

# ■ GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD) DEGREE

## 1. Definition

The award of the PhD degree is contingent upon a candidate having:

- a) completed an approved programme of supervised research;
- b) presented a written thesis which demonstrates an advanced level of knowledge and understanding in the candidate's field of study and which describes and summarizes the research undertakings and findings;
- c) satisfied the Board of Examiners in an oral examination (and any other examination if deemed necessary), on matters relevant to the subject of the thesis; and
- d) complied with supervision, attendance and all coursework requirements as laid down by the respective Faculty/School/Academy (hereafter called Faculty).

## 2. The Graduate School

The Graduate School is responsible for ensuring that all students admitted to the PhD programme have met the appropriate admission requirements; that research prospectuses are well conceived and reasonable; and that candidates have fulfilled all requirements for the PhD degree prior to being recommended to the Senate for the aforesaid award.

## 3. Admission Requirements

3.1 Applicants seeking admission to the PhD degree programme should possess:

- a) a Master's degree from a recognized university or comparable institution; or
- b) a Bachelor's degree with First Class Honours from a recognized university or comparable institution; or
- c) any other qualification deemed by the Graduate School to be acceptable for this purpose.

3.2 Candidates under section 3.1(b) of the General Regulations should have evidence of research achievement/experience. They may be admitted to the MPhil programme initially, but with a view to proceeding to the PhD programme after satisfactorily passing an assessment at the time of candidature confirmation.

3.3 Candidates under section 3.1(c) of the General Regulations may be required to take a qualifying examination, in which event their progress shall be reported to the Graduate School at the end of their first year of study.

### 3.4 Language Requirements

Applicants may be required to prove their language abilities in English and/or Chinese by means of an interview, or, for applicants from outside Hong Kong, by means of performance in a test to show acceptable language proficiency, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Member of Chartered Institute of Linguists (MCIL) examination.

## 4. Registration

### 4.1 Double Registration

Unless otherwise approved by the University, registered candidates are normally not permitted to register part-time or full-time for any other qualification, either at the University itself or at any other local institution of higher learning. Candidates breaching

this regulation are subject to discontinuation of their studies at the University.

4.2 Successful applicants shall be admitted to register provisionally for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy as either full-time candidates or part-time candidates.

4.3 Applicants will not be admitted into full-time candidature if they are undertaking work not relevant to their area of study for more than 6 hours per week.

4.4 Applicants will not be admitted into part-time candidature unless the Graduate School is satisfied that they are able to work regularly on the programme of study and maintain regular/adequate contact with their supervisors.

4.5 It is expected that full-time candidates who are studentship recipients will be engaged in duties within a department of the University. These duties, such as teaching/research assistantships, will contribute to the overall development of the candidates' understanding of their chosen field.

## 5. Period of Study

### 5.1 Normal Period of Study

The normal period of study for the completion of the approved research and study programme is 36 or 48 months (the longer period is applicable to PhD entrants who do not have a research Master's degree) for full-time candidates and 72 months for part-time candidates.

### 5.2 Maximum Period of Study

The period of study may be extended by a maximum period of 24 months. Applications should be endorsed by the Principal Supervisor, Department Head and Faculty/School Dean/Academy Director (hereafter called Faculty Dean). Approval for extension and further extension beyond the maximum period of study rests with the Graduate School.

### 5.3 Minimum Period of Study

5.3.1 The minimum period of study is 30 months for full-time candidates and 60 months for part-time candidates, except in the cases specified in sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 of the General Regulations below.

5.3.2 Full-time candidates already holding a Master's degree in a field of study closely related to that of the PhD programme may spend a minimum period of 24 months on study and research.

5.3.3 Part-time candidates already holding a Master's degree in a field of study closely related to that of the PhD programme may spend a minimum period of 36 months on study and research.

5.4 For details regarding calculation of study period, please refer to section 2 of the "Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees" in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.

## 6. Programme of Study

6.1 Candidates will pursue a programme of study approved by the Graduate School, and shall present themselves for relevant examinations and at such times as may be required by the examiners.

## 6.2 The programme of study shall comprise:

- a) supervised original research work culminating in the submission of a thesis;
- b) coursework as required by the respective Faculty;
- c) attendance at lectures, study groups and workshops as well as participation in seminars, colloquia and conferences as directed by the supervisor(s);
- d) any other courses needed to make up for the candidate's deficiencies as required by the supervisor(s); and
- e) passing the online tutorial on avoiding plagiarism at a level of 80% or above and make a declaration via the online test platform before arranging confirmation of candidature.

6.3 Students who fail to fulfil section 6.2(e) above will be barred from (a) the arrangement for confirmation of candidature; (b) access to the academic transcript/testimonial (official copy and student copy).

## 7. Coursework

### 7.1 Coursework Requirements

7.1.1 Candidates should successfully complete a minimum of 12 units of coursework as laid down by their respective Faculty and achieve a minimum GPA score of 2.67, except as specified in sections 7.1.3 and 7.4.1 of the General Regulations below. Each course normally carries 2 to 3 units per semester/trimester/term. For courses with the same grade, the one carrying the greater number of units takes precedence over the remaining in calculating the GPA score. If the student takes more than the required units of coursework, only the best courses which fulfil the coursework requirements of 12 units would be included in the GPA calculation.

7.1.2 Make-up courses and laboratory courses which are required to cover the candidate's deficiencies are not counted towards the coursework requirements.

7.1.3 Candidates who have a relevant Master's degree may be exempted from 3 units of coursework.

7.1.4 For candidates who have been transferred from MPhil candidature and have successfully completed the MPhil coursework requirements, the units gained in their MPhil coursework requirements can be counted towards their PhD coursework requirements if deemed appropriate by the Faculty.

### 7.2 Academic Standard of Required Courses

7.2.1 The number of units assigned to a course is indicative of the contact time with a teacher and/or the study time associated with that course, on a weekly basis over a period of one semester/trimester/term. In general, a single unit represents attendance once a week throughout the semester/trimester/term at a lecture/recitation lasting 50 minutes.

7.2.2 Not more than two courses (which must have direct relevance to the research area of the student) are to be taken at advanced undergraduate level (e.g. 3XXX or 4XXX series courses in HKBU, or upper division courses in a 4-year UG curriculum).

7.2.3 Any course to be taken by a candidate will need to be recommended by the Principal Supervisor and endorsed by the Department Head with due reference to the candidate's academic background.

7.2.4 If a required course cannot be offered by the University at a given time, an equivalent course may be taken from another university in Hong Kong with the approval of the Principal Supervisor and the Department Head.

## 7.3 Mode of Teaching and Assessment Method

The teaching of a course can be delivered in any appropriate mode, such as tutorial, small class, lecture, seminar, colloquium, conference, etc., depending on the course syllabus and the number of students enrolled. Whether the course is taken at the University or another institution/university in Hong Kong, some means of assessment, such as a written examination or submission of term paper(s), is needed to evaluate the candidate's achievement.

### 7.4 Coursework Administration

7.4.1 Candidates should officially enrol in the chosen courses through the Graduate School. For courses successfully completed at other institutions/universities under the cross-institutional course enrolment scheme, transfer of units/credits is allowed but the letter grades would not be included in the GPA calculation. For the purpose of calculating GPA score, courses without letter grades and courses with grade "S" take precedence over courses with letter grades. Students who take all courses under the cross-institutional course enrolment scheme for fulfilment of coursework requirements would not have a GPA score.

7.4.2 All courses attempted in the University will be recorded in the candidate's transcript with letter grades and the total number of units gained. For courses that cannot be assessed objectively (e.g. guided reading and seminar, etc.), candidates will only be given an "S" grade for satisfactory completion of a course or a "U" grade for unsatisfactory performance. For courses successfully completed without letter grades, only the units would be counted towards the total number of units gained. The grades would not be included in the GPA calculation.

7.4.3 Courses taken in the University with grade below "C" will not be counted towards the units gained nor used in the GPA calculation.

7.4.4 For courses approved for transfer from another institution/university, the total number of units gained (but not the letter grade) will be recorded in the candidate's transcript. The University reserves the right not to approve transfer of units for courses with grades below the equivalence of grade "C+" in the University's grading system.

7.4.5 Any candidate who fails to satisfy the coursework requirements will be dismissed from the University.

7.4.6 Candidates are required to satisfy all coursework requirements within the normal study period and prior to the submission of their theses for oral examination.

7.5 For registration, attendance and assessment of courses, the relevant provisions under the General Regulations for Undergraduate Degree Programmes and the General Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Degree/Diploma/Certificate Programmes are applicable unless otherwise specified.

7.6 For registration procedures, please refer to section 3 of the "Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees" in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.

## 8. Candidature

8.1 A full-time candidate registered provisionally for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy will be subject to a probationary period of up to 18 months (for a part-time candidate, up to 21 months). Between the 12th and 18th months after commencement of study (for a part-time candidate, between the 15th and 21st months), a provisional PhD candidate must attain full candidature by satisfying the requirement on avoiding plagiarism under section 6.2(e) above and the submission of a research prospectus and relevant documents for an open seminar, to be assessed by a Panel before consideration by the Graduate School. The Assessment

Panel shall be chaired by the Department Head (or designate). Members shall comprise the Principal Supervisor, and at least one member in the field who comes from the same department or other departments to assess the research prospectus, the relevant documents, and the seminar presentation. The Department Head's designate shall be a senior academic of the Department. If the Department Head is the Principal Supervisor of the candidate, a designate must be appointed to chair the Panel. Failure to attain full candidature in a timely manner may result in dismissal.

8.2 The Assessment Panel will submit the completed report forms, giving assessment of the candidate's performance and potential along with the research prospectus (bearing the supervisors' endorsement) and relevant documents to the Graduate School.

8.3 Upon satisfactory fulfillment of the online tutorial on avoiding plagiarism and after review of the research prospectus and the reports from the Assessment Panel, the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee will determine whether to admit a provisional candidate to full candidature, or to terminate his/her period of provisional registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy or to require the candidate to transfer to a programme of study leading to the degree of Master of Philosophy.

8.4 For detailed confirmation procedures, please refer to section 4 of the "Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees" in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.

## 9. Transfer of Candidature

9.1 A candidate whose candidature has been confirmed for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy may be permitted to transfer to candidature for the degree of Master of Philosophy provided that such transfer is made at least 12 months before the expiration of the normal study period.

9.2 A candidate who is initially registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy and has completed at least the first year of his/her studies may be permitted, with the approval of the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee, to transfer to a programme of study for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy provided that the candidate meets the requirements as specified under section 8 of the General Regulations.

9.3 For application procedures, please refer to section 5 of the "Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees" in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.

## 10. Supervisors

10.1 All candidates shall be assigned one Principal Supervisor from the corresponding department of the University and one Co-supervisor from the same or another department of the University. When it is desirable to access specific expertise elsewhere, an additional Co-supervisor may be appointed from another department or from outside the University.

10.2 For appointment and responsibilities of supervisors, please refer to section 6 of the "Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees" in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.

## 11. Examiners

11.1 Candidates shall be examined by a Board of Examiners appointed by the Graduate School.

11.2 The Board of Examiners shall consist of two external examiners and two internal examiners, including the Department Head (or designate) and one academic in a research field closely aligned with the candidate's research. The Faculty Dean (or

designate) shall chair the Board, casting deciding votes only. The Department Head's designate shall be a senior academic of the Department and the Faculty Dean's designate shall be a senior academic of the University. In case the Department Head or the Faculty Dean is the Principal Supervisor of the candidate, a designate must be appointed to serve on the Board.

11.3 The supervisor(s) of the candidate being examined shall be invited to have input in the questioning of the candidate, but shall not be included in the vote taken by the Board of Examiners.

11.4 Appeals against decisions made by the Board of Examiners and/or the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee are provided for, but the highest and final authority rests with the Senate in all cases (see section 18 of the General Regulations).

11.5 For selection criteria and appointment procedures of external examiners, please refer to section 11 of the "Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees" in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.

## 12. Leave of Absence

12.1 Candidates who wish to be absent from their studies in Hong Kong must apply for leave of absence by completing the *Leave Application* form.

12.2 Any leave of absence granted for special purposes connected with studies will be counted towards the period of study.

12.3 Any leave of absence granted for special purposes not connected with studies will not be counted towards the period of study and will result in an extension of the period of study by the length of the period of absence.

12.4 Leave of absence for more than 12 cumulative months will not be granted.

12.5 For application procedures, please refer to section 10 of the "Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees" in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.

## 13. Attendance and Performance

13.1 Regular contact with their supervisors is a requirement for all candidates. In order to monitor this contact and keep track of the study progress, candidates are required to submit a progress report to the Graduate School every 6 months starting from their commencement of studies. Supervisors shall also write an assessment of the candidate's performance and submit the report to the Graduate School.

13.2 If a candidate fails to satisfy the requirements under the above section or fails to make satisfactory progress, the supervisor(s) shall advise the candidate in writing. A copy of the letter will be sent to the Graduate School for record. If the candidate is a studentship recipient, upon the recommendation of the supervisor(s) and the Department Head, the studentship may be terminated.

13.3 If the candidate continues not to satisfy the requirements of attendance and performance, he/she may, after due warning, be dismissed from the University.

13.4 A candidate may notify the Graduate School in writing of any illness or other special circumstances which may have prevented him/her from satisfying the requirements under sections 13.1 and 13.2 of the General Regulations or may have adversely affected his/her performance and which he/she might like to be taken into account before the Graduate School makes a recommendation in terms of section 13.3 of the General Regulations.

## 14. Suspension, Withdrawal and Dismissal

### 14.1 Suspension

14.1.1 Under special circumstances, a student may be permitted to suspend his/her studies for a period of up to one year. This is granted in cases of health problems, financial difficulty, urgent family affairs or job-related problems.

14.1.2 For suspension, students must complete the clearance procedures at the department office, Library, Office of Student Affairs, Finance Office and the Graduate School. Subject to approval of the Graduate School, the effective date of suspension is given 3 working days from the day of submission of the completed application.

14.1.3 Upon expiration of the suspension period, the student must return to his/her studies. If the student fails to report to the Graduate School according to schedule, he/she will be classified as having unofficially withdrawn.

### 14.2 Withdrawal

14.2.1 Students intending to leave the University prior to graduation must apply for official withdrawal. A student who leaves the University without following the proper procedures will be considered as having unofficially withdrawn. No official documents will be issued to such a student, and he/she will not be re-admitted under this status.

14.2.2 For official withdrawal, students must complete the clearance procedures at the department office, Library, Office of Student Affairs, Finance Office and the Graduate School. Students must settle any outstanding tuition fee before an official withdrawal status is given by the Graduate School.

14.2.3 Subject to approval of the Graduate School, the effective date of withdrawal is given 3 working days from the day of submission of the completed application.

14.3 For application procedures, please refer to section 10 of the “Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees” in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.

### 14.4 Dismissal

The University may at any time, by action of the Senate, require any student to terminate his/her studies at the University either on academic or disciplinary grounds, or on other grounds deemed as appropriate. The Senate may also dismiss a student whose conduct or general influence is considered harmful to the institution. Such a student will normally not be considered for re-admission.

## 15. Thesis Requirements

15.1 The thesis shall comply with the following conditions:

- a) The thesis should be written in English except students in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature. Students who pursue research work in areas that are related to the social or cultural environment of China or European countries, or those who can demonstrate a need to use Chinese or a language other than English to write their theses should seek prior approval from the Graduate School via the Faculty, Department and Principal Supervisor upon commencement or within six months from commencement of studies by respectively completing the *Commencement Form* or *Request for Change of Language for Writing Thesis*. Justifications must be provided. If approved, students are required to produce a translation of the abstract in English. Applications submitted after the said period will not be considered.

- b) The thesis shall form an original contribution to knowledge in the given discipline. The originality shall be shown either by the discovery of new facts or theories or by the demonstration of innovative, critical thinking.
- c) The thesis shall not incorporate published work by the candidate unless the work was published subsequent to the registration of the candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
- d) The thesis shall be the candidate's own account of his/her research and shall be accompanied by a declaration to this effect signed by the candidate.
- e) Where a candidate's research work is part of a collaborative project, the thesis must clearly indicate the candidate's individual contribution and the extent of collaboration.
- f) A candidate shall not submit work that has previously been included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to the University or any other institution in support of an application for a degree, a diploma or other qualification.
- g) The thesis shall be suitable for publication either as submitted or in an amended form.

### 15.2 Title of the Thesis

The title of the thesis shall be submitted by the candidate for approval not less than 2 months before the submission of the thesis. Thereafter no modification of the title can be made without approval.

### 15.3 Submission of the Thesis

15.3.1 At the end of the programme of study, a candidate shall submit 3 bound copies and an electronic copy (PDF format in one single file stored in a CD-ROM) of the thesis to the Graduate School in fulfilment of their degree requirements. These copies shall be kept by the University. The thesis shall conform in layout, binding and presentation to the requirements prescribed by the Graduate School.

15.3.2 The thesis shall contain an abstract of 200 to 500 words in English and/or 400 to 1,000 characters in Chinese summarizing the content of the thesis. If the thesis is written in Chinese, both the Chinese and English abstracts should be included.

15.4 For details regarding thesis format and submission procedures, please refer to section 12 of the “Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees” in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.

## 16. Examination

16.1 A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy shall be examined in terms of his/her thesis submitted, by an oral examination, and in some instances, by means of a written examination. The Graduate School will appoint a Board of Examiners to conduct these examinations normally within 3 months from the submission of the thesis to the Graduate School.

16.2 The focus of the examination of candidates is on:

- a) the subject matter of the thesis, in particular the quality of research supporting it;
- b) the field of study encompassed by the thesis;
- c) the originality of the research;
- d) the written and oral presentations of the research results and conclusions; and
- e) the contribution of the research to the field of knowledge.

16.3 For examination arrangements, please refer to section 13 of the “Guidelines and Procedures for Research Postgraduate Degrees” in the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students*.



## 17. Examination Results

17.1 Candidates who have fulfilled the requirements of candidature and coursework, submitted an acceptable thesis, and satisfied the Board of Examiners shall be recommended, through the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee and Research Committee, to the Senate for the conferment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

17.2 In cases where a candidate has failed to fully satisfy the examiners or the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee, the candidate may:

- a) be required to re-submit the thesis with minor modifications or revisions as required by the examiners. After the revisions are approved by the Principal Supervisor, the final thesis shall be submitted to the Graduate School within 3 months; or
- b) be required to re-submit the thesis with substantial revisions as required by the examiners. After the revisions are approved by the Principal Supervisor and the examiners, the final thesis shall be submitted to the Graduate School within 6 months; or
- c) be required to undergo further oral and/or written examination(s) within 6 months; or
- d) be deemed to have failed in the candidacy.

17.3 Under exceptional circumstances, the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee has the discretion to recommend that the candidate be awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy.

17.4 A candidate shall be notified of the results of the examination within 2 weeks from the date of the oral examination.

17.5 A candidate shall be notified of the decision of the Senate.

17.6 A student who is found to have committed an act of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism, submission of material(s) for assessment which is not the student's own work, the use of fabricated or copied data for assessment, may lead to disqualification for the award of the degree or dismissal from the University.

## 18. Appeals against Decisions

18.1 Appeals against decisions concerning course grade assignment, eligibility of coursework unit transfer, or qualification for candidacy may be addressed to the Dean of Graduate School or his designate who may refer the cases to the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee for consideration.

18.2 In cases concerning the fulfilment of requirements for awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, appeals may be carried to the next sitting authority above the one who made the decision under appeal. That is, an appeal against a Board of Examiners' decision should be addressed to the Chairman of the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee; an appeal against a decision of the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee should be addressed to the Chairman of Research Committee; and an appeal against a decision of the Research Committee should be addressed to the Chairman of Senate.

18.3 Under normal circumstances, only one appeal is permitted. Under exceptional circumstances, such as information not being made available to the Research Postgraduate Studies Committee when it ruled on an appeal against a Board of Examiners' decision, a second appeal may be permitted. Within the normal academic processes and structures, appeals cannot be made against Senate rulings.

## 19. The Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

19.1 A candidate who has complied with all the conditions for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy shall be awarded the degree.

19.2 Degrees are conferred at the commencement ceremony of the University.

(Note: Degree Regulations are subject to change and review from time to time. For the latest version of the Regulations, please refer to the web version of the *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students* available at <http://gs.hkbu.edu.hk/en/current/rpg/handbook/>)