

The NIHSS Regional Doctoral School

For the Regional Doctoral School, Prof J.A. Smit, the NIHSS-regionally appointed mentor, has been involved in different activities required from the NIHSS such as quarterly reports and budget applications (3 out of 4 done¹), new doctoral student application vetting (around 60 from students outside UKZN vetted), and article reviews for the NIHSS Virtual Annual National Doctoral Conference 2021, and Virtual Annual Humanities and Social Sciences Alumni Conference (of which 43 were done)².

5.1 The Disruptive Effects of COVID-19

The most important effect of COVID-19 on the Regional Doctoral School (RDS), since March 2020, is that supervisors could not meet with PhD students in person and also that Regional Doctoral School students, comprising of around 60 students, as of 2020, could not meet face-to-face for group and one-on-one thesis writing mentoring and support.

This has necessitated the re-thinking of the operations of the RDS, in respect of remote national, and inter-regional webinars, and a reconfiguration of the different aspects of actual thesis writing mentoring and support to optimally deploy digital media.

5.2 Small Group Thesis Writing Mentoring and Support

This system was suggested to the NIHSS in May 2020, and deployed as from 29 May 2020. It appears that it works quite well.

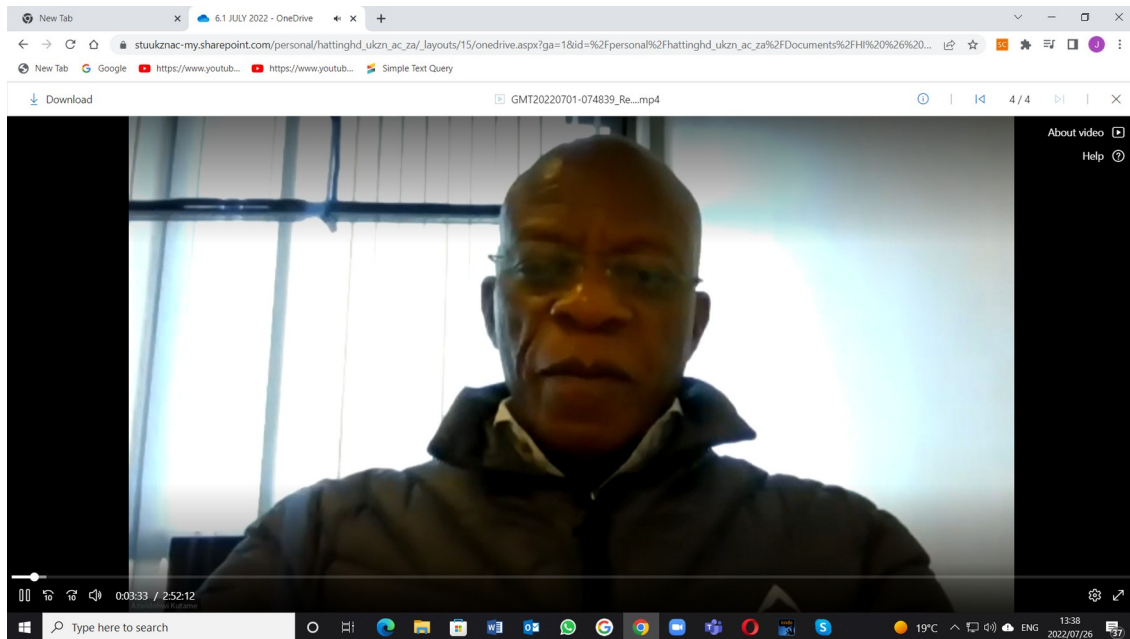
It works through remote small group and one-on-one meetings, where students are continuously mentored, over a period of 2 days, 3 days, or 5 days at a time, with student in-group and in-person presentations and mentor feedback.

According to student reviews, shared with the NIHSS, it appears that the system works well.

So, we plan to continue with the system into 2022.

¹ The quarters are: 01 April – 30 June 2021; 01 July – 30 September 2021; 01 October – 31 December 2021; and 01 January – 31 March 2022. The third quarter report and fourth quarter application (01 January – 30 March 2022) will be submitted by Friday 17 December 2021. To note, is that the NIHSS is currently considering moving away from the quarterly system to an annual year planner with budget system.

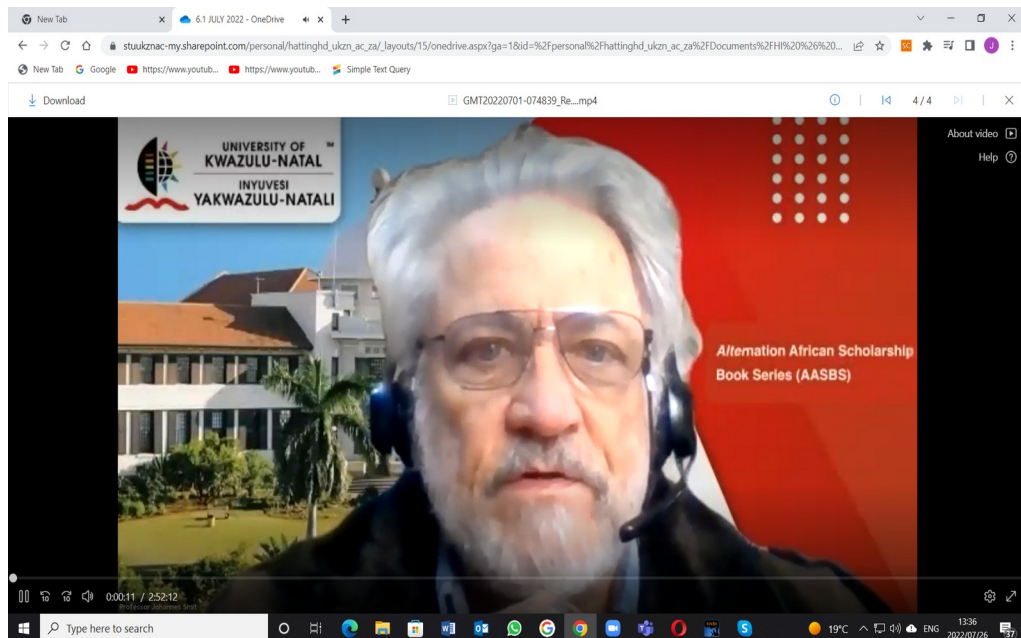
² Cf. <https://www.nihss.ac.za/ndc>;
<https://www.nihss.ac.za/sites/default/files/ANDC2021/vANDC%20Booklet%202021.pdf>;
and <https://www.nihss.ac.za/sites/default/files/ALUMNI2021/Alumni%20Booklet%202021.pdf>.



Prof Azwidowhi Kutame presenting a RDS webinar

5.3 New 2021 NIHSS-CHUM PhD Scholarships

7 new CHUM doctoral students have received scholarships, of whom 6 had their proposals passed by review committees by the end of 2021.



Prof Jannie Smit presenting a webinar.

The number of scholarships awarded per university depends on the number of graduations. If throughput ratios come down, the number of scholarship allocations are also reduced.)

5.4 NIHSS – UKZN Regional Doctoral School Throughput

Since its inception, at this point in time, 63 NIHSS and SAHUDA-funded Doctoral students as supported by the UKZN NIHSS Regional Doctoral School have graduated.

An additional 9 have graduated in December 2021.

At present, on 15 December 2021, there are 11 students who have submitted their theses for examination.

7 new 2021 students have been supported with their research proposals, of which 6 have been processed and approved by the respective School Research Proposal Review committees.

This leaves 27 students in the Regional Doctoral School, who we have divided into 3 streams.

Stream 1: We are currently working intensively with 9, for possible submission for examination at the end of March 2022.

Stream 2: We are also working with a group of 10 that we hope will submit for examination at the end of June 2022.

Stream 3: We are working with the last 8+ which includes those from previous streams who have not submitted for examination yet, for submission for examination in November/December 2022.

5.5 NIHSS-UKZN Supervision Indabas

We have had the series of 3 supervision indabas earlier this year. These were on 14 and 21 May, and 11 June 2021.

Precisely 30 Colleagues from across the CHUM schools presented papers on the 3 days, which were very well attended – around 50 UKZN staff attended each of the indaba's.

To note, is that Prof Smit was requested to facilitate the same for the University of Zululand. He organized 5 events with 10 colleagues from Zululand participating in presenting papers, with around 50 staff attending each event.

We hope to do the promised follow-up call for papers in 2022, with the view of some book publications towards the end of the year, into 2023.

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