



EQUINE-LIBRIUM

COLLEGE • CLINICS • VHPC • STABLES

# MSc Veterinary Physiotherapy

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**2026**

**MSc Programme Handbook**



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# CONTENTS

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## Table of Content

1	Purpose and Scope	1
2	Programme Information	1
3	Postgraduate studies process	4
4	Assessment	10
5	Support	10
6.	Supporting documents	11

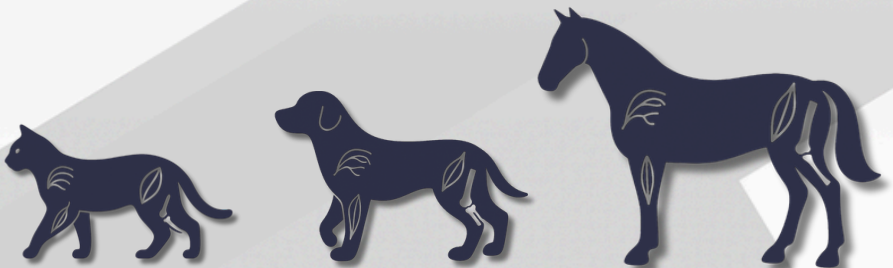


# Purpose and Scope



This handbook aims to provide a general guide on the postgraduate research process, programme, module information, and the responsibilities of supervisors and students. It is intended to supplement the rules and regulations handbook.

While each research project will be unique, all will fall under the general framework provided here. Student recommendations for revisions of this brochure are welcome.



## Programme Information

### 2.1 Modules

There are two modules in the programme. Both are run via the Google Classroom LMS and workspace.

#### 1. Research Methodology (RSM509)

It is a non-credit-bearing Fundamental Learning Programme module on NQF level 9. The module prepares students to integrate research methodology, biostatistics, ethics, and research project management.

The module prepares students to integrate research methodology and advanced theory in Veterinary Physiotherapy, as well as to contribute relevant scientific knowledge to the field of Veterinary Physiotherapy.

The core purpose of this module is to facilitate the student's completion of a research project in their field of interest within Veterinary Physiotherapy.

It is designed to provide a refresher on fundamental research methodology and introductory biostatistics, promote an in-depth understanding of research processes, stages, and management, including a proposed study's ethical considerations.

It is further designed to prepare students with respect to responsible research data management, publication and dissemination.

The module consists of two parts: a research methodology refresher course which is to be completed on Google Classroom as a self-paced and guided course, and a journal club, which is run asynchronously through Google Spaces.

The methodology refresher course prepares students to engage with the fundamentals of research methods, study design, and how to manage a research project. It prepares students to engage with advanced methodologies.

The College's Journal Club allows students to engage with advanced veterinary physiotherapy subject matters with faculty. This prepares students to critically engage with relevant topics, disseminate findings, and promote scientific literacy.

## **2. Research Project (RSP509)**

It is a 180-credit Core Disciplinary learning module on NQF level 9. The purpose of this module is to equip students with competence in research skills that allow them to complete an advanced research project in their field of interest within Veterinary Physiotherapy, and to write and submit a completed research thesis.

The module is designed to promote an in-depth understanding of the processes, stages, and management of research, including ethical considerations of their proposed study. In this module, students are expected to write a thesis in which they will: craft a research proposal, design a study, submit the proposal to the ethics committee using ELC guidelines, collect data, evaluate and interpret statistical findings, write up and report their findings.

The module prepares students to select and justify research designs and methods, to ethically and responsibly collect research data, to integrate specialist subject matters and advanced theory in Veterinary Physiotherapy, and to contribute relevant scientific knowledge to the field of Veterinary Physiotherapy.

### **2.2 Protocol and Ethical Approval**

It is a 180-credit Core Disciplinary learning module on NQF level 9. The purpose of this module is to equip students with competence in research skills that allow them to complete an advanced research project in their field of interest within Veterinary Physiotherapy, and to write and submit a completed research thesis.

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The module prepares students to select and justify research designs and methods, to ethically and responsibly collect research data, to integrate specialist subject matters and advanced theory in Veterinary Physiotherapy, and to contribute relevant scientific knowledge to the field of Veterinary Physiotherapy.

In the case of protocol rejection, the student will have to redesign the study and submit a new protocol to the ERC.

## 2.3 Supervisors

Equine-Librium College promotes a co-supervision system to pair an academic supervisor who is an expert in the field of Veterinary Physiotherapy with a co-supervisor who offers expertise in postgraduate supervision. This allows our students to work closely with a knowledge field expert in Veterinary Physiotherapy and have the benefit of an experienced postgraduate supervisor.

Academic supervisors provide academic guidance and mentorship to students. They should help students with critical thinking as well as guide them on their independent research. The research project should enable students to become part of the academic community, and supervisors can arrange for students to take part in lectures and seminars presented in modules offered in other related programmes.

The academic supervisor needs to communicate the student's needs to the programme coordinator to ensure the programme is shaped to the benefit of the postgraduate student.

Co-supervisors offer support on the administrative procedures relating to research. They offer guidance on ethical clearance, research protocols, and processes and should be familiar with institutional policies and processes.

### **Supervisor requirements:**

Supervisors need to have at a minimum a qualification in the relevant field of study on a higher level or on the same exit level as the postgraduate programme that they will be supervising.

The supervisor needs an appropriate research track record as well as expertise in the field of study.

Inexperienced supervisors are required to pair with an experienced co-supervisor and partake in the necessary staff development opportunities.

## 2.4 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the process or act of presenting another person's ideas, words, or works as your own, or incorporating it into your own work without full acknowledgement.

Students are required to submit an originality report as well as a Declaration regarding Plagiarism.

## 2.5 Intellectual property rights

Intellectual property refers to someone's idea, invention, creation, etc., that can be protected by law from being copied by someone else.

- All research done as a student of Equine-Librium College is the intellectual property of the institution.
- Students are required to mark the second page of their research as follows "Property of Equine-Librium College. All rights reserved."

## Postgraduate studies process

### 1 Admission and Selection

For admission and selection, potential candidates should have a BSc in Veterinary Physiotherapy, NQF level 8 or equivalent degree.

Students who do not hold a BSc Veterinary Physiotherapy degree but are registered with SAVC as Veterinary Physiotherapists may apply for admission access through the RPL process.

*The RPL process requires prospective students to register and complete a preparatory research methodology course and to pass an online, proctored test with 60%. The course duration is 4-6 weeks and done asynchronously. We strongly recommend doing this course 3 -6 months ahead of time.*

Prospective students are required to submit their academic profile containing all qualifications and proven academic record with an average of 60%, a curriculum vitae (CV) detailing their practical work experience if applicable (with references as well as proof of working experience), and a personal statement in their application.

Interviews will be scheduled with prospective students. These will be held online with the Principal and Head of Research. The purpose of the interview is to gauge research aptitude, fit for the MSc programme, and what the student is passionate about with respect to Veterinary Physiotherapy. The interview is scheduled to be approximately 30 minutes - a practical scenario will be presented to the student to solve during the interview.

Selection will be based on all of the above criteria. The number of applicants selected for admission will depend on the capacity of the institution.

## 2. Supervision assignment

Students are allowed to approach a supervisor within the institute with expertise in their field of interest, depending on their availability. Students are allowed to approach and request an external supervisor of their choice with the approval of the Principal and Programme Coordinator.

If the Academic supervisor is inexperienced in postgraduate research supervision, then two supervisors will be assigned, an academic supervisor as well as a co-supervisor.

When supervisors are assigned, students need to set up a meeting with their supervisors (this can be online) to discuss the research project process and requirements.

## 3. Resources

The Programme coordinator, along with Student administration, will give students access to research resources, this includes online databases, information on the books held by the campus library, as well as a list of academic personnel who can be contacted to offer support or insights into their different fields of expertise.

Students will be granted access to undergraduate module information and be allowed to attend any classes relevant to their field of interest. Equine-Librium College has agreements with 7 practicing Veterinary Physiotherapy clinics across the country.

Students can apply for access to data, and to observe clients/treatments through the Programme Coordinator if they have received ethical approval to conduct research. Students can also apply for access to the Equine Lameness Clinic. Further, agreements with registered and qualified biostatisticians in South Africa are held by ELC. This is to help students when planning their proposal, and when doing the statistical analysis of the project.

Through these agreements, students will have access to up to three consultations with a biostatistician; consultations beyond these three sessions will be at the students' own cost.

Students should discuss the resources they need for conducting research with their supervisor and submit a resource request form to the Programme Coordinator. The Programme Coordinator will submit the form to the relevant departments within the institution for review. Equine-Librium College will review all requests for resources and accommodate students within the capacity of the institution at the time.

The Programme Coordinator will also be able to assist students with the following resources:

- Inter-institutional access to the research databases held by the University of Pretoria.
- Contact details or scheduling with veterinary physiotherapy clinics.
- Details or scheduling of research equipment at ELC.

#### **4. Research topics**

Students need to discuss their proposed topics with their supervisors to ensure that the research topic is viable and within the supervisor's field of expertise and interest.

#### **5. Approval of research proposal**

Students will need to develop a research proposal to show that they understand the relevant field chosen in the research topic, and can develop a feasible research plan.

Students will be expected to present their proposal to the Postgraduate Committee - this is called the protocol defence. The Postgraduate Committee will evaluate the topic and protocol and request modifications or make suggestions on a case-by-case basis.

The research proposal should be sent to the Programme Coordinator at least 2 weeks ahead of the protocol defence, for review by the Postgraduate Committee.

Proposal defences can be held in-person or online; usually in the form of a slide show; usually 60-90 minutes in duration.

#### **6. Ethical clearance**

Students need to apply for ethical clearance from the Ethics and Research Committee before commencing with research. Equine-Librium College promotes ethical, responsible, and transparent research, both students and staff should be informed on the relevant policies surrounding ethical research, such as the Policy on Animal Use. Students take full responsibility for knowing the policies, rules and regulations.

It is the responsibility of both the student and the supervisor to uphold principles, procedures, and policies pertaining to ethical research.

Animal use will be reviewed by the Animal Welfare members of the Ethics and Research Committee.

The internal research ethics committee may escalate a project for review by an external animal research ethics committee; in these cases, students may only commence their research once they have received approval from this committee. In such cases, the first application fee will be covered by ELC. Any subsequent charges are on the students' own cost.

Students will be informed about review dates and procedures to an external committee by the Head of Department.

## **7. Research project management**

Students are expected to use the research proposal to form a research management plan. This should include timelines for progress and feedback schedules, and meetings with the supervisors should also be included.

If students are not able to adhere to the management plan they should contact their supervisor and programme coordinator with an updated timeline.

Supervisors should assist in creating a realistic plan that is well-structured and offers the students enough time to complete quality research.

If the student is funded by a third party the timeline should meet their requirements for continuous funding.

## **8. Progress and feedback**

Students need to submit feedback according to their research management plan. Students are expected to complete a written progress report every 6 months (or semester).

Supervisors should use feedback submissions as a monitoring tool for student progress as well as an opportunity to monitor student welfare. If students are repeatedly not progressing according to the management plan, even after adjustments are made, supervisors need to report it to the Programme Coordinator.

The supervisor's responsibility is to give students timely feedback on their research/chapters or progress. Feedback should include engaging students in critical reflection on their research, as well as highlighting possible strengths and weaknesses of the student.

Supervisors are required to submit a written progress report on postgraduate students each semester to the Programme Coordinator and Head of Department. The Head of Department will submit a report on all the students within the programme to the Principal and Postgraduate Committee.

## **9. Dissertation completion and submission**

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the Programme Coordinator and Head of Department, at least 6 months prior, when the dissertation will be submitted. This is done by completing the Intention to Submit document.

The Programme Coordinator and Head of Department will notify and organize examiners. Guidance on preparing the thesis will be provided by the supervisors and through instructions in the RSM509 Module. The thesis should follow a traditional format and consult the manual of style provided in the RSM509 Module.

The supervisor needs to ensure that the student is prepared for the final submission of their thesis.

They need to provide the student with insights and suggested improvements through their feedback, and students need to attend to the feedback to the satisfaction of the supervisor.

Supervisors should:

- Be up to date on institutional policies regarding postgraduate research and assessment
- Prepare students for the requirements of the final assessment as set out in the assessment plan
- This includes guidelines for submitting an article for publication and how to present research to a panel of experts
- Be aware of international standards for scientific articles
- Read the dissertation carefully to check for grammatical errors, coherence, and consistency

## 10. Article submission

Students are required to submit an article for publishing on their research findings; they are expected to submit and complete the Intention to Publish document to assist in this process.

Proof of submission for publication needs to be sent to the Programme Coordinator and Head of Department. Although presenting a paper at a conference is not a requirement it should be encouraged, students can discuss appropriate upcoming conferences with their supervisors and/or the Programme Coordinator/Head of Department.

## 11. Examination

The research dissertation is the main component of the programme assessment and will be assessed by external examiners from either inside or outside of South Africa. Appropriate examiners will be contacted and arranged by the Programme Coordinator and/or Head of Department.

Students need to be aware that there are additional requirements for completing the postgraduate research programme such as: submitting an article for publication and presenting a lecture/seminar to undergraduate students.

### **Examiner requirements:**

At least one external examiner needs to be appointed per dissertation. Examiners need to have at least a master's level qualification in the relevant field of study and have relevant experience in higher education.

## 12. Preparation of data storage

Research data management is the responsibility of the student conducting research. Students need to plan how data will be managed during the research process, and how it will be collected, processed, and analysed.

The Ethics and Research Committee has the responsibility to ensure that all research activities including data gathering are done within national and international ethical standards.

Data gathered during research is the property of Equine-Librium College.

After completion of the Research project (RSP509) students are required to set up a meeting with the Programme Coordinator or Head of Department to discuss data gathered during research. Data will then be handed over and stored within the institution's cloud-based storage. Data storage is overseen by the Programme Coordinator and Head of Department.

## 4 Assessment

Assessment comprises formative and summative assessments. Formative assessment will be assessed by the supervisor and moderated by an external moderator.

Formative assessment includes:

- Progress report and chapter submissions to supervisor
- Presentations/seminars to undergraduate students
- Literature review

Summative assessment will be assessed by an assessment board, comprising an internal examiner and at least one external examiner per dissertation.

The assessment will also be moderated externally. The external examiner report and external moderator report will be considered by the Postgraduate Committee for final examination outcomes.

Summative assessment includes:

- Dissertation
- Article submitted for publishing

### **External moderator requirements:**

External moderators need to be experts in the relevant field of study and have qualifications at least the same level as the qualification being examined. A minimum of 10 percent of the examinations will be moderated in full, and a minimum of 20 percent will be spot checked at random.

## **5 Support**

### **5.1 At-risk students**

Students are monitored throughout the programme by their supervisors. Supervisors are required to submit progress reports on the students after each semester. This allows the Programme Coordinator and Head of Department to identify at-risk students early. Students are encouraged to make an appointment with their supervisor if they are falling behind schedule to identify possible causes.

### **5.2 Subject Knowledge Support**

Students are allowed to contact lecturers employed by Equine-Librium College for support on concepts or subject matter related to their field of expertise.

## **6. Supporting documents**

### **6.1 Postgraduate ethical approval process**

### **6.2 Student-supervisor agreement guide**

### **6.3 Policy Ethical Approval**

### **6.4 Ethical Approval form**

### **6.5 Resource request template**

### **6.6 Policy Animal Use for Research Purposes**

### **6.7 Plagiarism Policy**



## DIRECTORS

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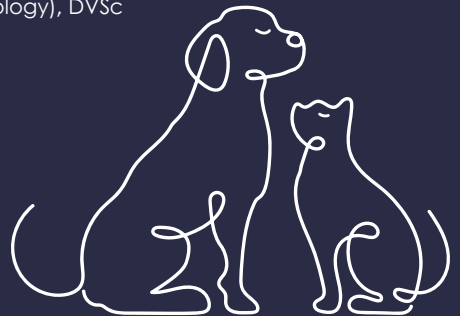
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