing pediatric conjugate vaccines against *H. influenzae* type b (Hib) and *N. meningitidis*. This work was done in collaboration with a local vaccine manufacturer with the objective of reducing the cost of Hib conjugate vaccines by manufacturing it locally. After graduation she joined the Unit for Drug Research and Development at the North West University, South Africa, as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow, where her research focused more on the drug delivery properties of Pheroid™, a fatty acid-based micro-emulsion.

Priscilla joined the Postgraduate School as Deputy Director to drive internationalisation of the school and to head its research capacity development and funding initiatives.

**PROGRAMME FOR
NOVEMBER 2013**

Date	Time	Topic	Presenter
4 - 7	09h00 – 17h00	Scientific Writing	Prof Eric Lichtfouse, University of Burgundy, Dijon, France. He is the Chief Editor of <i>Agronomy for Sustainable Development</i> , <i>Sustainable Agricultural Reviews</i> , <i>Environmental Chemistry Letters</i> , <i>Environmental Chemistry for a Sustainable World</i> and lecturer on Scientific Writing and Communication at the Agroecology Unit, University of Burgundy, Dijon, France.
18 - 20	09h00 – 16h30	Research Paradigms / Qualitative Analysis	Prof Brigitte Smit, Department of Educational Leadership and Management; College of Education; UNISA
25 - 26	09h00 – 16h30	Scientific Writing Skills for Academic Articles	Mrs Selene Delpont, Language Centre, University of Stellenbosch
27 - 29	09h00 – 17h00	Mentoring Article Writing for emerging Health & Natural scientists (follow-up of group who attended the September session)	Prof Graham Baker & Prof Elizabeth Lickendorff. Prof Baker is the previous editor of the <i>South African Journal of Science</i> .

As space is limited, it is compulsory to register for all courses. Enquiries can be sent to postgraduatersvp@ufs.ac.za

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