

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

**PROCEDURES FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (MPhil)
(For students enrolled between 1 September 1999 and 31 August 2001)**

Preamble

“Faculty” as stated in the procedures below refers to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC) and the Faculty Board. Always bearing in mind the constitutional powers and duties of the two bodies, each faculty can determine whether it wishes to have the Faculty Board delegating responsibility to the FHDC, subject to the approval of the Senate, or maintain the status quo, or undertake other approaches as appropriate.

MPH1. Definition

MPH2. and MPH2A. Admission requirements

1. Enquiries from intending applicants which precede a formal application for admission, and which are concerned with the availability of supervision, facilities/infrastructure to support research studies, coursework requirements, *etc.* should be directed to the relevant department for a reply.
2. Departments are encouraged to ask applicants to discuss, in person or through correspondence, the proposed research plan in very broad terms with the prospective supervisor(s) or any member of the Departmental Research Postgraduate Committee (DRPC), and satisfy the Committee as to their ability and suitability to undertake the scheme of research proposed before submitting a formal application.
3. A candidate for registration shall submit to the Graduate School an application on the appropriate Form, together with the prescribed application fee and documentation (such as degree certificates and diplomas), as required in the Form and according to the Regulation, for proving academic qualifications and indicating classification of honours. The candidate is also required to ask his or her academic referees to complete the Academic Referee’s Report in confidence and to ensure that the reports are forwarded to the Graduate School at the same time he or she submits the application. Individual departments can decide on a case-by-case basis as to whether further requirements are to be set or any other supplementary documents are required.
4. Applicants who are seeking admission on the basis of qualifications from overseas universities or comparable institutions of which the language of teaching and/or examination is not English are required to submit evidence that they have obtained a score or grade in any one of the tests of English proficiency as listed in General Regulation G2(b), unless they are applying for permission to write their thesis in a language other than English.
5. The Graduate School shall establish whether an application is *prima facie* eligible for consideration under Regulation MPH2(b) and General Regulation G2(b) and pass the application to the Chairman of the DRPC for

consideration by the Committee. The application, together with the recommendation of the DRPC and the proposed supervisor(s), if applicable, shall then be submitted to the Faculty for consideration and recommendation to the Board of Graduate Studies (BoGS).

6. The BoGS shall decide if an application shall be admitted or rejected. The decision shall either be:
 - (a) if the applicant is eligible for admission, that he or she be admitted with or without being subject to the requirement of passing a qualifying examination (see MPH3 below); or
 - (b) if the applicant satisfies the requirements for admission in all respects except that relating to English proficiency as stipulated in General Regulation G2(b), that the applicant be admitted through a waiver of the requirement, where there are special circumstances which merit the granting of such a waiver; or
 - (c) if the applicant is not eligible for admission under Regulation MPH2(b),
 - (i) that the applicant be admitted exceptionally under Regulation MPH2A, in the light of the criteria approved by the BoGS; or
 - (ii) that the applicant be conditionally admitted subject to his or her attaining academic qualifications which satisfy Regulation MPH2(b); or
 - (d) that the application be rejected.

The applicant shall be notified in writing of the Board's decision by the relevant Faculty Secretary acting on behalf of the Graduate School.

7. A recommendation on whether or not to admit shall *normally* be made by the Faculty within one month of the receipt of the application by the DRPC.
8. On admission, the Head of Department concerned, the supervisor(s) and the candidate shall confirm the candidate's eligibility for registration as a full-time candidate as defined in Regulation MPH4A.
9. The offer of admission shall contain a stipulation that the candidate must confirm in writing that he or she would comply with the rules and regulations of the University, and in particular, with the provision regarding the prohibition of concurrent registration.
10. The reports from the academic referees shall be destroyed by the Faculty Office once the process of considering an application has been completed. For applications which have to be deferred for later consideration, referees' reports can be retained until a decision has been reached.

MPH3. Qualifying examination

Where a qualifying examination is required, the Faculty shall appoint at least two examiners on the recommendation of the DRPC. The Faculty shall also determine whether the examination shall be set to test a candidate's academic ability, or ability

to pursue the research project proposed, or both. The result of the examination shall be decided by the examiners. If they are not in agreement then the result shall be decided by the FHDC.

MPH4. Registration

1. A candidate shall be permitted to register only on the first day of September or January of each year and shall be subject to a probationary period of twelve months in the case of a full-time candidate and eighteen months in the case of a part-time candidate.
2. One month before the expiry of the probationary period, the supervisor(s) and the candidate shall be required to submit respectively to the Faculty via the DRPC a "Supervisor's Report" and a "Candidate's Progress Report" (to which a detailed scheme of research must be attached) which seek to establish the candidate's capability in research.
3. A candidate shall also be required to have satisfactorily completed all the Graduate School courses and at least 50% of the remaining prescribed coursework by the end of the probationary period. Failure to do so may lead to the termination of candidature.
4. The DRPC shall consider the reports together with the coursework results of the candidate, and shall submit the report and **a recommendation on the confirmation or termination of the candidature, or an extension/shortening of the probationary period to the Faculty for a decision.**
5. *Only under very justified circumstances should the Faculty approve an application for shortening of the probationary period.*

The highlighted part has taken effect from September 1, 2004. The approving authority before the above date was the Board of Graduate Studies.

The highlighted italic part of this procedure has been added with effect from January 1, 2006. Prior to that, extension of probationary period was approved by BoGS.

MPH4A. The Head of Department, the supervisor(s) and the candidate shall confirm the candidate's eligibility for registration as a full-time candidate as defined in Regulation MPH4A; and shall notify the Faculty Secretary concerned of any change in the candidate's status as a full-time or part-time candidate.

MPH5. Transfer of Candidature

1. A candidate whose candidature has been confirmed and who has satisfactorily completed all coursework requirements may, if he or she so wishes, apply for transfer from the MPhil degree to the PhD degree. The candidate shall submit an application to the DRPC via the supervisor(s). The application shall then, together with the recommendation from the DRPC, be submitted to the Faculty Secretary for consideration by the Faculty, and put to the BoGS for a decision. Such transfer, if approved, shall be effected at least three months prior to the expiry of the MPhil candidature **unless special approval has been given by the Faculty**, and the candidate's period of study for the degree shall be counted from the initial date of registration.
2. A candidate who wishes to apply for transfer from full-time to part-time candidature (or vice versa) shall submit an application to the DRPC via the supervisor(s). The application shall then, together with the recommendation from the DRPC, be submitted to the Faculty Secretary for consideration by the Faculty and a recommendation made to the BoGS. If the application is approved, the candidate's new remaining period of study shall be calculated

The highlighted part of this procedure has been added with effect from January 1, 2006. Prior to that, late transfer of candidature was approved by BoGS.

The highlighted part of this procedure has been brought into effect from January 1, 2007. Prior to that, any fraction of a month in the new remaining period of study was rounded up to a whole month.

by applying the ratio of 2:3 as the conversion value to the original remaining period of study, **to the nearest whole day.**

MPH6. Period of Study

1. After confirmation of candidature, a candidate who, in view of extenuating circumstances, wishes to request that the period of study be extended beyond the specified period of twenty-four months (for full-time candidates) or thirty-six months (for part-time candidates) shall submit an application for extension to the DRPC for consideration. The application must be made no later than three months before the period of study is due to expire, and must be supported with reasons. The Faculty shall then forward the recommendation of the DRPC, in the light of comments from the supervisor(s), to the BoGS. A candidate who after confirmation of candidature wishes to shorten the period of study by submitting his or her thesis before expiry of the period of study may do so at any time, as long as he or she has completed all the degree requirements.
2. The fees for higher degree studies as set out in the General Regulations shall be charged, and fees shall be charged according to the Regulations even if a candidate is pursuing his or her study overseas. Once a thesis is submitted for examination a candidate need not pay additional Continuation Fees, unless he or she is required to revise and resubmit the thesis for a new examination within a specified period.

MPH7. Coursework Requirements

1. Each course shall normally comprise 24 contact hours.
2. A candidate shall be required to take at least five but not more than ten courses, as specified in the coursework syllabuses. The number of courses specified will include two compulsory courses offered or approved by the Graduate School. **The Faculty shall approve the coursework curricula and syllabuses of Faculty/departmental courses and any subsequent amendments thereto and the BoGS shall be kept informed of the details of any approval granted.**
3. Candidates pursuing the same degree in the same department shall be required to take the same number of courses.
4. A candidate shall not be allowed to select courses previously undertaken and examined in. A candidate with a qualification from this University or another university or comparable institution of equivalent standard to this University may, on production of certification of having successfully completed any of the required courses, be exempted from taking the course(s). Any such application shall be considered by the BoGS, on the recommendation of the supervisor(s), the DRPC and the Faculty. Candidates should however be encouraged to take other courses in lieu, which would equally be of help to his or her research work. **Applications for the substitution of a prescribed Faculty/departmental course by a course outside the curriculum shall be approved by the Faculty.**
5. The coursework selection of each candidate shall be determined by the DRPC,

The highlighted part of this procedure has been brought into effect from January 1, 2006.

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taking into account the views of the candidate and the supervisor(s).

6. Candidates shall take courses immediately upon registration and should aim at completing all the courses within the first twelve months of the period of study. As stipulated in MPH4(3), candidates shall be required to complete the specified proportion of coursework before the end of the probationary period. All coursework requirements must be completed before thesis submission.
7. Candidates may be allowed to change course selection within the first two weeks after the commencement of the course, subject to the approval of the DRPC.

MPH8. Leave of absence

1. Applications for leave of absence from Hong Kong and/or from the approved course of study and research, or for vacation purposes, shall be made in writing as early as possible in advance of the proposed leave period. The application shall be addressed to the DRPC via the supervisor(s). Permission for absence of up to one month may be granted by the DRPC on the recommendation of the candidate's supervisor(s). An application for absence for a period exceeding one month shall be considered by the FHDC, on the recommendation of the DRPC. The appropriate committee(s) shall also determine whether or not the leave of absence is for study purposes. In granting permission for leave of absence for study purposes, the relevant committee(s) shall satisfy itself that appropriate arrangements have been made for the continued and adequate supervision of the candidate. If the candidate is to be attached to an academic institution elsewhere while on leave of absence, the committee granting leave may require evidence that guidance will be available from a suitable person at that institution. If the leave of absence for study purposes is approved, or if the period of vacation leave is that to which a full-time candidate is entitled, the candidate shall not be required to extend the period of study by the period of absence. If a candidate wishes to be away for more than twelve months, the candidate shall be required to withdraw his or her candidature but will be allowed to apply for admission subsequently. The period of study shall then begin afresh.
2. A candidate given leave of absence for study purposes or vacation leave within the entitlement period shall be required to pay the normal fees. A candidate given leave of absence for purposes other than study shall not be required to pay any fees during the period of absence but shall not be allowed to follow the course of study and research and present himself or herself for examination.
3. A candidate who has been absent for any period shall be responsible for making up for any course of study and research which has been missed as a result of his or her absence.

MPH9. Supervision and progress

1. A supervisor or supervisors shall be appointed for a candidate by the BoGS on the advice of the Faculty which shall in turn have regard to the recommendation of the DRPC, and with the agreement of the candidate. New supervisor(s) may be appointed on the recommendation of the Faculty if

the BoGS deems it necessary.

2. Supervisors shall be Teachers of the University as defined in the University Ordinance and Statutes, or Honorary or Visiting Teachers.
3. Each supervisor and each candidate shall be issued with the "Notes for Supervisors of Candidates for the Degrees of MPhil and PhD" and with any further instructions issued by the Graduate School.
4. The supervisor(s) and the candidate shall be required to submit to the FHDC a "Supervisor's Report" and a "Candidate's Progress Report" respectively
 - (a) one month before the end of the probationary period of the candidature; and
 - (b) at six-monthly intervals, other than at the end of the probationary period.
5. The DRPC shall on each reporting occasion be required to provide comments on the supervision and/or progress on the reports and shall show their comments to the supervisor(s) and the candidate before transmitting the reports in paragraphs 4(a) and (b) above to the FHDC **for recommendation to the Faculty Board.**
6. The BoGS may require from time to time statistical or other reports from FHDCs on candidates' progress.
7. If the Faculty approves that the candidature be not confirmed, the candidature shall be allowed to lapse. An appeal with full justification given may be submitted by a candidate to the BoGS against a decision by the Faculty to terminate his/her probationary candidature. In respect of a candidate whose candidature has been confirmed, but who subsequently is recommended by the supervisor(s) and the DRPC to discontinue studies because of unsatisfactory progress, such a recommendation shall be considered by the FHDC and the Faculty Review Committee for recommendation to the Faculty Board and the Committee on Discontinuation.
8. During the course of study, candidates may be required to give one or more seminars on the subject of their course of study and research, and may be required by the Faculty to perform satisfactorily in the conduct of such seminars before their candidature can be confirmed or transferred to that of PhD. Such a requirement may even constitute a condition for the award of the degree.

The highlighted parts in MPH9(5) and MPH9(7) have taken effect from September 1, 2004. The approving authority before the above date was the Board of Graduate Studies.

MPH10. Title of thesis

1. A candidate shall submit for approval the thesis title at any time following the confirmation of the candidature but at least three months before submission of the thesis for examination. **Applications for a waiver of the 3-month notification period shall be approved by the Faculty.**
2. The Faculty shall take account of the recommendation of the DRPC and the supervisor(s) in deciding if the title and any subsequent modification should be approved.

The highlighted part of this procedure has been brought into effect from January 1, 2006.

MPH11. Submission of thesis

1. Before a candidate submits his/her thesis for examination, he or she should pass a copy of the thesis to his or her supervisor(s) who should complete and sign a standard proforma if he or she finds the thesis ready for submission. A supervisor may, under special circumstances, dissociate himself or herself from the thesis by using the same proforma.
2. A candidate shall deliver to the Faculty Secretary four copies of the thesis, in accordance with the "Regulations governing the format, binding and presentation of theses". The Faculty Secretary shall acknowledge to the candidate the receipt of the four copies of the thesis, and send a copy of the receipt to the Director of Finance and Enterprises. The receipt shall include a reminder of the requirement for an oral and any other examination.

MPH12. Examinations

1. Coursework Examination

A candidate is assessed by examiners appointed by the Faculty/ Graduate School on each of the courses which he or she has registered to take. The assessment may take one or a combination of methods.

2. Thesis Examination

Appointment of Examiners

- (a) Two examiners, comprising one internal examiner and one external examiner, shall be appointed by the Faculty at the same time as the title of the thesis is approved, on the recommendation of the DRPC. The DRPC shall provide a brief c.v. of the proposed external examiner.
- (b) Examiners shall normally be those who have completed a graduate degree at doctoral level in the discipline or in cognate area or have equivalent experience and should as far as possible have not been involved in supervision of the thesis. The internal examiners shall be Teachers of the University as defined in the Ordinance and the Statutes. If there is more than one supervisor, a primary supervisor of the thesis cannot be an examiner, but is an ex-officio non-voting member of the Thesis Examining Committee (TEC).
- (c) In the case of a candidate who is a Teacher or a full-time appointee of the University who provides instruction, two examiners, external to the University, shall be appointed.

Examiners' Evaluation of MPhil Theses and Reports

- (d) **The Faculty Secretary shall schedule a notional date for the oral examination, at the same time when the thesis is sent out to the examiners, on the understanding that the notional date would be confirmed or that an actual date for the examination would be determined nearer the time should an oral examination be required.** The examiners shall read the thesis and shall submit

The highlighted parts of this procedures have been brought into effect from January 1, 2005.

separate written reports direct to the Faculty Secretary. The examiners are requested to report within six weeks from the date of the receipt of the thesis. **At the same time, the examiners are asked to note the notional date for conducting the oral examination if one is to be conducted according to MPH12(2)(j) below.** If the report is not received by the due date, a reminder shall be sent out by the Faculty Secretary. If any report is still outstanding by the end of three months, the Faculty should take appropriate action e.g. the appointment of a new examiner. All examiners' reports should be kept "confidential" until the examination process has been completed. Each report shall include an opinion as to whether or not the examiner considers:

- (i) that the thesis is of sufficient standard¹ for the degree of MPhil and the requirement for an oral examination is waived;
- (ii) that the candidate is required to pass an oral examination before the thesis is deemed to be of sufficient standard¹ for the degree of MPhil, or;
- (iii) that the thesis is not acceptable for the degree of MPhil in its present form² but should be modified and re-submitted for a new examination. [Please refer to Procedure (h) below.];
- (iv) that the candidate should be failed with no opportunity to re-submit the thesis. In such a case, the candidate may make a representation through the Faculty Review Committee and the Committee on Discontinuation.

¹Any suggested minor corrections or revisions (e.g. corrections of typographical errors and errors in nomenclature, improvement in phrasing, or rewriting of small sections of the thesis) should be outlined in the examiner's report. It is understood that it will be the responsibility of the supervisor to discuss the suggested changes with the candidate, to determine which should be incorporated in the thesis before its final submission. Minor corrections and amendments must be made within a period of one month.

²This recommendation reflects the examiner's opinion that further research, re-analysis of data, or substantial rewriting of at least part of the material is required.

Appointment of Thesis Examining Committee

- (e) A TEC shall be established. The Committee shall consist of a Chairman and three members. The Faculty will appoint the members of the Committee who shall consider the opinions of the examiners and determine which examination result of the four options in (d) is to be recommended. The internal examiner and the external examiner are voting members while the candidate's supervisor is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Committee. The Chairman, who is a non-voting member, shall be appointed by the Faculty **from a pool of academics to be nominated by the Dean of the Faculty and approved by the BoEGS** to ensure that the examination is conducted in a fair manner. The Chairman shall as far as possible not be from the same department or subject area (in the case of a unitary faculty) as the candidate, but appointed from a cognate

The highlighted part of this procedure shall take effect for TECs set up in or after September 2005.

discipline so as to have a sufficient understanding of the subject of the thesis. The Chairman should make a recommendation to this Examining Committee on whether a third independent examiner should be appointed if the TEC cannot reach a consensus on the examination result after the oral examination. A person appointed as an examiner who is not a Teacher of the University shall receive an honorarium. Only one such honorarium shall be payable to each examiner for the examination, including re-examination, of each candidate.

Thesis Examination Result

- (f) The TEC should inform the Faculty Secretary of their recommendation of option (i) to (iv) in (d) above. If the Committee recommends option (i) or (iv), the Faculty Secretary should inform the appropriate authority of the Faculty to make a recommendation to the BoEGS. [Procedure (p) below refers.] In the case of (ii) or (iii), the Faculty Secretary will either set up an oral examination for the student (see Procedures (j) to (n) below) or inform the student to revise and re-submit his/her thesis for a new examination, as appropriate.
- (g) Where corrections and amendments to the thesis are required, the Faculty Secretary shall inform the student of such as soon as possible in order that the corrections and amendments can be addressed without delay.
- (h) Where the TEC decides that a candidate is required to revise and re-submit the thesis for a new examination, the Faculty Secretary shall inform the candidate of such a decision. At the same time the candidate shall be informed that attendance may be required at an oral or any other examination. The candidate shall be required to produce a summary of the amendments made to the revised thesis, on re-submission. The thesis will, after submission, be examined by the original examiners who may recommend only:
 - (i) that the candidate is required to pass an oral examination of the thesis before the thesis is deemed to be of sufficient standard for the degree of MPhil; or
 - (ii) that the candidate should be failed.

Participation of Examiners in Oral Examination

This provision has been brought into effect with external examiner appointments made on or after January 1, 2005.

- (i) In all cases where not all the examiners agree that the thesis is of sufficient standard for conferment of the degree, it is mandatory for the external examiner to participate in the oral examination. If the external examiner is not available in Hong Kong at a time convenient for the meeting of the TEC, a meeting by means of teleconferencing or video-conferencing shall be held. Only if such means prove not to be possible should Faculties consider appointing an additional examiner to represent the external examiner at the oral examination. Prior approval of the BoEGS shall be required for the appointment of an additional examiner who shall meet the requirements stipulated in MPH12(2)(b) above. In cases where there is consensus amongst the examiners on the result of the thesis, Faculties are still encouraged to arrange for the participation of the external examiner in the oral examination through any of the means stipulated above.

Oral Examination

- (j) When an oral examination of the thesis is required, the Faculty Secretary shall organize it normally within one month from the day the TEC makes that decision. The oral examination shall normally be held in Hong Kong by the TEC.
 - (k) The Faculty Secretary shall give the candidate at least one week's notice of the date of the oral examination.
 - (l) In special cases where an oral examination cannot be held in Hong Kong special approval shall be sought from the BoEGS.
 - (m) An oral examination is normally considered a closed examination, and questions will only be raised by members of the TEC. However, the Chairman may extend invitations to those who have been closely associated with the preparation of the thesis.
 - (n) Following the examination, the TEC will meet *in camera* to render a final assessment of the thesis and of the candidate's ability to defend his/her work. The Committee may recommend that the candidate has:
 - (i) Passed the oral examination and the thesis is considered acceptable.³
 - (ii) Failed the oral examination and required to undertake a second oral examination.³
 - (iii) Not passed and required to re-submit thesis⁴ and undertake a second oral examination.
 - (iv) Failed and should not be permitted any re-examination.
- ³*This recommendation may have attached to it the requirement that the candidate complete corrections or revisions to the satisfaction of a specified person.*
- ⁴*The members of the TEC should attach to this recommendation a list of any requirements which they feel are appropriate.*
- (o) No candidate shall be permitted more than two submissions of thesis or more than two oral examinations.

Candidate's Final Examination Result

- (p) The recommendation of the TEC shall be forwarded to the Faculty. The decision of the Faculty on the result of the MPhil programme should be passed to the Board of Examination for Graduate Studies (BoEGS) for a decision on behalf of the Senate. All the relevant documents on the case should be attached.

Time Limit for Revision

- (q) The final version of MPhil theses not requiring re-examination shall be submitted to the Faculty Secretary within 1 month, unless specified otherwise, of the date on which the student is informed of the

examination result. If a corrected thesis is not submitted within 2 months of this deadline, the program will be terminated.

- (r) MPhil theses requiring re-examination shall be resubmitted to the Faculty Secretary within 12 months, unless specified otherwise, of the date on which the student is informed of the examination result. Students requiring re-submission and re-examination of theses must maintain their registration during this period. Failure to resubmit the revised thesis within 12 months will result in termination of the student's programme.
- (s) Any departure from the above, i.e. a special case, requires the approval of the BoEGS.

MPH13. Coursework Examination Results

1. Coursework shall be assessed on a pass/fail basis.
2. **The DRPC shall make recommendations on the examination results of the candidates in the departmental/faculty courses taken in accordance with Regulation MPH13, to the FHDC for a decision. The Graduate School shall make recommendations on the candidates' examination results in Graduate School courses to the BoEGS for a decision.**
3. In the event that a candidate has failed in any course (which, for this purpose, covers both the re-examination of the same course and the "alternative" course) in a second attempt, he or she may be recommended for discontinuation, or termination of candidature if still within the probationary period of study. The normal procedures for discontinuation and termination (as laid down in MPH9(7) above) shall be followed.
4. Candidates who are unable because of illness to be present for any written examination may apply for permission to present themselves for a supplementary examination. Any such application shall be made on the form prescribed within two weeks of the first day of absence from any examination. The supplementary examination shall be held at a time to be determined by the FHDC (**for departmental/faculty courses**) or the BoEGS (**for Graduate School courses**) as appropriate. Candidates who fail to satisfy the examiners in one or more papers in such a supplementary examination shall be considered as failure at the first attempt.

This provision has been brought into effect from January 1, 2006. Prior to that all results had to be endorsed by the FHDC and approved by the BoEGS.

The highlighted part of this procedure has been brought into effect from January 1, 2006.

November 2005
January 2007