

**PROCEDURES FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (MPhil)  
AND DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)  
(For students enrolled before 1999)**

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**RD1. Definition**

No administrative procedures required.

**RD1A.** Heads of Department and supervisors and students shall confirm the student's eligibility for registration either as a full-time candidate as defined in Regulation RD1A or as a part-time candidate; and notify the Faculty concerned of any change in the candidate's eligibility for registration.

**RD2 and RD2A. Admission requirements**

1. A candidate for registration shall submit 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. Individual department can decide on a case-by-case basis as to whether further requirements are to be set or any other supplementary documents (such as a transcript of studies showing courses taken and their results) are required.

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.

2. The Registry shall establish whether an applicant is *prima facie* eligible for consideration under regulations RD2(a) and (b).
3. If an applicant applying for admission to read for the degree of PhD is not eligible for consideration the application shall be rejected by the Registry.

If an applicant applying for admission to read for the degree of MPhil is not eligible for consideration under regulation RD2, the application shall be referred through the Faculty Secretary to the Head of the appropriate Department for possible consideration under regulation RD2A in the light of the criteria approved by the Faculty Board. If the application is supported by the Head, it shall be submitted to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC) for consideration and recommendation; otherwise, the application shall be rejected by the Faculty Secretary.

If the applicant satisfies all the requirements for admission except the requirement of English proficiency as stipulated in General Regulation G2(b), the application shall be referred through the Faculty Secretary to the Head of the appropriate Department, for consideration of a possible recommendation in the light of any special circumstances to the Board of Graduate Studies (BoGS) for a waiver of the requirement. The application shall be returned to, and rejected by, the Registrar if the Head of the Department does not recommend such a waiver.

4. If the applicant is eligible *prima facie* for admission, the Application Form shall be sent to the Faculty Secretary who shall forward it to the Department concerned for completion of Section B and C by the Head and the proposed supervisor(s). The Application Form shall then be submitted to the FHDC for consideration and recommendation to the Faculty Board. In forwarding its recommendation to the Faculty Board the FHDC shall also recommend whether a qualifying examination is required.
5. The Faculty Board shall then decide if the application shall be:
  - (a) accepted, *or*
  - (b) accepted subject to the passing of a qualifying examination; *or*
  - (c) rejected.

The applicant shall be notified in writing of the Board's decision.

6. A decision on an application shall *normally* be made within three months of the receipt of a formal application. In certain Departments applicants may be asked to discuss the proposed research with the Head of Department or prospective supervisors concerned first and satisfy the Department of their ability and/or suitability to undertake the scheme of research proposed before submitting a formal application.
7. On admission, Heads of Department and supervisors and students shall confirm the student's eligibility for registration as a full-time candidate as defined in Regulation RD1A.

### **RD3. Qualifying examination**

Where a qualifying examination is required, the Faculty Board shall appoint at least two examiners on the recommendation of the FHDC. The Board 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.

### **RD4. Registration**

1. Initial registration

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. Nine months after registration as a full-time candidate or fifteen months after registration as a part-time candidate, the candidate shall be required to submit to the FHDC a Candidate's Progress Report and a detailed scheme of research. At the same time, the supervisor(s) concerned shall also be required to submit to the FHDC Supervisor's Report(s). These documents will be used for review of the candidature, which shall be confirmed or terminated or, in the case of the degree of PhD, changed to that for the degree of MPhil by the Faculty Board. **The Faculty Board may also approve an extension of the probationary period in order to have a longer period of observation, but shortening of the probationary period will only be approved by the Faculty Board under very justified circumstances.**

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

## 2. Transfer

- (a) A candidate who wishes to apply for transfer from the MPhil degree to the PhD degree (or vice versa) shall submit an application to the Faculty Secretary via the Head of Department with the recommendation of supervisor(s) and the Department Head concerned. The application shall then be considered by the FHDC and put to the Faculty Board. If the application is approved, a candidate's period of study for the degree shall be counted from the initial date of registration.
- (b) An MPhil or a PhD candidate who wishes to apply for transfer from full-time to part-time candidature (or vice versa) shall submit an application to the Faculty Secretary via the Head of Department and with the recommendation of the supervisor(s) and the Head of Department concerned. The application shall then be considered by the FHDC and a recommendation made to the Faculty Board. If the application is approved, a candidate's new period of study shall be counted from the date of initial registration by using 2:3 as the conversion value, **to the nearest whole day.**
- (c) Heads of Department and supervisors and students shall notify the Faculty concerned about any change in the eligibility for registration either as a full-time or as a part-time candidate.

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.

## RD5. Period of study

1. A candidate who wishes the period of study to be longer than the specified maximum period, or shorter than the specified minimum period, shall submit an application to the Faculty Board with a recommendation from the supervisor(s) and from the Head of Department. Any such application shall be submitted at least three months before the specified period is due to expire and shall give reasons why there is special need for the period of study to be lengthened or shortened.

2. The higher degrees fees 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 study overseas. Once a thesis is submitted for examination a candidate need not pay additional Continuation Fees, unless required to revise and resubmit the thesis for a new examination within a specified period.

**RD6. Leave of absence**

1. Applications for leave of absence shall be made in writing as early as possible to the Head of the Department via the supervisor(s). Permission for absence of up to one month shall be granted by the Head of Department on the recommendation of the candidate's supervisor(s) but an application for absence of a period of exceeding one month shall be considered by the FHDC itself. The Committee shall also determine whether the leave of absence is for study purposes or not. In granting permission for leave of absence for study purposes, the FHDC shall satisfy itself that appropriate arrangements have been made for the continued and adequate supervision of the candidate. If the absence of leave 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. If a candidate wishes to be away for more than twelve months, the candidate shall be required to withdraw 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 on entitled vacation leave 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 eligible to use any University facilities during this period.

**RD7. Supervision and progress**

1. A supervisor or supervisors shall be appointed for a candidate by the Faculty Board on the advice of the FHDC and the recommendation of the Head of Department concerned, and with the agreement of the candidate. New supervisor(s) may be appointed on the recommendation of the Head of Department if the Faculty Board deems it necessary.
2. Supervisors shall be Teachers of the University as defined in the Ordinance or Honorary or Visiting Teachers (including professors, readers, and lecturers of all grades).
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 relevant Faculty Board.
4. The supervisor(s) shall be required to submit to the FHDC a report on the candidate using the prescribed "Supervisor's Report" (a) three months before the end of the probationary period of the candidature;

and (b) at least annually thereafter.

5. The Head of Department shall on each occasion be required to comment on the supervision and/or progress on the "Supervisor's Report" and shall show these comments to the supervisor and the candidate before transmitting the "Supervisor's Report" to the FHDC for recommendation to the Faculty Board.
6. A candidate shall also be required to submit a confidential "Candidate's Progress Report" to the FHDC each year at the same time as the supervisor submits the "Supervisor's Report".
7. If the Faculty Board approves the recommendation of the FHDC 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. If the Faculty Board approves the recommendation of the FHDC that the candidate, whose candidature has been confirmed, be required to discontinue studies because of unsatisfactory progress, such a recommendation shall be made to the Committee on Discontinuation.
8. A candidate may be required 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 shall be given in writing of this and of the possible consequence of failure to satisfy the course requirements. Recommendations 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. Candidates should be encouraged to give one or more seminars on the subject of their course of study and research.

#### **RD8.**

#### **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 Board.**
2. The Faculty Board shall take account of the recommendation of the FHDC in deciding if the title and any subsequent modification should be approved.

#### **RD9.**

#### **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 issue a

receipt for the four copies of the thesis to the candidates, with a copy of the receipt sent to the Director of Finance and to the Dean of the Graduate School. 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 it is possible to submit a statement indicating whether 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 is made.

## **RD10. Examination**

1. A Board of Examiners shall be appointed by the Faculty Board at the same time as title of the thesis is approved. For each candidate the Faculty Board 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) and one external examiner; but a candidate who is a Teacher of the University shall have one internal examiner (who 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 shall be sought from the Board of Examination for Graduate Studies (BoEGS). The specialist examiners shall be appointed by the Faculty Board on the recommendation of the FHDC and the nomination of the Head of Department. The nomination of the Head should be made following consultation with the supervisor(s) and students. The Head 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, and if any of them indicates otherwise, alternate arrangement 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 appointed by the Faculty Board on the advice of the FHDC in consultation with the Head of Department and supervisor(s) to represent the external examiner for the purpose of the oral examination. The additional examiner shall participate fully at the oral examination, raising questions posed by the external examiner as well as his own, and shall be an *ex officio* member of the Board of Examiners.

This procedure has been brought into effect from September 2004. RD10(11) will prevail over this procedure under the specified circumstances.

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, 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 for the degree sought, 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 each thesis. **At the same time, the examiners are asked to note the notional date for conducting the oral examination.** 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 Faculty Secretary shall organize the oral examination, and any other examination as required by the specialist examiners where the recommendations of all the specialist examiners are uniform in this respect, normally one month after receipt of all the examiners' reports, and 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 the recommendations on the type of other examination differ one from another the Board of Examiners shall decide whether any further examination (together with its form and its examiners) is indeed 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 absence. A written and/or other examination may be held either before or after the oral examination.

The highlighted parts in RD10(6)-(7) have been brought into effect from January 1, 2005.

10. The oral examination shall normally be held in Hong Kong in the presence of the external examiner (or the additional examiner in his 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 RD10 (2) above, and shall be a member of the Board of Examiners. (In the case of a candidate who is a Teacher 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.)

RD10(11) will prevail over this procedure under the specified circumstances.



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 at the Oral Examination Panel 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 appointment of an additional examiner. 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.

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



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 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.

The highlighted part of this procedure shall take effect for Chairman of the oral examination appointed in or after September 2005.

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 sought 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.

**RD11. Examinations 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 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 RD11.

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 candidate be permitted to revise the thesis, and/or present for a new oral examination, and/or present for a new written or other examination) and
  - (b) cases where the substantive recommendations of the specialist examiners are not in agreement.
2. The Board of Examiners may consider its business in circulation if *all* of the following conditions are met:

- (a) The specialist examiners of the thesis *are ALL agreed*
  - either* (i) that the thesis is satisfactory without revision or amendment of any kind;
  - or* (ii) that the thesis is of sufficient standard for the degree sought without a new examination, provided that corrections and amendments are made within a period (normally three months) and to the satisfaction of a person, determined and nominated by the Board of Examiners respectively;

*or* (iii) the thesis is not of sufficient standard for the degree sought but that, subject to the confirmation at the oral and/or other examination(s), the candidate be allowed to revise and resubmit for a new examination within a period of not more than twelve months, the exact period to be determined by the Board of Examiners.

- (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) (i) or (a) (ii) 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) (i) or (a) (ii) 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) (i) or (a) (ii) are met.
3. 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 BoEGS shall inform the Faculty Secretary of the Board's decision and the Faculty Secretary shall then inform the candidate, the supervisor, the Head of Department, 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 for information.
4. 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.
5. 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 revised thesis shall be examined by all the specialist examiners.

6. 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 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.
7. 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 written 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, 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 form and examiners.

**RD12. Publication based on thesis**

No administrative procedures required.

November 2005

January 2007