

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

REGISTRAR HANDBOOK
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WELCOME

Welcome to the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) School of Medicine. Beginning your training as a registrar and MMed student marks the first step in your journey toward specialist practice. This handbook is designed to guide you through the MMed degree and the UKZN registrar programme. It will be

updated from time to time; each version will carry the revision date on the cover page, so please check the website for updates. In addition, refer to the College of Health Sciences Registration Handbook, which contains additional information.

YOUR NEW HOME

University of KwaZulu-Natal

The University of KwaZulu-Natal was formed in 2004 through the merger of the University of Natal (founded in 1910) and the University of Durban-Westville (founded in 1972). Its medical school opened in 1951. UKZN is recognised nationally and internationally for its academic excellence, strong research profile and commitment to social transformation. The University embraces diversity, promotes equity of access, and seeks to produce graduates who are not only skilled professionals but also socially responsive citizens. The UKZN REACH-T principles embody our core values—Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Collaboration, Honesty, and Trust—and guide our conduct and our interpersonal relations. The UKZN health sciences are recognised for their contribution to clinical training, biomedical research and community engagement, and the University plays a pivotal role in training doctors and specialists for KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa as a whole.

College of Health Sciences

The College of Health Sciences (CHS) is one of four colleges within UKZN. The CHS is responsible for governance, academic standards and

quality assurance across all health-related programmes. It is led by Professor Busisiwe Ncama, who serves as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Head of College. She is supported by a senior leadership team who ensure the smooth running of the College's administration and academic activities. A College Dean of Research and College Dean of Teaching and Learning oversee academic activities, while the College Director of Professional Services heads College administration.

The CHS includes two schools. You are joining the School of Medicine, which is responsible for undergraduate and postgraduate medical training and undertakes research in biomedical science. The School of Health Sciences is a separate school responsible for pharmacy, nursing, optometry, dentistry and the rehabilitation professions. The SHS is based on the Westville and Howard College campuses, and not at medical school.

As a registrar and MMed student, the University will play a major role in your next four or five years. Most of your direct contact with UKZN will be at the level of the school. You may not be aware of CHS most of the time, but it is playing a critical role in your education, assuring quality, overseeing adherence to

academic rules and policy, and monitoring academic progression.

School of Medicine

The School of Medicine has recently undergone a reorganisation. It now contains two divisions. The Clinical Medicine division includes the clinical disciplines, public health medicine and occupational and environmental health. The Laboratory Medicine and Medical Sciences division includes the pathology disciplines, anatomy and physiology.

The School is headed by Professor Refiloe Masekela, who is the Dean and Head of School, overseeing the strategic direction and academic integrity of the School. A deputy dean leads each of the two divisions. The Dean is further supported by three senior academics, each responsible for a specific area of academic activity within the School. These are the Head of the Registrar Programme, the Head of Research and Higher Degrees and the Head of Teaching and Learning.

Head of the Registrar Programme

The Head of the Registrar Programme (HRP) is responsible for the registrar training programme. His or her responsibilities include monitoring students' academic progress and managing the complex interplay of academic and service-related issues, including the interface between UKZN and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health (DOH), which employs most of our registrars, and owns the clinical platform where you work and learn.

Head of Research and Higher Degrees

The Head of Research and Higher Degrees (HRHD) oversees the School's research strategy and postgraduate research activities. Responsibilities include oversight of research activity, assisting and mentoring researchers

and postgraduate students, coordinating research training and fostering a culture of scholarly research activity.

Both the HRP and HRHD have extensive involvement with your training: the HRP with the clinical training aspects, and the HRHD with your research project, as well as many of the administrative issues arising from your training, given his or her responsibility for all postgraduate programmes in the School. The HRP and HRHD work closely together on matters affecting our registrars.

Head of Teaching and Learning

The Head of Teaching and Learning (HTL) has less direct contact with our registrars. He or she is responsible for the School's undergraduate programmes, principally the MBChB programme. This includes developing and implementing curriculum plans, ensuring alignment with University and College standards, monitoring teaching quality, overseeing assessments and examinations, and supporting academic staff in pedagogical matters.

Administration

The administrative staff of the School, known at UKZN as the Professional Service staff, are headed by the School Operations Manager. The Academic Services Manager leads academic administration. This includes the School Postgraduate Office, with which you will have many interactions during your time at UKZN. The postgraduate staff are your first line of contact in dealing with both enquiries and problems, and will handle most of your administration associated with your degree. Each discipline in the School is assigned to a specific postgraduate admin officer.

Beyond this, an additional member of the Professional Service staff is assigned directly to your discipline. His or her responsibilities include secretarial duties and the

administration of clinical rosters and teaching programmes within the discipline. However, your first point of contact for any matter relating to your training is with the Postgraduate Office. The Postgraduate Office is easily accessible via email, phone or personal contact—you are welcome to call in at the office on the fourth floor of the medical school at any time. No appointment is necessary. We also have a satellite office on the Grey's Hospital campus in Pietermaritzburg, in a complex of park homes immediately adjacent to the hospital building. The postgraduate administrator in the office has the same responsibilities, authority and access to the School leadership as his or her colleagues on the medical school campus, making it unnecessary for Pietermaritzburg-based registrars to travel to Durban to receive assistance.

Disciplines

The basic academic unit within the School is the academic discipline. The clinical and pathology disciplines align with the traditional medical specialties. Each is headed by a Discipline Head, a senior clinician or pathologist. Your Discipline Heads are highly qualified: in addition to exceptional clinical experience, they are required to have strong academic credentials, including teaching experience and an active research programme. All are required to have a PhD degree. Clinical Discipline Heads are responsible to the DOH for the management of clinical services within their area, pathology discipline heads to the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) for management of pathology services, and to UKZN and the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) for the quality of your training.

THE TRAINING PLATFORM

The School is administered from the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine campus located at 719 Umbilo Road, Durban, adjacent to Victoria Mxenge Hospital. The CHS offices are situated close by, on the UKZN Howard College campus. UKZN has three other campuses: the Westville campus (which includes the University central administration), the Edgewood campus (School of Education), and the Pietermaritzburg campus. School of Medicine activities in Pietermaritzburg are not, however, based at the Pietermaritzburg campus but are run from the School's satellite office at Grey's Hospital.

Both undergraduate and postgraduate health science students receive their clinical training on our *distributed clinical training platform* (DCTP), which extends across the province. It

includes most of the district, regional, tertiary, central and specialised psychiatric hospitals in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Port Shepstone, KwaDukuza (Stanger), Empangeni and Newcastle, as well as several rural district hospitals and urban and rural community health centres. The DCTP provides medical students, registrars and other health science students with exposure to diverse patient populations, case mixes, and a broad spectrum of health care contexts, ensuring both depth and breadth of clinical experience.

As a registrar, you may find yourself based at or rotating through some of these sites. The School has its own facility at most of the regional hospitals, including those in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, KwaDukuza and Empangeni. These facilities provide our students and

staff with teaching and meeting venues and Wi-Fi access for staff and students. Each is run by a School admin officer, who serves as a link between students and staff and the School.

Registrars in the pathologies receive their in-service training in the laboratories of the NHLS in Durban, principally at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital. Forensic pathology registrars receive their training in mortuaries operated by the DOH.

OUTLINE OF THE REGISTRAR PROGRAMME

The Registrar Programme provides structured preparation for specialist practice. If you complete the programme successfully, you will gain a Master of Medicine (MMed) degree from UKZN, a Fellowship qualification from the CMSA, and a specialist registration from the HPCSA. The programme combines intensive clinical or pathology training with academic development and research.

Within the DCTP, registrar rotations in clinical disciplines are structured to support progressive learning. Each rotation is supervised by experienced clinicians, who provide guidance, feedback, and formal assessments. Registrars are expected to meet defined learning objectives, demonstrate competence in clinical skills, and participate in case discussions and teaching sessions. The combination of tertiary-level specialist exposure and community-based experience allows registrars to develop comprehensive clinical expertise while remaining aligned with MMed programme milestones and CMSA examination requirements.

The School is responsible for your academic activities: learning, clinical teaching and learning, research and assessment. The CHS and DOH are both represented on a joint Registrar Programme Steering Committee (RPSC), which oversees those elements of the training of registrars which involve DOH directly, such as employment contracts, leave arrangements, clinical responsibilities and termination of training. A liaison committee

with similar responsibilities links the School with the NHLS and oversees pathology training.

DOH and NHLS-employed registrars

Most of our clinical registrars are employed by the DOH in registrar posts, while the NHLS employs pathology registrars. You will be registered as an MMed student with UKZN throughout your training. *This is not a formality.* You will find that you have major obligations to UKZN in terms of your learning, academic progress, professionalism, standard of practice and research project. The academic rules of the CHS specifically cover all these aspects, and you may be excluded from the programme if you fail to remain registered with UKZN, do not make satisfactory academic progress, or are found wanting in terms of professional impairment, substandard professional performance or unprofessional behaviour. The School has a memorandum of agreement with DOH that states that your contract as a DOH registrar will end should you be excluded from the MMed programme. UKZN manages you for every aspect of your training, other than your employment contract and your salary.

Supernumerary registrars

Not every registrar can secure a DOH or NHLS post, for example, those who are not South

African nationals. Competition for available registrar posts is fierce, and some would-be specialists may join our programme as self-funded or externally-funded students. These are known as supernumerary registrars. They are registered as MMed students along with all other registrars. Beyond this, supernumerary registrars receive identical training to employed registrars. This means that they need to undergo an identical training experience. They are therefore required to rotate through the same institutions and perform

the same duties, including after-hours duties, as all other registrars. No exceptions are made for them. A contract governs appointment as a supernumerary registrar, and they require permission from the DOH or NHLS to train in their facilities. It is important that you are aware of and have complied with all regulatory requirements, including visas, work permits, HPCSA registration, DOH permission, indemnity and professional insurance. The Postgraduate Office will advise you on these issues.

THE REGISTRAR CONTRACT

Registrars appointed to a DOH or NHLS registrar post are subject to a contract, and it is essential that you fully understand all clauses

in your contract. You will be held to them. Here are some of the key points to remember:

The Department of Health Registrar Contract

Duration and Service

- The contract lasts 48–60 months, depending on your programme.
- The DOH reserves the right to require you to work in a DOH specialist post for 14–18 months following completion of the MMed programme. This is dependent on need and on the availability of posts.
- Service obligations may be adjusted for leave, such as sick leave or maternity leave.

Performance and Reviews

- Your academic and clinical performance is reviewed every six months by the Registrar Programme Steering Committee (RPSC).
- Poor performance may result in contract termination or other consequences.
- You must meet defined learning objectives and complete rotations as scheduled.

Extensions

- Extensions due to exceptional circumstances (e.g., illness, maternity leave) must be applied for at least 90 days before the contract ends.
- Extensions are limited to six months and require approval from the Head of Department and RPSC.

Registrar Responsibilities

You must:

- Remain registered with UKZN and HPCSA throughout training.
- Work a 40-hour week and after-hours duties or commuted overtime as required.
- Spend at least 70% of your time on service delivery and the remainder on learning, teaching, and research.
- Complete the full training period to qualify for HPCSA specialist registration.
- Record attendance daily and comply with all departmental policies.
- Cover your own costs for learning, research, and travel unless otherwise provided.

Remuneration and Benefits

- Salary is paid according to the occupational-specific dispensation (OSD) package into your nominated bank account at the end of the month.
- You may join the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) and the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS).
- Reimbursements for travel, relocation, or study may be available if qualifying conditions are met.

Leave

- Study leave: 2 days per examination, up to 10 days per year for research activities.
- Sick leave: 36 days over a 36-month cycle; incapacity leave may be applied for if exhausted.
- All leave must be approved by the Discipline Head and Clinical Head of the unit where you are currently working.

Breach and Termination

- Breach occurs if you fail to meet contract terms, leave the programme early without a valid reason, or perform poorly.
- The Department may terminate the contract, recover costs, or take legal action in case of breach.
- Either party may terminate the contract with one month's written notice.

Be aware that DOH automatically terminates the contract of any registrar who fails to register with the University at the start of each semester. Your salary will be stopped, and you will have to apply for readmission for the next semester.

The NHLS registrar contract

Duration and service

The NHLS registrar contract lasts for 48-60 months, depending on the programme. Registrars are required to work a minimum of 56 hours per week and to cover a 24-hour service.

Work-back agreement

Once registered as a specialist, the registrar will be required to work for the NHLS for a period of at least 24 months.

THE REGISTRAR PROGRAMME, CMSA AND THE MMED DEGREE

As a registrar, you have three simultaneous identities, and you must see yourself and evaluate your own performance in terms of all three. You are primarily a *postgraduate student* of the University, enrolled in the MMed programme. Secondly, you are a *trainee*, training for specialist practice in a training site registered by the HPCSA for the purpose. Thirdly, you are a *registrar*, an employment post on the DOH or NHLS establishment specifically set aside for specialists in training, and which carries service responsibilities. Each identity refers to a different aspect of your activities.

The *registrar programme* refers to the training programme in KZN wherein specialists are trained while fully immersed in the practice of medicine or pathology in their specialty in the hospitals of the DOH or the laboratories of the NHLS. It is jointly administered by UKZN and the DOH via the RPSC, or by UKZN and the NHLS via an academic liaison committee.

The *MMed degree* is an academic qualification conferred by UKZN. The length of the programme differs between disciplines,

depending on the HPCSA requirements for the length of specialisation training. It will be either four or five years, and your DOH, NHLS or supernumerary contract will reflect this. It comprises coursework (essentially your clinical or pathology practical experience) and a research project.

Coursework is assessed through formal examinations. The HPCSA has appointed the CMSA as the official examiner for specialist qualifications in South Africa. To accommodate this, the University requires MMed students to pass the relevant CMSA examinations, which may replace some internal University examinations. Once you pass your Part II examination, you will gain a Fellowship of the CMSA, but you will be unable to register as a specialist until you have completed the MMed degree. Your research is assessed through the submission and examination of a thesis.

Once you have completed all the requirements of the degree, that is, you have passed all your modules, including the research project, and have been registered for the specified minimum of 8 or 10 semesters,

dependent on your discipline, the Dean will certify you as *degree complete* (DC). Only then will you be provided with the necessary certificate (Form 57) to apply to the HPCSA for registration as a specialist. It is important to note that you will not be declared DC or be given these forms until your university transcript reflects that you have passed all modules required for your degree. The HPCSA itself requires that you fulfil all the requirements of the University MMed programme before registrars apply for specialist registration. It is therefore not possible to apply for specialist registration if you have not been certified as DC by the School.

The MMed programme is administered strictly in accordance with university academic rules, and no exception is made for MMed students. If, for example, you fail to register for a semester, you will be required to remain in the programme for an extra six months before you are certified as DC. This is because the academic rules for the MMed

prescribe that you are registered for 8 or 10 semesters, depending on your discipline. That you were at work, and receiving training, and that you have passed your examinations and research project, will not exempt you from the extra six months, since your academic record will reflect that you have not met the minimum length of registration requirement and have therefore not met the requirements for the degree. This minimum period matches the minimum training period prescribed by the HPCSA for the specific specialty.

There is no longer any purpose in requesting "recognition of outside time/prior experience" as this, even if granted, will not shorten the required minimum period of registration for the MMed. The only exception is the student who transfers into UKZN from an MMed programme at another university. They may apply for credit for the years for which they were registered as MMed students in their previous University.

A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE

Seeking assistance

Support and advice for registrars begins at the discipline level, with your postgraduate coordinator and Discipline Head. Contact the Postgraduate Office for all administrative issues regarding academic progress, registration, progress and exit from the degree, and all aspects of research submission and examination. If necessary, or at your request, they will bring your concerns to the attention of the HRHD or HRP. *This can be done in confidence.* There may be occasions where you are unwilling to raise a problem within your own discipline or feel that you have not been adequately helped at that level. The HRP, HRHD, Deputy Deans or Dean are available to help you. Confidentiality is

guaranteed, and should some form of action be advisable, they will only proceed with your consent.

Academic and personal difficulties

You should discuss academic difficulties with your Discipline Head, postgraduate coordinator or any of the senior academics or consultants that you respect and trust. If you do not receive sufficient help there, seek the help of the HRP, HRHD or Deputy Deans via the Postgraduate Office. Do not hesitate to bring personal difficulties to the attention of any of our staff, either in the discipline or the School. The Postgraduate Office will put you in touch with the appropriate advice and help. Confidentiality will be respected. The Student

Support Office on the fourth floor is headed by a trained psychologist and is also available to you.

Needlestick injuries

The School has an information sheet covering management of needlestick injuries, which is summarised in Annexure 1. If you suffer a needlestick injury or are otherwise exposed to potentially hazardous material, you should follow the instructions given there.

Protection

Please take all necessary precautions to protect yourself against exposure to pathogens, including safe handling of sharps and use of face shields, gloves and N95 respirators when indicated.

Discrimination, bullying and harassment

The School is committed to equity, inclusivity and a fair and welcoming learning and work

environment. No form of discrimination is tolerated. Nor are bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, intimidation or victimisation. All are seen as a fundamental infringement of your rights as well as an obstacle to effective education. You must report such experiences promptly, particularly before patterns of inappropriate behaviour become established, and your work, happiness or health suffer. You may report such concerns, confidentially, through any channel available to you. You may discuss your concerns at a higher level of the School directly if you prefer not to discuss the matter at the discipline level. The Postgraduate Office will set up a confidential meeting for you with the HRP or HRHD, Deputy Dean or Dean on your request. Whomever you speak to, confidentiality is guaranteed. You will not be forced into steps such as formal grievance or disciplinary procedures without your consent. The University also has hotlines for issues such as bullying, harassment and gender-based violence, which you may utilise.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR

You must maintain the professional standards required of a medical practitioner. This is a broad term covering just about every aspect of your work: standard of care, punctuality, reliability, attention to detail and communication, to name just a few. Failure to maintain such standards may have serious consequences. The School has the authority to exclude you from the registrar programme under academic rule *CHS 10 Professional standards* (quoted later in this document), and you may be subject to University, DOH, NHLS or HPCSA disciplinary processes, as well as to civil and criminal litigation.

Discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and bullying require a perpetrator as well as a victim. Registrars must ensure that they do not themselves become perpetrators or put themselves in a position where they may be perceived to be a perpetrator. Be careful in your interactions with staff members, patients and families, your colleagues, interns and students. Ensure that you are courteous and respectful in your interactions with your interns and students, even when responding to cases where you believe that their work or behaviour falls below your expectations.

Be aware that romantic relationships in the workplace are potentially problematic: when such a relationship fails, it can give rise to extremely unpleasant consequences: a toxic work environment, victimisation, retribution and reputational damage.

Responding to disputes and complaints

Medical practice carries an ever-present risk of finding yourself involved in a dispute or the subject of a complaint. This may come from a patient, family, colleague, another department or hospital management. Given the nature of clinical work, this is not uncommon and does not usually result in serious long-term consequences, provided you respond correctly. The first rule is never to attempt to deal with complaints or disputes by yourself. Always enlist the help of your senior or Discipline Head. If you sense a dispute is moving beyond your control, politely step back and call in your senior immediately, irrespective of the hour of day or night. Dealing with such issues is one of the reasons why you are backed up by a consultant-on-call whenever you are on duty.

Relations with colleagues in the course of clinical care

Internal referrals

You may find yourself in a disagreement with a registrar or MO from a different department

over acceptance or ownership of a patient. **The patient must never be subjected to inconvenience or risk as a result.** Allowing this to happen indicates a lack of professionalism and is legally hazardous. When faced with such a patient, respond professionally. If you cannot resolve the issue yourself, involve your senior immediately. Alternatively, show maturity in accepting the patient provisionally—they can always be transferred the following day if your senior agrees with your opinion on ownership. It is your seniors' responsibility to resolve disputes between disciplines, not yours.

Outside referrals

Be extremely careful when asked by another hospital to accept a transfer. You may think that a generalist MO ought to be able to manage a particular illness, *but the very fact that they have contacted you for help should tell you that they are not confident in doing so.* It is usually safest to accept the patient and decide for yourself just how sick they are. Once a patient has been discussed with you, you become part of the team managing the patient, even if you do not accept them as a transfer, *and you may be held responsible* when things go wrong at the other hospital. Discuss cases readily with your senior. If you do not accept a patient, you should maintain regular contact with the referring MO or registrar to provide ongoing advice and assistance. Having been consulted, you are *de facto* part of the team of doctors caring for the patient.

ACADEMIC RULES RELATING TO THE PROGRAMME

University, College and MMed rules

The University's Academic Rules govern all aspects of your academic training. Registrars are governed by three sets of rules: general university rules, College of Health Sciences rules and MMed rules. You will find these in the College Handbook, which is updated annually and is available in both hardcopy and on the College website. You must understand these rules. Ignorance of the rules will not excuse you if you find yourself in difficulty because of non-compliance.

The School has no discretion or flexibility in how rules apply to you. If the rules say you *must*, then you *must*. If they say *you may not*, then *you may not*. Neither the discipline nor the School has the authority to override or ignore the academic rules prescribed for university programmes in general or the MMed in particular. Do not take chances. Registrars have had their training extended by a semester because they forgot to register for a semester, did not feel that they should have to register, did not register for the right module, or took time off without following the official route for suspending registration. Some have forfeited their salaries for the period for which they were not registered, and some have had their DOH contracts terminated and have lost their position on the programme.

Academic dishonesty

UKZN has no tolerance for dishonesty, cheating in examinations, misrepresentation or forgery in logbooks and portfolios, scientific fraud or dishonesty, or plagiarism. UKZN has a policy on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic work, and inappropriate and

undeclared use of AI will be regarded with the same seriousness as other forms of intellectual dishonesty. Such actions may result in disciplinary proceedings and may result in suspension or exclusion. You may also be subject to parallel disciplinary processes via the CMSA, the DOH or NHLS as your employer, or the HPCSA as the professional regulator. Since any form of dishonesty is considered unprofessional practice, it also renders you liable to exclusion under Rule CH10 (Professional standards), quoted below.

Communication with the University

Note that there is only one official channel of communication between the University or School and the student (which includes registrars). This is via email correspondence directed to the student's University email account (@stu.ukzn.ac.za). It is university policy that an email has the same status and force as a written letter. The School will not communicate with you via your private email account, nor are you entitled to expect some form of personal communication via phone, SMS, social media or other written communication. You must monitor your UKZN email account frequently. Such an email may be the only communication you receive. If you fail to read an email and therefore do not respond as required, the responsibility will be yours.

REGISTRATION AND FEES

Registration for the appropriate modules throughout the programme is mandatory. This is not a matter for discussion or negotiation. You also need to remain up to date with the payment of fees.

Registration for modules

Clinical and professional practice modules

You are required to register for the required modules each semester before the closing date. You must be registered for the coursework modules (Clinical and Professional Practice 1-4 or 1-5) throughout your training, without exception. For every semester that you are not registered, a further semester will be added to your training. You will also have to apply for readmission to the programme, and, if this is refused, you are effectively excluded from the programme. Extension of your training will almost certainly mean that your registrar contract expires before you complete the programme. You will then have to vacate your registrar post and complete your degree from another position.

Research Methodology module

You must be registered for the Research Methodology module when required to take that module. Your discipline will tell you when this is: typically, in the second semester of your first year. Note that University rules *do not allow a coursework module to be repeated*. If you fail to complete the Research Methodology module in the semester for which you registered, you will have to appeal to the College Academic Affairs Board for permission to reregister. If your appeal fails, you will be excluded from the programme.

Research Project module

You must register for the Research Project module in the semester immediately following the research methodology module. You are required to reregister for that module every subsequent semester until you have successfully submitted your thesis. Failure to

do so may result in your training being prolonged.

Suspension and extension of registration

Suspension of studies

If you have a valid reason to suspend your studies, e.g., pregnancy, illness or family emergency, there is a process to be followed. Complete the relevant form and include a full motivation. The Postgraduate Office will assist you with this. You also require the recommendation of your Discipline Head and the HRP. The HRHD will consider your application and make a decision. Suspension may be renewed for a further semester if necessary. Suspension of studies stops the clock on your studies: the suspended semesters are not counted towards your time in the programme, meaning that you can complete the programme within the maximum allowable time.

Maximum allowable time for degree completion

You are expected to complete the programme within the 8 or 10 semesters prescribed for your discipline. If you do not do so, you will be required to apply for permission to reregister for additional semesters. This is a formal process which needs a full motivation and explanation from the student and the support of the Discipline Head and HRP. Your application will be considered by the School Research and Higher Degrees Committee, which will make a recommendation to the College Academic Affairs Board. If permission is not given, you are excluded from the programme. Even if the College allows you to reregister, your registrar contract with DOH or NHLS will not be automatically extended. You will have to apply to the RPSC for extension of your contract, and this is rarely granted. If not, you will

have to find another post from where you can complete the degree.

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

Learning outcomes

For our MMed programmes, the School follows the CANMeds recommendations and defines the learning outcomes under the following headings: Professional competence, Professionalism, Communication, Partnership, Management and Leadership, Advocacy, and Scholarship. These are further defined and explained in Annexure 2: *Learning outcomes*.

Expected progress through the programme

The School has strict expectations concerning the rate at which you advance through the MMed programme. Your progress will be assessed every semester. Failure to progress may, after appropriate warning and a period of probation, result in academic exclusion from the programme, meaning that you will not qualify as a specialist.

The School Board has decreed that registrars are not permitted to enter the CMSA Part 2

examinations until they have completed their research and have made good progress in writing their thesis. This decision followed the observation that a high proportion of students were delaying their research until late in the programme, misjudging the time required, and ending the prescribed semesters with their research incomplete. You must ensure that you start your research project early, make rapid progress and have commenced writing your thesis by the end of Semester 6 (four-year programmes) or 8 (five-year programmes), so that you can write your CMSA Part II examination in the last year of your training.

Milestones

The School has established milestones within the MMed programme which must be reached after a specified number of semesters. These are outlined below, but are subject to change by the School Board at any time. Please note that a few disciplines, including urology, have a slightly different programme. Please ensure that you know what is expected of you.

MILESTONE	COMPLETE BY THE END OF SEMESTER
CMSA Part 1 passed.	Semester 2 (except where this was a requirement for acceptance into the programme)
Research Methodology module (PMED801) passed.	Semester 2 in most disciplines, semester 3 in a few. Check with your discipline what the requirement is.
CMSA Part 1b (Intermediate) examination passed.	Semester 3 (where required)

Research protocol submitted for ethics review.	The semester immediately following completion of Research Methodology PMED801.
Ethics permission received, and data collection started	The semester following that.
Data collection completed, and analysis completed. This allows you six months to write up your thesis.	Semester 5 (four-year disciplines) Semester 7 (five-year disciplines)
Thesis submitted for examination. This allows you two semesters in which to complete your Part II. You can only register for the CMSA Part II examination once your thesis is finished.	Semester 6 (four-year disciplines) Semester 8 (five-year disciplines)
CMSA Part II attempted. You should attempt the Part II examination in your penultimate semester. This leaves you with the opportunity for a rewrite in the final semester if you fail.	Semester 7 (four-year disciplines) Semester 9 (five-year disciplines)
CMSA Part II passed. Degree Complete	Semester 8 (four-year disciplines) Semester 10 (five-year disciplines)

Assessment and monitoring

All MMed students undergo in-course assessment, with a formal assessment at the end of each semester. Assessments will cover all the learning outcomes included in the appendix. Your discipline will inform you of its assessment schedule.

Substandard clinical performance, lack of professionalism and impairment as a practitioner

The rules make provision for suspension and exclusion under these circumstances. In all cases, a thorough, objective and fair review will be undertaken before a decision on the registrar's continued participation in the programme is made. Exclusion requires the approval of the School Board and the College Academic Affairs Board and is not something

which is lightly undertaken. Take note of the following rules:

CHS 9 Impaired Practitioner

A student who, after due consideration and assessment by College Student Impairment Review Committee is deemed impaired and unable, *inter alia*, on psychiatric grounds or grounds of substance abuse to continue his/her studies, shall have his/her registration suspended or be refused readmission to the programme.

CHS 10 Professional standards

A student registered with a professional council who behaves in a manner inconsistent with the ethical and professional standards prescribed by that council, or, where applicable, is deemed to provide

an unacceptable standard of care to clients, patients or the community, may have his/her registration suspended and/or be refused readmission to the programme.

The School will, in the first instance, approach problems of impairment, substandard clinical performance or lack of professionalism in a spirit of assistance, support and remediation. Should you feel that you have a problem, it is highly advisable that you seek assistance from the School at an early stage, rather than waiting until the problem gets out of hand and is reported through official channels. As with all such matters, confidentiality will be maintained.

Training in the pathologies

Pathology registrars undergo structured laboratory training under NHLS and university oversight. On joining the registrar programme, each discipline will provide the registrar with a copy of the structured training programme, which outlines all rotations and assessment schedules for the programme.

Training in public health medicine and occupational and environmental health

The academic programmes for these two disciplines differ substantially from those in the clinical and pathology disciplines. Information on the coursework modules covering the

actual practice of public health medicine and occupational and environmental health will be provided by these disciplines.

CMSA examinations

MMed students are required to pass the relevant CMSA Part I, intermediate (where appropriate) and Part II examinations in order to gain the degree. The CMSA is an autonomous institution and operates according to its own academic rules. Ensure that you consult the CMSA website before you register for an examination and are thoroughly conversant with their rules, requirements and practices. You are required to pay examination fees to the CMSA.

The degree with distinction

To obtain the degree *cum laude*, you are required to meet the following:

- An average of 75% in all coursework modules, with each module being passed at the first attempt and without supplementary examinations,
- Completion of the degree in the prescribed minimum time plus two semesters,
- The thesis passed without re-examination, and an indication by the examiners that they believe the thesis is worthy of a distinction.

To obtain the degree *summa cum laude*, you must have achieved an average of 80% for your coursework modules.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY MODULE

The Research Methodology module is a compulsory component of the MMed programme. Its primary purpose is to equip registrars with the knowledge, skills, and competencies

required to design, conduct, analyse, and report research. The objectives of the module include developing a critical understanding of research design, methodology, and ethics,

providing practical skills in literature searching, study design, data collection, and statistical analysis, ensuring registrars are competent in preparing research protocols for ethics approval, and fostering skills in scientific writing, presentation, and publication. The module is closely aligned with the MMed research project and forms the foundation for your subsequent research.

The module covers principles of research design, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. It introduces registrars to study types such as observational, experimental, cross-sectional, cohort, case-control studies, and clinical trials. The module also addresses sampling methods, sample size calculation, data management, coding and storage, an introduction to biostatistics and appropriate analytical methods, critical appraisal of published research, the principles of evidence-based medicine, and research ethics. Registrars also learn to write research proposals and reports, use bibliographic software, manage references, and prepare oral and poster presentations.

The Research Methodology module is delivered over one semester, typically in the second semester of the first year of training. It is an online course which combines lectures, small-group tutorials, workshops, and practical exercises. Registrars are required to submit assignments and practical exercises to demonstrate competence in research skills.

Assessment includes evaluation of assignments, a written examination, and successful completion of a research protocol, not necessarily the research protocol which will actually guide the student's research project. The knowledge and skills acquired guide the planning, execution, and reporting of the MMed research project.

The School has prepared a comprehensive guide to the preparation of a research proposal, available in the Postgraduate Repository on the School website, which you should work through:

[SMPG-12-Preparing a research proposal or protocol](#)

You must participate fully in the module, satisfactorily complete all assignments and obtain a pass at the first attempt. If you fail, you will not be allowed to register for the next semester without the permission of the College Academic Affairs Board. If that permission is withheld, you will be excluded from the programme. This arises from the following university rule:

Rule CR10: Failed coursework modules.

Failed coursework modules may not be repeated, except with the permission of the College Academic Affairs Board.

RESEARCH PROJECT MODULE

The Research Project module is an essential component of the MMed programme and constitutes 25% of the credits for the programme. It utilises the knowledge and skills gained in the Research Methodology module and is intended to enable graduates to conduct an independent research study. Students

are required to identify a research question, formulate a research project, write and defend a research proposal, complete a research protocol and have it approved by an ethics committee, undertake data collection, analyse their data and report their findings in the form of a thesis. They are expected to apply

appropriate study designs, sampling strategies, and statistical or qualitative analysis methods relevant to their discipline. They also develop skills in academic writing, data presentation, and interpretation of results in the context of existing literature. Registrars must maintain accurate records of all research activities, including data collection sheets, analysis scripts, and bibliographic references.

Format of the thesis

The MMed thesis at UKZN comprises two chapters.

Chapter 1 serves as the introduction and foundation of the thesis. It includes a clear exposition of the research problem, a thorough review of the relevant literature, and a statement of research objectives. This chapter situates the study within the current body of knowledge, explains its rationale, and demonstrates the registrar's understanding of the theoretical and clinical context of their research.

Chapter 2 is presented as a manuscript prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. It follows the conventions of a publication-ready scientific article, including abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and references. This chapter demonstrates the registrar's ability to report research findings in a professional, concise, and academically credible format suitable for dissemination in the medical literature.

The thesis also includes standard supplementary elements such as acknowledgements, references, and appendices (e.g., ethics approval and data collection tools).

The School has prepared comprehensive guides to the preparation and submission of the MMed thesis, which you must work through and follow. These are available in

the Postgraduate Repository on the School website:

<https://medicine-school.ukzn.ac.za/postgraduate-repository/>

These include:

[SMPG-2-Specimen MMed thesis](#)

[SMPG-11-A guide to the preparation of the MMed thesis](#)

You must complete the following checklist before submitting your thesis. This is very important: it is designed to help you avoid the mistakes which will inevitably lead to you having to perform corrections once the examiners' reports have been received:

[SMPG-3-MMed thesis checklist](#)

You should read the *Information for Examiners*, which will give you an idea of how you will be assessed:

[SMPG-4-Information for MMed examiners](#)

Examination of the thesis

Assessment in the Research Project module is based on the successful submission and examination of the MMed thesis. Two examiners are appointed to examine your thesis. At least one examiner, and in most cases both, is external to the University. Registrars are required to meet deadlines for each stage of the project, including protocol approval, commencement and completion of data collection, analysis, and thesis drafting as listed under *Milestones* above. Note that the University rules stipulate that *a thesis which fails examination cannot be re-examined*. The entire project has to be discarded, and a new project started. It is more likely that the student whose thesis fails will be subject to academic exclusion.

Examination normally takes six to eight weeks, but it can take longer if the examiners are slow in returning their recommendations. Three outcomes are possible, as shown below:

Examiners are required to recommend one of the following outcomes:

- Accept without change
- Corrections to the satisfaction of the supervisor and School
- Major revision and re-examination
- Fail without opportunity for revision.

Revising or correcting your thesis is an important and formal procedure. You must adhere to the guidelines in the Postgraduate Repository: [SMPG-6-Writing the corrections table](#).

Publication

We encourage you to submit your manuscript to a scientific journal for publication if it is of a high enough standard. Many of our registrars do this successfully. Incorporate all the corrections and suggestions made by your thesis examiners, as this will improve your manuscript. Your supervisor will work with you on final preparation and submission. Some funds are available through UKZN to support publication costs.

Note that all students who entered the programme in 2025 or later are required to submit a full thesis. There is no longer an option to bypass the thesis by providing evidence that a manuscript has been published.

Research integrity

All biomedical research is governed by strict expectations regarding the honesty of the work and compliance with research ethics. You may not commence any aspect of your research, other than planning and the writing of

the research protocol, until you have submitted a protocol to a university ethics committee and have received written approval to begin the research. Dishonesty in research has severe consequences and is likely to lead to formal disciplinary action and possible exclusion from the programme. You must understand research ethics and know what is regarded as unethical or intellectually dishonest behaviour, if you are to avoid unintentionally ending up on the wrong side of the rules. Always seek advice if in doubt, and come forward if you feel you may have made an honest mistake. The School and the ethics committee will respond to this in a constructive, sympathetic and supportive manner. Severe consequences, such as disciplinary proceedings or withdrawal of permission for the project, are unlikely if the transgression was unintentional, particularly if it is voluntarily reported.

Help with research

It is critical to the on-time completion of your degree that you do not start your research project too late and do not fall behind once you have started. It is also highly desirable that you produce the very best research, thesis and, possibly, publication that you can. You must seek help early with any problems you encounter in your research. Approach your supervisors, Discipline Head, a mentor or the HRHD. Make full use of the learning opportunities available to you, from learning opportunities set up by the School, such as short courses and online resources, but also from the vast array of information on research practice easily accessible through a Google search or a ChatGPT conversation.

Use the resources available from the Postgraduate Repository on the School website (<https://medicine-school.ukzn.ac.za/postgraduate-repository>). You will find extensive guides to completing

your research proposal and protocol, and to writing your thesis.

A good supervisor-student relationship is critical to your success. You are encouraged to seek out and find your own supervisor, one of the academic staff whom you respect and trust. It is, however, the discipline's responsibility to ensure that you have a supervisor by the second semester. If you are having

difficulty finding a supervisor, you must bring this to the attention of your Discipline Head at an early stage. If you are still unsuccessful, engage the help of the HRHD via the Postgraduate Office. Similarly, if you find that the student-supervisor relationship is not working for you for any reason, discuss this at an early stage with your Discipline Head or the HRHD.

ANNEXURE 1. MANAGEMENT OF NEEDLESTICK INJURIES

In the event of a needlestick injury:

- 1) Rinse the affected area thoroughly with running water.
- 2) Report to the Occupational Health clinic of the hospital where you are based to be issued with post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) as soon as possible. After hours, or if the hospital does not have such a clinic, report to the Emergency Department. During office hours, you may also contact Sr Jali at the Medical School Campus Health Clinic (tel 031 260 2045, jalin1@ukzn.ac.za). PEP should be started within 2-3 hours (but, if this deadline is missed, it should be started at any stage up to 72 hours).
- 3) Record the incident in the patient's case notes.
- 4) Report the incident to your clinical supervisor.
- 5) Test the source for the following (if status not already known): HIV, Hepatitis B surface antigen, Hepatitis C
- 6) Write a full report on the incident, which must include the following:
 - 7) Incident documentation
 - 8) Detailed chronological account from the incident occurrence to clinic arrival
 - 9) Complete timeline with specific dates and times
 - 10) Precise location details (hospital, ward, workstation, cubicle numbers)
 - a. *Incident specifics*
 - i) Activity being performed when incident occurred
 - ii) Type of exposure: blood/body fluid splash vs. needlestick
 - iii) Needle characteristics: hollow bore or solid
 - iv) Contamination status: whether object was previously used
 - v) Blood visibility on the object
 - vi) Anatomical penetration depth: artery, vein, muscle, or subcutaneous
 - b. *Personnel and reporting*
 - i) Witnesses present during the incident
 - ii) Complete reporting chain with full names and contact details
 - iii) Facility contacts where incident was reported
 - c. *Medical response*
 - i) ARV (Antiretroviral) dispensing location
 - ii) Treatment details, including medications, dosage, and administration instructions
 - iii) Prescribing healthcare provider information
 - d. *Source details*
 - i) Full names, ID number, hospital number. physical address.
 - ii) The source diagnosis, e.g. HIV, hepatitis B, malaria
 - iii) Previous medical history

- iv) HIV, Hep B surface antigen and Hep C status
 - v) Is the source HIV positive? Or status unknown?
 - vi) Is the source on ARVs (or similar therapy for other infections)? If so, the nature and duration of therapy
 - vii) Have CD4 and viral loads been done, if so, when? What is the trend in serial CD4 counts and viral load (if available)?
 - viii) Their current stage and state of health
 - ix) Obtain copies of the source results, if possible.
- 11) You need to have the following tested on yourself: Hepatitis C antibody, HIV ELISA, Hepatitis B surface antibody, FBC, platelets, ALT, and creatinine.

ANNEXURE 2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

On exiting the programme, the learner will:

EXIT LEVEL OUTCOME	DEMONSTRATED ABILITY
<p>1. Professional competence</p> <p>Possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for specialist practice in the discipline, recognise the limits of their expertise and seek assistance when required, utilise finite healthcare resources appropriately and understand practice in contexts other than the training institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Practises to the standard appropriate to an entry-level specialist. ❖ Demonstrates the competencies required of an effective specialist in the South African context, and the specific competencies required of the discipline. ❖ Manages generic problems which are not specific to the discipline but are commonly encountered, effectively ❖ Assesses the patient accurately and comprehensively ❖ Manages the patient effectively ❖ Applies surgical and procedural skills effectively ❖ Recognises the limits of their expertise and consults appropriately. ❖ Utilises finite healthcare resources appropriately. ❖ Applies experience in practice in contexts other than the training institution.
<p>2. Professionalism</p> <p>Understand professional behaviour, ethical behaviour and medical ethics and practise medicine professionally and ethically.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Behaves professionally ❖ Practises medicine with an understanding of professional behaviour, ethical behaviour and medical ethics.
<p>3. Communication</p> <p>Establish effective and ethical therapeutic relationships with patients, families and communities; communicate efficiently and appropriately with patients, families, communities, health professionals and external organisations and institutions, and keep effective records.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establishes effective and ethical therapeutic relationships with patients and families and, where appropriate, communities ❖ Accurately elicits and synthesises relevant information from patients, families and other health professionals. ❖ Communicates efficiently with patients, families and communities. ❖ Communicates effectively with other health professionals in the course of clinical care. ❖ Communicates efficiently with organisations and institutions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Keeps effective records ❖ Communicates in an appropriately professional manner.
<p>Partnership</p> <p>Incorporate the knowledge, skills and perspectives of other health professionals into the management of patients to improve outcomes, and demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills and personal behaviour in their interactions with seniors, juniors, peers and colleagues from other disciplines and professions (partnership).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Readily incorporates the knowledge, skills and perspectives of colleagues and members of other health professions into the management of patients to improve outcomes. ❖ Works effectively in relationship to seniors, peers and juniors within the immediate working environment ❖ Demonstrates appropriate interpersonal skills and personal behaviour in their interactions with colleagues.
<p>4. Management And Leadership</p> <p>Manage their work, career and practice effectively, manage a care team effectively, understand the strengths and weaknesses of the health care system and factor this into their practice, and promote the success of health care and health education in the context in which they work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Manages their work effectively. ❖ Manages a team effectively ❖ Promotes the success of health care and health education in the context in which they work ❖ Explains the strengths and weaknesses of the health care system ❖ Manages career and practice effectively.
<p>5. Advocacy</p> <p>Respond to the needs of their patients and the communities they serve and promote their interests.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identifies the health needs of the community they serve ❖ Acknowledges the contribution of institutional partners in the health of our communities, and exploits these to improve both individual patient care as well as to promote health more generally ❖ Recognises vulnerable or marginalised populations, adapts clinical management to their needs, and works to improve their condition. ❖ Speaks knowledgeably in support of efforts to promote health in whichever context the opportunity arises ❖ Applies the ethical and professional principles inherent in health advocacy, including altruism, social justice, autonomy, integrity and idealism.

6. Scholarship

Maintain and enhance professional competence through a commitment to lifelong learning, practice medicine in a spirit of enquiry, contribute to a general improvement in practice within a particular context, understand the research process, initiate and conduct a research project, and facilitate the learning of others.

- ❖ Maintains and enhances professional competence through a commitment to lifelong learning.
- ❖ Practices medicine in a spirit of enquiry
- ❖ Contributes to a general improvement in practice within a particular context
- ❖ Applies appropriate research principles
- ❖ Supports and conducts research
- ❖ Facilitates the learning of others
- ❖