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## A CALL TO STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING AND RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS:

Enriching your supportive and capacitation  
role to accelerate undergraduate and  
postgraduate success

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Enriching your supportive and capacitation role to accelerate undergraduate and postgraduate success

There is a shared responsibility by a number of significant stakeholders to actively capacitate undergraduate students so that they are enabled to reap rewards from their academic pursuits. Invaluable and ongoing support from key role-players within the university community cannot be emphasised enough. These internal parties, which include academics, researchers, administrators, student support personnel, alumni associations, student representative councils (SRCs) and relevant interest groups, are called upon to accelerate their collective contribution towards the overall performance of undergraduate students.



*"Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another."*

Open and honest conversations are needed by interested parties within and outside of the university environment that seek to, amongst other things, understand the diverse experiences of students, the challenges they face, their day-to-day struggles and their aspirations to improve the quality of their lives and those dependent on them. It is also important for the needs and expectations of students to be understood by the university management and administrators. Another consideration is the kind of outreach that is required from prospective employers who aim to attract professional talent for their organisations from the available pool of graduates.



*"An investment in education pays the best dividends that last for generations."*

A myriad of challenges faced by students, such as dropout from tertiary studies, delayed completion of academic qualifications, bread-and-butter difficulties, problems in adapting to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic and escalating stress-related problems have a debilitating effect on their overall wellbeing, progress and performance outputs. It is therefore prudent for all institutional stakeholders to embrace a unified approach to maximise their collective efforts to harness their resources and expertise to effectively address these challenges. More creative ways to expand academic support services, which include the provision of self-empowerment programmes and enabling tools, should be creatively explored.

Therefore, resource-based initiatives, such as this Undergraduate Toolkit, which seek to enlighten, empower and capacitate students on personal, academic and professional development levels require the active support of all interested parties. In a spirit of partnership and cooperation, the developers of this Toolkit invite all key internal stakeholders within institutions of higher learning to interact with us to explore collaborative and innovative ways to significantly advance the goals and outreach of this Toolkit as an additional resource easily accessible to students. This Toolkit is relevant to the needs of students at any stage of their undergraduate study.



*"If you are planning for a year, sow rice;  
if you are planning for a decade, plant trees;  
if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people."*



*"We invest in things like the future, like our children, like education. In other words, we invest in things that we understand we will not see an immediate return [on] investment but everybody knows it will have a positive impact and you can easily measure it over the course of time. Your why is exactly the same thing."*

### 1. How can the institution of higher learning enable students to access The Undergraduate Toolkit?

Through an investment in this initiative, universities can make this Toolkit accessible to all undergraduate students, across all disciplines. An Order Form for the purchase of this resource is enclosed at the end of this Toolkit.

This can be done in many ways that include the following:

- (i) Making the Toolkit available to all first-year students as part of their registration pack;
- (ii) An institutional licence, for an agreed timeframe, that allows all students and staff unlimited use of the Toolkit;
- (iii) Enabling all students to access the Toolkit online through the institution's intranet facility;
- (iv) Ensuring that the library has a few Toolkits available on USB for use by students; and
- (v) Endorsement and/ or promotion of the Toolkit by the SRC, relevant interest groups and the alumni association.





KHENSEY  
MALULEKE

*"Congratulations on your hard work in developing such an amazing undergraduate toolkit. The postgraduate toolkit is my academic bible and is already helping me get through my PhD programme so I can already imagine how this will help a lot of undergraduates to have a firm and solid foundation so that they too may thrive in academia. I am so happy to celebrate this huge milestone with you at the launch of the undergraduate toolkit on the 22nd of April!"*  
— via email,  
29 March 2022

## 2. Additional resources: Related products and specialist services offered to universities and research councils by the developers of this Toolkit

### A. For institutions of higher learning and research bodies

2021 marked the 10-year anniversary of the **4th edition of the Postgraduate Toolkit developed by Dr Layla Cassim**, which incorporated changes applicable to research within a COVID-19 context. Over the last decade, thousands of postgraduate students and researchers across Africa have used the Postgraduate Toolkit. A sample of endorsements and testimonials on Dr Layla Cassim's work in the higher education field has been shared at the end of this Undergraduate Toolkit.

The **Postgraduate Toolkit is a peer-reviewed electronic textbook and multimedia resource** that assists postgraduate students and researchers across all disciplines and levels of study to complete their research projects and theses successfully and build long-term research careers. The 4th edition is available online (where it can be downloaded) as well as on USB.

#### The Postgraduate Toolkit emphasises:

- (i) Indigenous Knowledge Systems and a decolonised view to research;
- (ii) Practical research, at a community level, to address socio-economic and other inequalities;
- (iii) Interdisciplinarity;
- (iv) Intersectionality and a queer-friendly, feminist approach to research; and
- (v) Wellness, health and quality of life for postgraduate students and researchers.



SCOTTISH  
PROVERB

*"Learn young,  
learn fair; learn old,  
learn more."*



The **10 chapters of the Postgraduate Toolkit** cover the following important topics:



*"I will tell you, in the case of education, you have to make the investment if you're going to get the return. There's no doubt about that. It's a proven fact the return is there if you make the investment. It really is about priorities."*

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction to research & how to write a research proposal
- **Chapter 2:** How to write a grant application or funding proposal
- **Chapter 3:** An overview of research design and methodology
- **Chapter 4:** Guidelines on how to write a thesis and research report
- **Chapter 5:** How to write and publish an academic paper
- **Chapter 6:** Tips for oral and poster presentations of your research
- **Chapter 7:** Key project management principles in research
- **Chapter 8:** Some self-empowerment tools and support systems for postgraduate success
- **Chapter 9:** The student, supervisor and university - enhancing postgraduate supervision
- **Chapter 10:** Your Personal and Professional Development Contract (PDC) & self-employment for researchers

Each of the above ten chapters is in written form and also presented as voice recordings, to make the Postgraduate Toolkit more accessible and interactive. The voice recordings are given in two formats: narrated PowerPoint® slides as well as MP4 videos. In total, there are more than **25 hours of voice recordings, 988 written pages and 48 practical exercises**, as well as assessment questions and memoranda for the ten chapters, in the 4th edition of the Postgraduate Toolkit.

Universities and research organisations can **purchase a license to have both the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Toolkits** on their website, for the unlimited use of their staff and students. An example is the University of Limpopo, which is currently licenced to make the Postgraduate Toolkit available on the university's intranet for all its staff and students.



Are you:

- The postgraduate student who needs additional tools for success?
- A research supervisor who wants to enhance your mentoring role?
- A manager or human resources practitioner who wishes to support employees who are studying?
- Interested in enhancing research output, particularly in South Africa and on the African continent?

**Then this Toolkit is for you!**

The Postgraduate Toolkit is compiled by Dr Layla Cassim, who obtained her PhD at the age of 24 and her MBA at the age of 27. This Toolkit, covering a wide range of often problematic topics, empowers you to take ownership of your academic, personal and professional development.

**CHAPTER 1**  
Introduction to research & How to write a research proposal

**CHAPTER 2**  
How to write a grant application or funding proposal

**CHAPTER 3**  
An overview of research design and methodology

**CHAPTER 4**  
Guidelines on how to write a thesis and research report

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Some self-empowerment tools and support systems for postgraduate success

**CHAPTER 9**  
The student, supervisor and university - enhancing postgraduate supervision

**CHAPTER 10**  
Your Personal and Professional Development Contract (PDC) & Self-employment for researchers

AVAILABLE ON USB AND ONLINE

Dr LAYLA CASSIM

# POSTGRADUATE TOOLKIT®

A practical, user-friendly academic and self-empowerment toolkit to assist you as a postgraduate student in any discipline to complete your degree


Supported by  
**Dr Wendy Luhabe**  
former Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg

**4<sup>th</sup> EDITION!**  
**10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY EDITION**


**988 written pages and more than 25 hours of voice recordings**

**More than 10 000 postgraduate students & researchers across Africa have used the Toolkit over the last decade**

**E-BOOK**  
ISBN 978-0-420-90049-2



**USB**  
ISBN 978-0-420-90050-8



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Dr Layla Cassim  
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Universities and research councils are invited to explore the cost-effective licence option for either of or both Toolkits with us. Decision-makers from these organisations are encouraged to invest in both the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Toolkits in order to provide more focussed capacitation and targeted support along the fuller student and staff trajectory. An enquiry in this regard, based on institutional needs, can be directed to us for a proposal and quotation. An Order/ Enquiry Form, which is enclosed at the end of this Toolkit, can be completed and sent to us.



*"Investing in education and providing 21st century skills for students are fundamental components to the nation's continued growth and prosperity."*



## B. For undergraduate students

A range of professional services to facilitate the self-empowerment and self-development of students through contact training, online training workshops and webinars is available to all institutions of learning. These include skills development in the following learning areas:

- (i) Training on specific topics from this Toolkit, such as Mentee development, An introduction to the world of research, Academic writing and Research proposal and thesis writing;
- (ii) Career counselling;
- (iii) Preparing for the world of work;
- (iv) Wellbeing and self-care;
- (v) Personal financial skills;
- (vi) Time management;
- (vii) Project management;
- (viii) Self-management for personal effectiveness;
- (ix) Anger management;
- (x) Stress management;
- (xi) Assertiveness;
- (xii) Conflict management;
- (xiii) Grievance-handling;
- (xiv) Addressing and preventing gender-based violence.
- (xv) Emotional intelligence; and
- (xvi) Addressing harassment in the workplace.

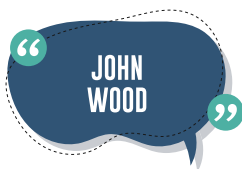


*"Education is not only a ladder of opportunity, but it is also an investment in our future."*



*"In an undergraduate business environment, the best learning experience is the interaction students have with each other. They need to learn from each other as much as from professors and lectures and other teaching tools."*





*"Education alone may not be enough to guarantee economic success. There are other success factors that matter, like good governance, rule of law, and access to trading routes and partners. But if you were challenged to assemble a prosperous society from scratch, education would be the first building block you'd want to develop."*

### C. For academics, researchers, administrators, managers, support staff and the SRC office bearers

A range of professional services to facilitate the ongoing capacitation of managers, support personnel and administrators through contact training, online training workshops and webinars is available to all institutions of learning. These include skills development and/ or coaching in the following learning areas:

- (i) Writing research proposals;
- (ii) Research design and methodology;
- (iii) Research ethics;
- (iv) The role of the research supervisor of students;
- (v) Mentor development;
- (vi) Thesis writing;
- (vii) Publishing papers in academic journals;
- (viii) Writing funding proposals, with a particular focus on the National Research Foundation's Thuthuka programme for emerging researchers;
- (ix) Academic writing and publishing retreats;
- (x) Editing and proofreading services;
- (xi) Career development and career management in academia;
- (xii) Conducting online teaching;
- (xiii) Organisational culture and workplace climate audits;
- (xiv) Diversity management and inclusion;
- (xv) Stakeholder relations and management;
- (xvi) Disability management;
- (xvii) Talent management and retention;
- (xviii) Addressing and preventing gender-based violence;



- (xix) Grievance-handling and dispute resolution; and
- (xx) Addressing harassment in the workplace.



SANDRA  
DODD

*"Given a rich environment, learning becomes like the air - it's in and around us."*

### 3. A note to interested parties: The road ahead

The developers of this Undergraduate Toolkit and the Postgraduate Toolkit invite all key stakeholders within institutions of higher learning and research organisations to explore the most cost-effective options available to make these resources available to students and staff across all faculties or for specific departments. In addition, support and capacitation services through training workshops, webinars, coaching and/ or consulting services in the abovementioned areas are also offered on a one-on-one basis or to a group of students and/ or staff for any of the service offerings indicated above.

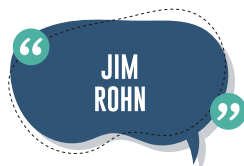
To establish contact with us, interested parties are encouraged to email us at [trn@mweb.co.za](mailto:trn@mweb.co.za) and copy [Lcassimers@gmail.com](mailto:Lcassimers@gmail.com) so that we can explore the most cost-effective route for you to secure one or both Toolkits for students under your care.

The Renaissance Network (TRN) and Layla Cassim ERS Consultants CC look forward to discussing your specific needs and expectations with you. A customised service offering can also be considered in the best interest of academic development and research capabilities at universities, research bodies and/ or with students directly.



HELEN  
HAYES

*"The expert in anything was once a beginner."*



JIM  
ROHN

*"The more you care, the stronger you can be."*



SHIVASAKTHY  
MANIVASAKAN

**"EDUCATION**  
*An investment for life...  
An intangible & tangible asset,  
that never loses its value."*

