

THE PHD ATHENAEUM: TURNING PHD ASPIRATIONS INTO REALITY

The PhD Athenaeum is a social innovation initiative of CiviNovus, the primary knowledge partner of the School of Social Innovation. It is therefore linked to the academic initiatives of the School of Social Innovation.

The PhD Athenaeum: Purpose, Programme and Process

There is a growing need for knowledge generation and validation and a demand for advanced studies in South Africa, including PhD research. There is also a need to increase the PhD output of South African Universities which need is specifically addressed in the South African National Development Plan (the NDP).

The current supervisory and promotional capacity of South African Universities for PhD candidates are insufficient and under pressure given increased demand and declining capacity for PhD supervision in South African universities. As a result, the demand for PhD programme placement exceeds the supply of supervisory capacity

The purpose of the PhD Athenaeum, is to create a space, program and process where prospective PhD students interested in pursuing PhD can be given a structured and CiviNovus supported set of opportunities to access a PhD proposal generation and PhD delivering support structure.

This space is called: The PhD Athenaeum.

The objectives of the PhD Athenaeum are to, through an academic and professional fellowship:

- Create and sustain a basic understanding of a PhD research project and its objectives and its relevance for science and society,
- Build the understanding of the objectives, content and protocols of a PhD research project,
- Raise awareness on the quality and impact of a good PhD research,
- Encourage top level scholarship and participation in the proposed PhD projects,
- Co-create and sustain a support structure and group for the participants,
- Institutionalize effective and efficient interaction between the fellows, academics, partners and administrative and support staff and processes in order to:
- Create, maintain a supportive and learning fellowship for all the participants resulting in successfully delivered PhD's by the participants.

Concretely, the programme and process is co-created by a team of fellowship linked academics, which include the PhD Athenaeum fellows. These fellows jointly co-create a structured set of academic activities where the fellows collectively engage in a programme and a process to:



- Initially prepare for and successfully design and deliver a competitive PhD Proposal to any University or supervisor of their choice,
- Eventually, pursue PhD registration as PhD students, and
- Finally, to be supported in the delivery of the successful PhD product during the full journey of their PhD research, through attending regular seminars 4 times per annum lasting 2 days.

A small and informal coordinating governance structure will be established for the program, consisting of an academic representative and supported by an administrator and one of the PhD students in the program. The organizing of the programme is allocated to the CiviNovus.

There are strong international linkages of the programme to Universities in the Netherlands and inputs have been made into the programme on a regular basis by Dutch Universities, including the Free University of Amsterdam and Tilburg University academics, who willingly contribute as volunteers.

The process is generally that the PhD Athenaeum is implemented over a period as a rolling over learning program with a series of two-day seminars over generally 4 (four) sessions per year.

Fellows may join at any point in time and will be guided over several sessions to design an acceptable PhD proposal and subsequent research trajectory. Fellows will be working on the process of preparing a proposal and thereafter in the fellowship to deliver the PhD based upon the proposal. Not every participant needs to attend all sessions at the same time, and some will be in more advanced stages of their PhD research. Fellows will enrol for periods of 1 (one) year at a time and a fee of currently R4000.00 per annum will be charged for the enrolment by fellows.



Discussions during a Phd Athenaeum session (2019).

Interested potential fellows can contact CiviNovus and the PhD Athenaeum: Ulrike Hanekom at CiviNovus on e-mail at athenaeum@civinovus.co.za or ulrike@civinovus.co.za or by telephone at: +27 21 910 0962.

