

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**

**REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)**  
(Applicable to the September 2007 and subsequent intakes)

**PHD1. Definition**

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is a research postgraduate degree. Such a degree shall be awarded to a candidate who

- (a) satisfactorily completes coursework, where prescribed;
- (b) presents a successful thesis representing the result of the candidate's research which should be an original contribution to knowledge and worthy of publication; and
- (c) satisfies the examiners in an oral examination (and any other examination if required) in matters relevant to the subject of the thesis.

**PHD2. Admission Requirements**

The University of Hong Kong offers both 3-year and 4-year PhD programmes.

- (a) A candidate who:
  - (i) complies with the General Regulations;
  - (ii) holds either:
    - 1) a Bachelor's degree with honours and a taught Master's degree or another qualification of equivalent standard from this University or from another university or comparable institution accepted for this purpose; or
    - 2) a Bachelor's degree with normally first class honours from this University or another qualification of equivalent standard from this University or from another University or comparable institution accepted for this purpose;
  - (iii) holds any additional qualifications as may be required by the Faculty concerned; and
  - (iv) satisfies the examiners in a qualifying examination if required;shall be considered for admission to a 4-year programme.
- (b) A candidate who:
  - (i) complies with the General Regulations;
  - (ii) holds a Bachelor's degree with honours and a research Master's degree or another qualification of equivalent standard from this University or

from another university or comparable institution accepted for this purpose;

- (iii) holds any additional qualifications as may be required by the Faculty concerned; *and*
- (iv) satisfies the examiners in a qualifying examination if required;

shall be considered for admission to a 3-year programme.

### **PHD3. Qualifying Examination**

- (a) A qualifying examination may be set to test the candidate's ability to pursue the research project proposed. A qualifying examination shall consist of one or more invigilated written examination papers; additionally, the invigilated written paper(s) may be supplemented by other forms of examination.
- (b) A candidate who is required to sit a qualifying examination shall not be permitted to register until all examination requirements are satisfied.

### **PHD4. Registration**

- (a) A candidature shall commence upon registration, which is permitted only on the first day of any calendar month.
- (b) A student may register as a *full-time* candidate when he or she holds
  - (i) no employment; or
  - (ii) part-time employment (whether inside or outside the University), provided that the employment entails not more than 150 hours of work per annum; or
  - (iii) a University research assistantship, provided that the work undertaken in this capacity is focused on the topic of the holder's research degree study.

The full or part-time status of the candidature must be affirmed in the form of a written declaration by the Chairman of the Departmental Research Postgraduate Committee and the student.

- (c) A full-time candidate may hold a University postgraduate studentship or other postgraduate studentship or scholarship intended to enable him or her to study on a full-time basis.

### **PHD5. Probation and Confirmation of Candidature**

- (a) A candidate whose application is accepted shall be subject to a probationary period. For a candidate in a 4-year degree programme, the probationary period shall be eighteen months for full-time studies or twenty-four months for part-time studies. For a candidate in a 3-year degree programme, the period shall be twelve months in the case of full-time studies or eighteen months in the case of part-time studies. By the end of this probationary period, the candidate must demonstrate capability in research, submit a detailed scheme of research, and complete the required proportion of coursework prescribed by the Policy Board of Postgraduate Education.

- (b) At the end of the probationary period, a decision shall be made on whether the candidature shall be confirmed or terminated.

**PHD6. Transfer of Candidature**

- (a) A candidate registered for a 3-year or 4-year degree programme may apply for transfer to MPhil candidature within the following time-frames:

<i>3-year PhD Programme</i>		<i>4-year PhD Programme</i>	
Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
12 months	18 months	18 months	27 months

If a candidate has not been confirmed in PhD studies, he/she will be required to demonstrate capability in research, submit a detailed scheme of research and complete the required proportion of coursework prescribed by the Policy Board of Postgraduate Education by the end of the probationary period of the MPhil candidature. At this time, a decision shall be made on whether the candidature shall be confirmed or terminated. A candidate shall complete all formal coursework requirements before thesis submission.

- (b) At any stage of his/her studies, a candidate may be permitted to transfer from full-time to part-time candidature (or vice versa) for the same degree, provided that the requisite coursework requirements can be completed before submission of the thesis.
- (c) Any transfer shall take effect only on the first day of any calendar month.

**PHD7. Period of Study**

- (a) A candidate registered for the degree shall follow an approved course of study and research under at least one supervisor. Studies shall commence on the first day of candidature, with the following time-limits:

<i>3-year PhD Programme</i>		<i>4-year PhD Programme</i>	
Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
36 months	54 months	48 months	72 months

The minimum study period is half of the study period.

- (b) A candidate shall spend the whole period of study in Hong Kong, unless leave of absence, provided for under Regulation PHD9 below, has been granted. Since part-time students may have a full-time job which demands them to be away from Hong Kong from time to time, they may be granted approval to be away from Hong Kong for up to six months in any academic year (*see Note*).
- (c) Any extra period allowed for revision or re-submission under Regulation PHD16A shall not count towards the period of study.

**PHD8. Coursework Requirements**

- (a) The approved course of study and research specified in Regulation PHD7(a) shall include a compulsory coursework component in a 4-year degree programme, the objective of which is to aid research work and preparation for writing the thesis. The formal requirements relating to such coursework shall be determined by the Policy Board of Postgraduate Education from time to time.

- (b) A candidate registered for a 3-year degree programme may also be required to take courses and satisfy coursework requirements.
- (c) The coursework requirements must be fulfilled before the candidate is permitted to submit the thesis.

**PHD9. Leave of Absence**

- (a) Research study in the University is considered a year-round activity that continues between terms and throughout the summer months.
- (b) A candidate who wishes to be absent from Hong Kong and/or the approved course of study and research, or who proposes to take vacation, shall be required to submit a written application for leave of absence. There are three types of discretionary leave, namely, vacation leave, study leave and non-study leave (*see Note*).

Vacation Leave

- (c) A candidate may be granted up to 14 days of vacation, excluding Sundays, **Saturdays afternoon** and public holidays, in each twelve months of the period of study. This is however not an entitlement. Whether approval will be granted to a candidate will depend on the progress of the candidate and the requirement of the candidate to undertake departmental duties associated with his/her studentship as stipulated in the Regulations governing Postgraduate Studentships. Leave of absence granted for vacation shall be counted towards the period of study.

The highlighted parts in MPH9(c) and (f) have brought into effect from January 1, 2012.

Study Leave

- (d) A candidate may be granted study leave for the purposes of study or research outside Hong Kong. Unless special circumstances warrant an exception, leave of absence under this category shall not normally be granted for a cumulative period of more than twelve months for the entire period of study, except in the case of a candidate undertaking research at an overseas partner institution with which the University has entered into a formal exchange agreement and in which case study leave of up to half of the period of study as defined in PHD7 may be granted. Any period of study leave granted shall be counted towards the period of study.

Non-study leave

- (e) A candidate may be granted non-study leave when he/she is best advised for personal, health, or other reasons to have time completely away from his/her academic responsibilities. Under no circumstances shall leave of absence under this category be granted on each occasion for a period of less than 7 calendar days or cumulatively for a period of more than twelve months for the entire period of study. A candidate shall apply for vacation leave to cover leave of a non-study nature of less than 7 calendar days. Any period of non-study leave granted shall result in the extension of the period of study by the period of absence.

Sick Leave

- (f) **In addition to the above, a candidate shall follow the arrangements on sick leave as specified in General Regulation G8(b)(i) on the**

**understanding that the candidate shall also inform his/her supervisor and Department immediately of his/her sick leave.**

**PHD10. Progress**

A candidate shall submit a progress report at six-monthly intervals, and may be required to give one or more seminars on any part of his or her course of study and research.

**PHD11. Discontinuation**

A candidature may be discontinued

- (a) if academic progress is not satisfactory; or
- (b) if the student has failed to meet the requirements as stipulated in this set of Regulations.

**PHD12. Notice of Intention to Submit Thesis**

To allow sufficient time for the appointment of examiners for a thesis and an oral examination, a candidate shall serve written notice of intention to submit a thesis for examination at least 3 months prior to the expected date of submission. The notice shall be accompanied by a provisional thesis title.

**PHD13. Submission of Thesis**

- (a) A candidate shall submit four copies of his/her thesis for examination, in accordance with the regulations governing the format, binding and presentation of theses, together with a written declaration that the thesis represents the candidate's own work.
- (b) A candidate shall not submit work that has been included in a thesis, dissertation or report which either has been previously submitted to this University or any other institution, or being submitted to any other institution, for a degree, diploma, or other qualifications, except in the case of a candidate who has registered in a PhD double degree programme of this University and another institution with which the University has entered into a formal agreement in respect of the programme. Original work of the student related to the thesis may be published prior to submission of the thesis and may be included in the thesis.

**PHD14. Examinations**

- (a) A candidate shall be examined by examiners appointed for this purpose both on the thesis itself, and at an oral examination on the subject of the thesis and/or the approved course of study and research. A candidate may also be examined by other means.
- (b) A candidate's coursework shall also be assessed by examiners appointed for this purpose.

**PHD15. Coursework Examination Results**

- (a) Coursework shall be assessed on a pass/fail basis.

- (b) A candidate who has not satisfied the examiners in respect of the coursework requirements at the first attempt shall be re-examined in the same, or an equivalent, course. A candidate who does not satisfy the examiners in such re-examination may be required to discontinue his or her studies.
- (c) A candidate who is unable to be present for any written examination due to acceptable extenuating circumstances may apply for permission to present himself or herself at a supplementary examination.

**PHD16. Thesis Examination Results**

A candidate who has satisfied the examiners shall be recommended for conferment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

**PHD16A** A candidate who has not satisfied the examiners

- (a) may be required to resubmit the thesis after making corrections and amendments as required by the Board of Examiners, without a new examination; or
- (b) may be required to revise and resubmit the thesis for a new examination within a specified period, and may also be required to satisfy the examiners at a new oral examination, or any other examination as appropriate, on the subject of the revised thesis and/or the approved course of study and research; or
- (c) may be required to attend a new oral examination, or any other examination as appropriate; or
- (d) may be deemed to have failed, without the option of resubmission.

**PHD17. Publication based on Thesis**

Any publication based on work approved for a higher degree should contain a reference to the effect that the work was submitted to The University of Hong Kong for the award of the degree.

*Note: For the purpose of this Regulation, a candidate is considered to be absent from Hong Kong when he/she is outside Hong Kong and is not able to conduct studies in the normal manners in the University. A candidate who resides near the vicinity of Hong Kong which allows him/her to return to the University campus for his/her studies in the same manner as other students is not regarded as being absent from Hong Kong.*

September 2004  
March 24, 2006  
June 18, 2007  
January 2009  
December 2011