

MEETING PROGRAMME – MENTORING OF EARLY CAREER ACADEMICS

DATE: 6th September 2023
 TIME: 10:00 – 13:00
 LINK: [Click here to join the meeting](#) (MS TEAMS)

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Annexure 1: Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

1. Governance Items			
#	Item	Presenter	Annex
1.1	Welcome and opening	Chair	
1.2	Minutes of the previous meeting of 24 February 2023 <i>For Approval</i>	Chair	Pg 2
1.3	Matters arising:		
1.3.1	• Update on Thuso Connect and Thuso Resources	Dr L Jordaan	
1.3.2	• Update on Working Group on postgraduate funding	Chair	
1.3.3	• Session at the RISG Dialogue on student mobility - update	Prof Jesika Singh	
2. Programme			
2.1	Mentorship for postgraduate students, early career academics and for supervisors - what makes mentoring successful at the different levels? Speakers: • Professor Refilwe Phaswana-Mafuya Director, SAMRC, University of Johannesburg • Professor Leslie Swartz Department of Psychology, University of Stellenbosch		
2.2	• Discussion and Q & A & key takeaways	Chair: Prof S Burton	
3	Closing remarks Date of next meeting - TBC	–	Chair: Prof S Burton

Annexure 1



**MEETING OF THE COP FOR POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP
HELD ONLINE ON FRIDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2023
10:00 TO 13:00**

MINUTES

1. OPENING AND WELCOME

Prof. Burton opened the meeting and extended a word of welcome to all participants.

2. CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved with no additional items.

3. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

- i. On 11 November 2022, the Committee deferred approval of the minutes of the previous CoP PGES meeting held on 17 October 2022 to this meeting. The CoP PGES approved the minutes the meeting held on 17 October 2022 with no amendments.
- ii. The CoP PGES also approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 November 2022 with no amendments.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 MEETING DATES FOR 2023

The **CoP PGES noted** the meeting dates for the remainder of the year:

- i. Friday, 24 February 2023
- ii. Friday, 23 June 2023
- iii. Friday, 27 October 2023

5. STANDING ITEMS

5.1 UPDATE ON AECRS

- i. The AECRS was established in 2020 following recommendations to build a cadre of emerging scholars. Information gathering and mapping followed and informed an implementation plan.

- ii. Four major interventions were implemented and should be completed this year. Frameworks for a national mentorship programme, and for the resources that would be needed to provide supervisory training, were established.
- iii. Monitoring and evaluation of the interventions to achieve these aspects will also be conducted.
- iv. The CoP PGES has undertaken various projects focused on supervision and mentorship. The CoP PGES's project for this year will be to develop an effective system to monitor the impact of academic support interventions. This meeting of the CoP PGES will focus on research integrity and ethics.
- v. Thuso Connect and Thuso Resources are under development and should be launched soon. Thuso Monitor will similarly be developed and implemented soon.
- vi. The CoP PGES will also continue to host colloquia and conferences throughout the year. A proposal for funding to continue for the next two years has been submitted to the Department of Science and Innovation, and feedback is being awaited.

5.2 THUSO RESOURCES AND THUSO CONNECT

- i. Dr Jordaan gave a live presentation of the Thuso Resources platform, guiding the meeting through the various components that can be accessed on the website.
- ii. While the Thuso Resources site is live, Thuso Connect is still under development and is being customised for the local context.
- iii. It **was noted** that the setting up of Thuso Resources has been discussed within this group several times, but for it to be useful universities must provide information on resources that can be made available on the platform. Universities were requested to identify appropriate contact persons and to share their contact information with Dr Jordaan and Prof. Burton.
- iv. Dr Jordaan detailed some examples of the desired resources, including how people can be productive researchers, research design, how to apply for funding, and better understanding of funding mechanisms in higher education. People can share their experiences about often frustratingly bureaucratic processes such as accessing funding, or resources that would be useful to develop an academic career or leadership in academia.
- v. Prof. Sioux McKenna mentioned that Rhodes University has developed a large number of open-access videos, which would be sent to Dr Jordaan.
- vi. In response to a question about access to the platforms, universities would be required to vet nominated individuals to gain access. The point was emphasised that a lot of assistance for postgraduate students is available already, while the Thuso platforms are aimed at assisting academics. The DVCs Research and Research Offices in each institution could be asked to vet the people who are meant to access the Thuso platforms.
- vii. The point was made that the UoTs and some comprehensive universities are working closely with THENSA, which is providing focused training on supervision. It was therefore recommended that the CoP PGES should liaise with THENSA about the possibility of sharing resources that could benefit the entire system. Dr Jordaan agreed to liaise with THENSA, which is always keen to collaborate.

6. WORKING GROUP ON POSTGRADUATE FUNDING

The CoP PGES established a working group to focus on postgraduate funding:

- i. To propose models for postgraduate funding, a baseline study will be conducted but the availability of information is proving challenging.
- ii. The working group will consider the Ministerial Task Team survey and will also request USAf to appoint a researcher who could secure information from the NRF and DHET.
- iii. The working group was meant to meet in mid-January 2023, but this meeting could not be arranged and will now take place in March 2023 after which feedback would be provided to the CoP PGES.

7. FOCUSED DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH ETHICS

Three presentations focused on research ethics were provided.

Prof. Burton started with the following presentation:

- i. Science is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence.
- ii. Two key concepts must be kept in mind, which is knowledge and understanding of the world, and systematic methodology based on evidence, which includes how the new knowledge is communicated.
- iii. Research integrity means doing the right thing, a combination of ethics and morals. Deciding on the right thing to do is a moral problem, while an ethical problem relates to how best to consider a solution to a moral problem. Ethics is the medium through which decisions are made about what the right thing to do is. There are different ethical systems to choose from to engage with moral dilemmas and decisions. These include different schools of thought, ethical systems, and the values that inform ethical systems.
- iv. Research integrity implies sound ethical conduct in doing research – how do we do our research, what do we do with the data, how do we use secondary data, and how do we know what is ethical? This comes down to respecting people's rights – academic freedom, enabling environment, access to facilities, and freedom from discrimination and abuse. It also entails accepting responsibilities, such as social responsibility, justice and benevolence, respect for individuals, and professionalism.
- v. Duties and obligations also slot into this category, and include whistle blowing, codes of ethics, and reputational risk for individuals and institutions.
- vi. Each person has their own distinct set of moral principles. It is important to remain true to one's moral values in dealing with ethical matters. Morals are shaped by religion, culture, family, and experience, so people have these firmly entrenched before they become scholars.
- vii. Moral autonomy is being able to make one's own ethical decisions. The right decision will be consistent with moral principles, ethical codes, and the law.
- viii. There is a National Research Ethics Framework which is overseen by the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC), and there are also the SA Medical Research Council and the South African National Clinical Trials Registry, and the Human Sciences Research Council Ethics Committee which oversees ethical considerations. All these frameworks are aligned to globally accepted documents such as the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (2010) and the Montreal Statement

on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations (2013), among others.

- ix. Universities are guided by a Code of Ethics, which identifies the key values that characterise the university, and highlights the rights and responsibilities of individuals that should apply in the various relationships they encounter within the academic environment. It covers general conduct and misconduct, intellectual property and publishing agreements, and records and monitoring. Ethics approvals and management processes will never be completely 'bullet proof', despite the best efforts of the university to ensure ethical behaviour – individual researchers are ultimately responsible for conducting their research in an ethical way.
- x. To ensure realistic, reliable, believable ethics standards, it is important to ensure that ethics approvals processes are managed successfully. There should be training on ethical research and research integrity provided to all students from undergraduate level upwards, and refresher courses should also be provided in addition to community information sessions.
- xi. Research data management – collating, saving, archiving, and providing appropriate access to institutional research data – should also receive attention.
- xii. General principles of ethical conduct must guide researchers to conduct research in an academic and responsible manner.
- xiii. Researchers – including students – must take responsibility for the design, methodology, and execution of their research, and how they report their findings and the limitations thereof. They must adhere to the principles of honesty, completeness, intelligibility, clarity, accountability, and exposure to public testing.
- xiv. Universities have the right to audit the quality of research, the ethical acceptability of research procedures, and the financial aspects of the research they do.
- xv. Responsible reporting and prevention of exploitation must also be addressed. New knowledge consists of research data, results, and conclusions, which must be managed while also keeping abreast of new and emerging trends such as open access and online publications prior to review. The latter is cause for considerable international debate at the moment.
- xvi. There is also a need to ensure that the unethical practice of publication in predatory journals, leading to highly tenuous conclusions, is countered by ensuring that the research has met internationally accepted standards for truth, meaning and value.
- xvii. Turning to the future, it is important to understand that management of research data will become increasingly important but also increasingly difficult. Public funded research information will need to be made publicly and digitally accessible, which will require global systems for managing research data.
- xviii. New technologies will also pose new questions, such as how AI could help detect fraudulent data and plagiarism, and whether AI can ethically be used to do research.
- xix. The new questions to ask are:
 - a. What are our opportunities to make a unique contribution through research?
 - b. How do we best use our research data to achieve our strategic goals?
 - c. How should we research, accommodate, and exploit AIs?
 - d. How do we ensure research integrity for our students?
 - e. How do we ensure research integrity in our students?
 - f. How do we ensure broad socioeconomic impact?
 - g. What should our national and international focus areas be?
 - h. Are we using our research platforms to best advantage?

Dr Sean Kruger, Senior Lecturer in the UP Centre for the Future of Work, made a presentation on the use of Artificial Intelligences in research.

It was noted that:

- i. Artificial intelligence can ignite innovation and support creativity, and in the long-term develop value for businesses.
- ii. From an educational perspective, AI creates new working contexts and could affect aspects such as ethical behaviour in research.
- iii. ChatGPT, a new AI application, can generate research that meet most of the requirements, but it could also be viewed as unoriginal work or even plagiarism.
- iv. The current system was built on data, and most of it was western orientated as local narratives were overlooked. In that sense, it is useful to ask what kind of data would be used in future and whether it should be fed into ChatGPT.
- v. The application can be used to do things like inform grant proposals, allowing the researcher to focus on the research. However, there is also the question about accelerating bad science and creating unwarranted biases. The costs associated with it could limit access and create further gaps. There are also concerns about data access and misinterpretation, which could result in biases and inaccuracies if targeted data is fed into the system.
- vi. Steps for effective use of AI include:
 - a. Use technology creatively and develop new language access points,
 - b. Move from automation to augmentation,
 - c. Re-imagine the future world of work,
 - d. Never overlook contextual narratives and dangers.
- vii. Open dialogue on the use of AI will be needed to ensure effective use and optimization of opportunities, so that our current efforts are not overtaken. We should consider how AI can be used to augment research for future researchers.

Prof. Nosisi Feza, DVC: Research and PG Studies at the University of Venda, detailed transformative ethics in research.

It was noted that:

- i. At the postgraduate level, it is important to consider various aspects such as ethical recruitment, supervision allocation, proposal acceptance, data collection and academic processes, and study ownership.
- ii. All these are based on a sense of respect for higher education – this means that it is unethical, disrespectful, and dishonest if students who are not competent to the task of doing research are recruited, because they will take up space, use resources, and not produce the desired output. Universities, particularly after COVID-19 and with the added burden of loadshedding, must make the most of available resources.
- iii. Another aspect is the allocation of a supervisor who would be up to the task – the supervisor must be an academic and scholar and must be able to provide the kind of support that will produce another scholar. In addition to supervisory support, the environmental and academic support provided by the university must also be in place to ensure ethical recruitment.
- iv. Mentorship programmes aiming to train novice researchers are valuable, but they must develop people who will be able to contribute to the development of research and other

researchers. Supervisors must have the relevant skills and knowledge to guide and develop their students without spoon feeding them. Students must be exposed to the relevant academic platforms that will give them access to the materials and information they will need.

- v. Ethical reading and ethical writing – assimilating and reflecting the knowledge one absorbs – are similarly critical considerations on which students must be trained to ensure authentic and peer-reviewed outputs are produced.
- vi. We also need to meet our contractual obligations throughout. There must be clear contracts between supervisors and students, clarifying the roles of each and monitoring the work that they do.
- vii. The approval of proposals must be clearly conceptualised, processes must be followed, and all ethical and financial considerations must have been considered. The value of the study for the field in which it is located must be clear, and it must be defended amongst peers.
- viii. Data collection must also be supported by a thoroughly conceptualised and well-documented process.
- ix. Transformative research ethics – which incorporate intellectual and moral autonomy – must be instilled in students from an early age, during their schooling years, and expanded and developed over time. Students are intelligent enough to beat systems like Turnitin which are designed to identify plagiarism, but they must be encouraged and trained to do the right thing even if no one is watching them.

Prof. Burton thanked the two presenters for their inputs. The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i. ChatGPT poses interesting questions in relation to assessment. To ensure that students acquire the right skills, assessment must be designed to compensate for the use of AI by thinking what the desired outcome of the assessment process is. There are tools available to identify AI-generated inputs, and one of the terms and conditions of open AI is that whatever is created is viewed as the originator's material, because they created the prompt. Assessment of research must therefore be clearly focused on the skills we want to stimulate – this will be a difficult and critical consideration for the future.
- ii. Applications like Turnitin and proctoring tools are also problematic. The issue is not to try and address the obvious problems such as plagiarism, but going back to the complicated, big conversations – what is higher education for, and what are its broader aims? These conversations must be had with students, rather than trying to catch them out for plagiarizing. There is a need to ensure that people understand the purpose of higher education, which must be driven by high-level conversations with students on an ongoing basis.
- iii. The graduate attributes that postgraduate students must leave the institution with must be clarified. If communication is a critical consideration, it might be necessary to level the playing field – there are many students who struggle to write and communicate, and if AI bots can be used to assist them, that might be an invaluable intervention.
- iv. There is also the possibility that bots could take novel, original data and go haywire, disseminating the information and data that had been put into it to the world at large.
- v. Following the national review of PhDs, a set of attributes have been developed as part of the national standard and it was asked whether these should be revisited. The

attributes have been reviewed to include normative aspects that include being somebody who understands their broader responsibilities to society.

- vi. The opinion was expressed that the nature of how information is generated and disseminated has been changing constantly, and AI bots is just a new way of doing so. There will always be new events and programmes that upset the way things are done, and the current one is AI. As a collective, it is important to think how postgraduate students are handled and what is expected from young researchers.
- vii. The point was further made that students apply for research funding every day, and once they have received the funding decide to run off somewhere else, which also raises questions around ethical recruitment. Similarly, there are questions around the various types of supervisors and how they manage the process. Ethics are being questioned every day, despite the various processes and systems in place. It is already helpful just to have a continuous conversation that will facilitate learning from one another.
- viii. The bottom line in many cases is funding and subsidies allocated to universities. Universities are establishing postgraduate schools and collaborating with their peers because they all compete for the same talent and the same resources, which makes joint supervision a viable option that will also help address the lack of supervision and other gaps in the system. It must form part of the continuous dialogue to stimulate other models for supervision in areas of common interest.
- ix. Topical aspects emerging from the presentations today could stimulate further workshops or colloquia. These could include a workshop focusing on graduate attributes, and the use of technology to achieve them. Usage cases could be discussed, focusing not only on the negative aspects of AI, but also the opportunities and lessons to be taken forward. Aspects such as mentorship, and cohort and group supervision such as in CPUT's Sisonke project, could also be covered.
- x. The Chair thanked all participants for their inputs, noting that some suggestions for future discussion will be revisited. Although answers to issues such as graduate attributes, new technologies and AI may remain elusive, the debate must continue.
- xi. Dr Singh, in concluding the discussion, emphasised that the CoP PGES must provide avenues to take the inputs from this meeting further. The CoP PGES has been providing useful inputs on a range of aspects in support of postgraduate studies. The colleagues who made presentations on the use of AIs in research were thanked for initiating the discussion, and for stimulating continuing discussion on the issue.

8. CLOSURE

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked all members of the Steering Committee for their participation and inputs. USAf was thanked for supporting the work of the CoP PGES. The slides presented in this meeting would be distributed with the minutes.

END