

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

**PROCEDURES FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)
(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.

PHD1. Definition

PHD2. 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 PHD2(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 PHD3 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 PHD2(b), that the applicant be conditionally admitted subject to his or her attaining academic qualifications which satisfy the Regulation; 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 PHD4A.
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.

PHD3. 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.

PHD4. Registration

1. Initial registration

The authority for confirming or otherwise a candidate's studies at the expiry of his/her probationary period was re-delegated from the BoGS to the Faculties with effect from September 1, 2004.

- (a) A candidate shall be permitted to register on the first day of any month of the 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.
- (b) 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.
- (c) The DRPC shall consider the reports, and shall submit the reports 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.
- (d) **Only under very justified circumstances should the Faculty approve an application for shortening of the probationary period.**

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

2. Transfer

- (a) A candidate may, if he or she so wishes, apply for transfer from the PhD degree to the MPhil degree within the first six months of full-time candidature, or nine months in the case of part-time candidature. 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. If the application is approved, the candidate's period of study for the degree shall be counted from the initial date of registration. The candidate will be required to complete all the formal coursework requirements before thesis submission, as in the case of other MPhil candidates.
- (b) 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 by applying the ratio of 2:3 as the conversion value to the original remaining period of study, **to the nearest whole day**. Should such a method of calculation result in a longer period of study than the normal period of study for the relevant mode, the latter period should be adopted.

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.

PHD4A. 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 PHD4A; and shall notify the Faculty Secretary concerned of any change in the candidate's status as a full-time or part-time candidate.

PHD5. 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 maximum period 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 specified minimum 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.

PHD6. 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.

PHD7. 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. A candidate may be required by the DRPC to attend courses offered within the University at any time during the period of study; and may also be required to repeat the courses and/or be re-examined or be recommended for discontinuation on failure to satisfy such requirements. If a candidate is required to attend courses and satisfy the requirements thereof, notification

The highlighted parts in PHD7(5) and PHD7(7) have taken effect from September 1, 2004.

shall be given in writing of this and of the possible consequence of failure to satisfy the course requirements. Recommendations from the DRPC in respect of a candidate who fails to satisfy the requirements of courses at which attendance is required shall be considered by the FHDC and, in the event that a candidate is recommended for discontinuation, the normal procedures for discontinuation (as laid down in paragraph 7 above) shall be followed.

9. 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. Such a requirement may even constitute a condition for the award of the degree.

PHD8.

Title of thesis

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

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.

PHD9.

Submission of thesis

1. 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. The receipt shall include a reminder of the requirement for an oral and any other examination.
2. Immediately after the submission of the thesis, the Faculty Secretary shall remind the supervisor(s) that if necessary, a statement can be submitted indicating that the thesis has been submitted without their knowledge and/or consent. Supervisors who have submitted such a statement may still be appointed as specialist examiners. The fact that a statement has been submitted should be made known to both the Chairman of the Board of Examiners and the candidate but kept confidential from the other examiners until a recommendation on the examination result has been made.

PHD10.

Examinations

1. A Board of Examiners shall be appointed by the Faculty at the same time as the title of the thesis is approved. For each candidate the Faculty shall appoint three specialist examiners, comprising two internal examiners who shall be Teachers of the University as defined in the Ordinance and the Statutes (only one of whom may be the supervisor; it is not however obligatory that the supervisor should be an examiner) and one external examiner; but a candidate who is a Teacher or an appointee in the grade of Teaching Consultant or Language Instructor of the University shall have one internal examiner (who

This procedure has been brought into effect from September 2004. PHD10(11) will prevail over this procedure under the specified circumstances.

may be the supervisor) and two external examiners. In special cases where it is not possible to find two internal examiners it may be necessary for only two specialist examiners to be appointed, one internal and one external, provided that the internal examiner so appointed is not the supervisor of the candidate. In the event that it is possible to appoint only one internal examiner and the internal examiner so appointed is the supervisor of the candidate, two external examiners shall be appointed. In each of these special cases, approval of the Board of Examination for Graduate Studies (BoEGS) is required. The specialist examiners shall be appointed by the Faculty on the recommendation of the DRPC. The DRPC shall provide a brief note on each proposed external examiner. The specialist examiners shall on appointment also be asked whether they will be able to forward their examiner's reports by the due date (see PHD10(7) below), and if any of them indicates otherwise, alternative arrangements for the appointment of another specialist examiner must be made as quickly as possible.

2. If the external examiner is not available in Hong Kong at a time convenient for the conduct of an oral examination, an additional examiner who shall be a Teacher of the University shall be specially appointed by the Faculty on the advice of the DRPC to represent the external examiner for the purpose of the oral examination. If there is more than one supervisor and one of the supervisors has already been appointed as the internal examiner, the other supervisor should not be appointed as the additional examiner. The additional examiner shall participate fully at the oral examination, raising questions posed by the external examiner as well as his or her own, and shall be an *ex officio* member of the Board of Examiners.
3. The oral examination is compulsory. The specialist examiners shall themselves decide whether any other additional examination is necessary *e.g.*, written, practical *etc.* and, if so, set the examination accordingly.
4. The specialist examiners (including any additional examiner(s) appointed), and the supervisor(s), if not a specialist examiner, together with the FHDC shall constitute the Board of Examiners.
5. Each specialist and additional examiner shall be issued with a copy of the regulations, these procedures, and any other relevant notes and instructions.
6. **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.** The specialist examiners shall read the thesis and shall submit separate written reports direct to the Faculty Secretary. Each report shall include on a proforma an opinion as to whether or not the specialist examiner considers the thesis to be of sufficient standard to merit an award of the degree, a recommendation as to whether there shall be a written or other examination (or both) in addition to the oral examination, and any recommendation concerning the contents of such examination(s).
7. The specialist examiners shall be given a maximum period of two months from the date of the receipt of the thesis in which to submit their reports on

The highlighted parts in PHD10(6) and PHD10(7) have been brought into effect from January 1, 2005.

each thesis. **At the same time, the examiners are asked to note the notional date for conducting the oral examination.** In the interim or by the due date, a reminder shall be sent out by the Faculty Secretary if the report has still not been received. If any report is still outstanding by the end of the three months, the case shall be referred to the FHDC for action.

8. The oral examination, and any other examination shall normally be held one month after the receipt of all the examiners' reports. The Faculty Secretary shall organize the examination(s) as required by the specialist examiners where the recommendations of all the specialist examiners are uniform in this respect, and shall arrange for copies of the reports to be seen by all the specialist examiners and the Chairman of the oral examination, and by the examiners appointed for any other examination prescribed. Where contrary recommendations on the type of other examination have been received, the Board of Examiners shall decide whether any further examination (as well as its method and its examiners) is necessary.
9. A written examination, if required, shall comprise one, or more, papers. The papers shall be set and marked by at least one of the internal examiner(s), who may be the supervisor, but moderated by the external examiner. Any other type of examination shall also be prescribed and assessed by at least one of the internal examiner(s), who may be the supervisor, but moderated by the external examiner or the additional examiner in his or her absence. A written and/or other examination may be held either before or after the oral examination.
10. The oral examination shall normally be held in Hong Kong in the presence of the external examiner (or the additional examiner in his or her place) and at least one internal examiner provided that the internal examiner is not a supervisor of the candidate. In the event that only one internal examiner is available in Hong Kong at the time of the oral examination, and that internal examiner is the candidate's supervisor, an additional examiner shall be appointed to represent the other internal examiner for the purpose of the oral examination. Such an additional examiner shall be appointed in the manner prescribed in PHD10(2) above, and shall be a member of the Board of Examiners. (In the case of a candidate who is a Teacher or an appointee in the grade of Teaching Consultant or Language Instructor of the University and for whom two external examiners are therefore appointed but all of whom are not available in Hong Kong at the time of the oral examination, two additional examiners shall be appointed for the purpose of the oral examination, each to represent one external examiner, if the internal examiner is the supervisor of the candidate.)
11. 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 in the oral examination to determine the examination result, a meeting by means of teleconferencing or video-conferencing shall be held to obtain the external examiner's direct input to the oral examination. 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

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

appointment of an additional examiner who shall meet the requirements stipulated in PHD10(2) 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.

12. The candidate shall be given at least one week's notice of the date of any examination by the Faculty Secretary.
13. In exceptional circumstances an oral examination may be held overseas with the approval of the FHDC. Such an examination must be conducted by the external examiner and at least one internal examiner, who may be the supervisor, or another Teacher of the University appointed as an additional examiner.
14. There shall be a Chairman to oversee the conduct of the oral examination. The Chairman 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 oral examination is conducted in a fair manner. He/She shall be a Teacher of the University who is neither the supervisor nor an examiner of the thesis. The Chairman need not necessarily be a member of the Department concerned. The Chairman of the oral examination shall be a member of the Board of Examiners. For an oral examination held overseas, the Chairman shall be an academic of a tertiary institution familiar with the examination of a thesis.
15. Even if the specialist examiners are of the opinion that a candidate's thesis is *not* of sufficient standard to merit the award of the degree a candidate shall be given an oral examination, and any other examination prescribed by the specialist examiners and/or the Board of Examiners, and the Board of Examiners shall receive reports thereon before it makes a recommendation on the results. If a second oral and/or any other examination(s) is/are required the same procedures shall apply.
16. In cases where there are two external examiners and their recommendations on the thesis differ one from another the Board of Examiners shall appoint a third external examiner who shall be informed of the difficulties encountered but not given the actual reports received from the internal and the other two external examiners.

PHD11. Examination results

1. The Board of Examiners shall consider the written reports on the thesis, the reports on the oral, and any other examination required, if applicable, and any declarations made by the supervisor(s) and/or the candidate, and shall then make a recommendation to the BoEGS, which shall then determine the candidate's result in accordance with Regulation PHD11.
2. The Board of Examiners *must* meet to consider
 - (a) cases in which the candidate has not satisfied the specialist examiners (whether or not there is a recommendation from an examiner or examiners that the thesis be required to be revised and re-submitted

or be rejected without the option of re-submission, and/or the candidate be required to present for a new oral examination, and/or a new written or other examination) and

- (b) cases where the substantive recommendations of the specialist examiners are not in agreement.
3. The Board of Examiners may consider its business in circulation (in accordance with document 285/495 re-amended in the Annex if applicable) if *all* of the following conditions are met:

- (a) The specialist examiners of the thesis *are ALL agreed*

[PASS]

either (i) that the thesis is satisfactory without revision, correction or amendment of any kind;

or (ii) that the thesis is satisfactory provided that grammatical/typographical amendments/minor corrections are made within one month and to the satisfaction of a person nominated by the Board of Examiners;

[CONDITIONAL PASS]

or (iii) that the thesis is of sufficient standard for the degree without a new examination, provided that corrections and amendments are made within a period (not exceeding three months) and to the satisfaction of a person, determined and nominated by the Board of Examiners respectively;

- (b) The examiners present at the oral examination
 - (i) have examined the candidate on all the matters suggested by the specialist examiners of the thesis for inclusion in the oral examination; and
 - (ii) have completed the proforma to indicate that they have been satisfied by the candidate's performance at the oral examination on the understanding that the provisions in paragraph (a) are met;
- (c) The examiners at any written or other examination have indicated that they are satisfied with the candidate's performance in that examination on the understanding that the provisions in paragraph (a) are met;
- (d) Any apparent defect in the documentation of the examination has been explained in writing and the explanation is accepted by the Board of Examiners in circulation on the understanding that the provisions in paragraph (a) are met.

4. The recommendation of the Board of Examiners shall be forwarded to the BoEGS (together with all required documents) which shall determine the result on behalf of the Senate. The Secretary to the latter Board shall inform the Faculty Secretary of the Board's decision and the Faculty Secretary shall then inform the candidate, the supervisor(s), the Chairman of the DRPC, the members of the FHDC and the specialist examiners of the decision. Where the external examiner cannot be present at the Board of Examiners' meeting, a copy of the minutes, or a copy of the circular of the Board of Examiners, as the case may be, shall be sent to him or her for information.
5. 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.
6. When a candidate is required to revise and re-submit the thesis for a new examination, the Faculty Secretary shall inform the candidate of this result as determined by the BoEGS. The candidate shall be informed at the same time that attendance may be required at a new 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 revised thesis shall be examined by all the specialist examiners.
7. The Board of Examiners need not meet but shall be invited to consider the written reports on the revised thesis in cases where *all* examiners are agreed that a revised thesis is satisfactory without further revision, correction or amendment, or satisfactory subject only to the amendments made to the satisfaction of a person nominated by the Board of Examiners and that a new oral and/or other examination is not necessary, *and* where the candidate has satisfied the examiners in any previous oral and any other examination. The Board shall also be invited to indicate if it agrees that the candidate be not required to attend a new oral examination or any other examination.
8. The Board of Examiners shall meet to consider the written reports on the revised thesis and the reports on the related oral examination (and any other examination if applicable) in cases where one or more specialist examiners report that a revised thesis is not satisfactory or that a new oral and/or other examination is recommended, or where the candidate has not satisfied the examiners in the oral or any other examination on the occasion of a previous submission. The Faculty Secretary shall organize a new oral examination to be held preferably within one month after receipt of all the examiners' reports and any other examination required by the specialist examiners (where the recommendations of all the specialist examiners are uniform in this respect). Where the recommendation of examiners on the type of examination to be held differs, the Board of Examiners shall decide whether any further examination is necessary and its method and examiners.

PHD12. Publication based on thesis

November 2005
January 2007