

## 6. Progress towards Graduation

### 6.1 Graduation requirements

All RPg students are required to fulfil a set of graduation requirements as prescribed by the Programme in order to graduate. Some of the requirements are compulsory for all while some are specific to individual programmes or individual students. Different types of graduation requirements will be introduced briefly in the following sections. Students should refer to the Course List, Course Descriptions and Study Scheme of their own programmes in the *Postgraduate Student Handbook* for details. Besides, RPg students should report and record the fulfilment of graduation requirements in the Study Plan and Progress Report for RPg studies in consultation with the Supervisor.

### 6.2 Course requirements

The course requirements set out the required courses and elective courses, if applicable, of the Programme. Taught courses (excluding courses with research elements, such as “Research”, “Thesis Research”, “Thesis Preparation”, etc.) aim to enhance the knowledge in research. In general, the requirement for different RPg programmes is as follows:

- (a) Not less than 12 units for research master’s;
- (b) Not less than 12 units for research doctoral students in the pre-candidacy stage, completion of which will be part of the candidacy requirements.

The two requirements can be identical, but a higher requirement can be set for Ph.D. candidacy if the Graduate Division so desires. Doctoral students without a research master’s degree may be required to take additional courses. The Graduate Division may specify the minimum grade at which these courses must be passed.

Students should take at least one course in each term, unless otherwise stated in the Study Scheme or approved by the Head of the Graduate Division. In addition, students’ research progress is monitored through taking “Thesis Research” courses. The minimum number of units to be taken by RPg students in each Term is given below. Each unit is regarded as equivalent to approximately three hours of study/research per week by the student.

Status	Full-time (no. of units)	Part-time (no. of units)
M.Phil.	6	3
Ph.D. (pre-candidacy)	6	3
Ph.D. (post-candidacy)	12	6
Continuing Students	3	3

### **6.3 Postgraduate students taking undergraduate courses**

Postgraduate students are allowed to enrol in undergraduate courses (4000 level or below) in the following situations:

- (a) Taking undergraduate courses as make-up requirements.  
An RPg student with a first degree of a different subject than the postgraduate programme may have to make up for some undergraduate courses as assigned by the Supervisor. Taking undergraduate courses which are not required.
- (b) RPg students may take other undergraduate courses, typically in a different subject, purely out of interest (e.g., calligraphy or music), or to develop other skills (e.g., language, including a third language).

RPg students who wish to take undergraduate courses should first consult their Supervisors.

Programmes can include up to 15% of undergraduate courses in the programme requirements. GCExCo's approval is required if Graduate Divisions request to include more than 15% undergraduate courses in the programme requirements.

### **6.4 Research thesis and oral examination**

All RPg students are required to submit a research thesis and pass an oral examination. The schedule, procedures, and assessment of the research thesis and oral examination will be described in detail in Section 8 below.

### **6.5 Candidature for doctoral degree**

There are two stages of Ph.D. studies: the pre-candidacy stage and the post-candidacy stage. No student will be admitted directly as a Ph.D. student (post-candidacy); such a status can only be gained by a Ph.D. student (pre-candidacy) upon satisfying all candidacy requirements for those under the "articulated" scheme and the Qualifying Examination for those under the "non-articulated" scheme. Only a Ph.D. (post-candidacy) candidate can submit a thesis and be examined.

The candidacy requirements are set by the Graduate Division, with administration taken care of by the Graduate School. A Ph.D. student shall not proceed to the post-candidacy stage until he/she has fulfilled all components of the candidacy requirements. The candidacy requirements include at least the following components:

- (a) Course requirements;
- (b) Candidacy Examination/Qualifying Examination; and
- (c) Thesis proposal and defence of the proposal.

The Candidacy Examination or Qualifying Examination contains a written component of one or more papers, which cover the basic disciplinary knowledge expected of a Ph.D. student. The subject coverage is not specific to each student, but is the same for a broad subject category within each Graduate Division. The Graduate Division may specify that certain papers can be replaced by passing

relevant courses at specified grades. There may be an additional oral component.

## 6.6 Candidacy Examination and Qualifying Examination

Candidacy Examination and Qualifying Examination are two different terms used in the assessment of Ph.D. students for proceeding to the candidature for doctoral degree. The former is used in “articulated” programmes whereas the latter in “non-articulated” programmes.

Students should refer to the study scheme of their own programme in the *Postgraduate Student Handbook* for details of the requirements.

For “articulated” programmes, the maximum period to pass the candidacy requirements, counted from first entry to the programme, is tabulated below. A Ph.D. student (pre-candidacy) who failed to pass the candidacy requirements within this maximum period will be discontinued from studies at the University:

Degree	Full-time	Part-time
Ph.D. (entering with a research master’s degree)	24 months	32 months
Ph.D. (entering without a research master’s degree)	36 months	48 months

However, for “non-articulated” programmes, the maximum period to pass the Qualifying Examination is defined by individual Graduate Divisions. Please refer to the *Postgraduate Student Handbook* for details of individual programmes.

## 6.7 Improving Postgraduate Learning

While there is no universally accepted approach for teaching students to be more creative in research, there are some basic principles, methodologies and skills with which students can equip themselves in the arduous task of doing research. Most knowledge and skills are imparted by the students’ Supervisors as they work together. However, some skills are cross-disciplinary in nature and can be taught in a more formal or systematic manner, e.g., laboratory safety, searching for and analysis of information, principles and ethics in documentation, presentation skills, and so forth. These courses are collectively referred to as the Improving Postgraduate Learning (IPL) programme and are coordinated by CLEAR.

Most IPL short courses are optional. However, RPg students are strongly advised to take every module that has potential relevancy to their research endeavours. Supervisors and Heads of the Graduate Divisions should also promote the IPL modules and encourage their students to take them.

The online module “*Observing Intellectual Property and Copyright Law during Research*” is compulsory for all RPg students. Relevant information is available on the CLEAR website at [www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear/prodev/ipl.html](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear/prodev/ipl.html).

Different programmes may require students to complete specific IPL modules, such as “*General Safety*”, “*Chemical Safety*” or other laboratory safety courses, depending on the nature of the research project. Students should consult their Graduate Divisions or Supervisors for details.

Research Data Management (RDM) is of increasing interest and importance to the academia. More and more research funders require researchers to submit data management plans as part of grant applications and share their research data to the scholarly community. In light of these policies and requirements, the Research Data Management (RDM) Training is incorporated into an appropriate IPL module offered by the Library. Attendance of RDM Training module is optional for the 2021-22 intake. Starting from the 2022-23 intake, all RPg students are required to complete the RDM training, specifically, the online course Basics of Research Data Management, in the first year of study as part of the graduation requirements. Relevant information is available at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear/prodev/ipl.html>.

Postgraduate students engaged in laboratory works need to comprehend a broad range of safety-related concepts. It is important for them to be familiar with safe working and basic emergency procedures while conducting laboratory activities that carry safety risks. In principle, postgraduate students should not conduct any laboratory work before meeting the University recognised training requirements. With effect from the 2022-23 intake, students who are prescribed laboratory safety training shall take the courses and, where appropriate, examinations in their first year of study.

## **6.8 Research Ethics Training**

To strengthen researchers' awareness of ethical concepts, the Office of Research and Knowledge Transfer Services (ORKTS) offers Research Ethics Training (RET) which contains four online modules in the following domains: (a) *Human Subject Ethics*; (b) *Laboratory Animals Ethics*; (c) *Survey and Behavioural Ethics*; and (d) *Publication Ethics*.

All RPg students admitted in 2017-18 and thereafter are required to complete the online RET module on "*Publication Ethics*" and obtain a valid Publication Ethics Certificate for graduation. More information on RET is available at [www.research-ethics.cuhk.edu.hk/web/](http://www.research-ethics.cuhk.edu.hk/web/).

## **6.9 Other requirements**

Graduate Divisions may prescribe additional graduation requirements for students of their particular field of research. For example:

- Language requirement, e.g., knowledge of spoken Cantonese and written Chinese may be required for some courses taught in Cantonese and English.
- A higher minimum cumulative GPA (e.g., 2.5) for graduation.
- Additional requirements for individual students may be set by the Graduate Division or Supervisor, depending on the academic progress of the students.

## **6.10 Course and unit exemptions**

Students who have already completed equivalent courses may apply for exemption from taking some courses and/or units by taking the following actions:

- (a) Check their eligibility by reading the *Policy on Course and Unit Exemptions for Postgraduate Students* (available in the *Postgraduate Student Handbook*);

- (b) Consult the Graduate Division on the possibility of granting course and unit exemptions;
- (c) Complete the prescribed online application form and attach any required supporting documents for submission to the Graduate Division via CUSIS; and
- (d) Pay the required fee.

Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The decision rests with the Head of the Graduate Division and is subject to approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.

### **6.11 Study Plan and Progress Report for RPg Studies**

In order to improve supervision, ensure timely progress and encourage broader training, the Graduate School requires each RPg student, together with his/her Supervisor or, if no Supervisor has been assigned yet, a divisional adviser, to complete an online Study Plan and Progress Report for RPg Studies on an annual basis.

The report is divided into two parts: the 1<sup>st</sup> part deals with the requirements of the whole programme. Students/Supervisors are required to complete this part once throughout the whole study period. The 2<sup>nd</sup> part is an annual account on the courses/other requirements completed by the students in each study year.

At the end of each academic year, Supervisors will meet with their RPg students to record the progress of the students' academic activities and fulfilment of the programme requirements against the study plan. Students also have the opportunity to read the comments given by their Supervisors. Supervisors should monitor the students' progress to ensure that the students fulfil the coursework requirements, Candidacy Examination/Qualifying Examination and any other graduation requirements within the study period.

### **6.12 Departmental duties and teaching assistance**

As a condition of the PGS award, RPg students shall carry out assignments relating to teaching and research as part of their postgraduate studies, normally for not more than 12 hours per week on average, as prescribed by the respective Department Chairperson, School Director or Faculty Dean. PGS holders are requested to observe at all times the *Code of Conduct for Postgraduate Studentship Holders* which is enclosed with the Admission Offer and Letter of Award at the time of admission.

Undertaking undergraduate teaching in the capacity of a Teaching Assistant (TA) during the study period is one of the common departmental duties which is also regarded by both the RPg students and the Graduate Divisions as part of the students' education. The *Guidelines on the Allocation of Teaching Duties to RPg Students* should be observed in assigning duties to RPg students. RPg students who will take up TA duties are required to attend training courses offered by CLEAR. Students may refer to the CLEAR website ([www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear)) for more details.

### **6.13 Language policy**

CUHK is a bilingual (Chinese and English) university. The University has three goals related to language proficiency at the postgraduate level:

- (a) At the time of admission, ensure a proper alignment of the language proficiency of students with the language of instruction adopted by the programme;
- (b) After admission, ensure that students have the opportunity to continue strengthening their language proficiency; and
- (c) Provide students with opportunities to be exposed to Chinese language and culture, particularly those without such exposure prior to admission.

The majority of postgraduate students at the University are proficient in Chinese and English, though there is a small number of overseas students who do not have prior exposure to the Chinese language and culture. The University deems it desirable that these students, at least doctoral students who will spend three years or more at the University, have some such exposure while they are attending the University. They will be encouraged to take at least one course in Chinese language and culture, though it will not be regarded as a degree requirement. A large variety of such courses are offered at the University.

In addition, postgraduate students may wish to strengthen their proficiency in Chinese (Putonghua and/or Cantonese) and/or English for academic, professional or other purposes, the programme in which they are enrolled may have specific language proficiency needs (such as proficiency in Japanese in the Japanese Studies programme), or the programme may for general educational purposes have a third language requirement. The University will continue to ensure that appropriate language courses are offered through the relevant units, including the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Chinese Language Centre, English Language Teaching Unit, Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, and other relevant departments.