

General Information for Thesis Preparation and Submission

– A Guide for Research Postgraduate and Taught Doctoral Students

1. Appointment of supervisor(s)

- 1.1 The Graduate Panel has the responsibility and complete authority to appoint and to reassign academic staff to supervise your chosen topic or area of research. There should be only one designated Supervisor. A Co-supervisor is sometimes also designated to ensure continuity of supervision. In the case of co-supervision, the Graduate Panel shall designate who will be the Supervisor.
- 1.2 If you wish to make a request to change your Supervisor/Co-supervisor, an application should be made to the Graduate Panel of the Graduate Division concerned by using the prescribed form.

2. Time for Submission

- 2.1 Students are normally expected to submit their theses (note: in this document “thesis” shall include – for D.Mus., M.Mus., and M.F.A. students – the student’s portfolio) by the end of the normative study period, i.e., the normal time period allowed for completion of all programme requirements, as stipulated in the Annex of the *General Regulations Governing Postgraduate Studies*.
- 2.2 If you do not submit your thesis and complete your programme requirements within this time limit, or the submission is not passed, then you will be put on “continuing status” until your successful completion of the thesis or upon your reaching the maximum study period. Continuing students shall pay a “continuation fee” per term unless they continue to take courses, in which case full tuition fees apply.
- 2.3 If the students will have exceeded the maximum period of study, they should submit an application to extend the maximum study end date for the approval of the GCExCo.

3. Declaration of intention to submit thesis

- 3.1 You have to declare your intention to submit your thesis by completing and returning the “Declaration Form on Intention to Submit Thesis/Portfolio” (Form TAS-1) to the Graduate Division concerned. Since the completed form together with the approval from the Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division should reach the Graduate School four months before actual submission, please check with your Graduate Division and allow sufficient lead time when you submit Form TAS-1 to the Graduate Division. The form includes the proposed date of

submission and thesis title (with 1-2 pages of summary of thesis/abstract of thesis), for approval by the Supervisor and the Head of Graduate Division. In case the Supervisor finds that the thesis is not suitable for submission, s/he will forward the thesis to the internal examiners for a decision. If there is any disagreement among the internal examiners, the case will be referred to the Head of the Graduate Division. You are not allowed to submit thesis if you are on leave or the External Examiner(s) has/have not yet accepted the invitation.

4. Title of thesis

- 4.1 The thesis title should be written in either English or Chinese. If you wish to change your thesis title, you must complete the form "Application for Change of Thesis/Portfolio Title" (Form TAS-2), for approval by the Supervisor and the Head of Graduate Division concerned, and forward it to the Graduate School for record.

5. Deferral of thesis submission

- 5.1 If you wish to defer submission of thesis beyond your originally proposed date, you should complete and return the form "Application for Deferral of Submission of Thesis/Portfolio" (Form TAS-3) to the Graduate School via your Supervisor and the Head of Graduate Division. Deferral in submission of thesis will result in delay in your graduation.
- 5.2 Deferral must NOT exceed your maximum study period.

6. Thesis Assessment Committee

- 6.1 Upon approval of your thesis title and the proposed date for submission, your Graduate Division should proceed to nominate members of your Thesis Assessment Committee which shall be chaired by the Head of Graduate Division or his/her representative, and shall consist of at least three Internal Examiners (the student's own Supervisor and Co-supervisor, if any, the Head of Graduate Division or his/her nominee, and a third Internal Examiner from within or outside the Graduate Division) and an External Examiner (optional for assessment leading to M.Phil., M.Mus. and M.F.A.).
- 6.2 The Internal Examiners must be academic staff of the University, except that within three months after his/her retirement/resignation, a teacher may continue to serve as Supervisor/ Co-supervisor/Internal Examiner of the student.
- 6.3 The External Examiners must not be members of the academic staff of the University. Anyone who has been on the teaching staff of the University and who has taken part in the teaching of the candidates, even in a visiting capacity, within three years and anyone expected to join before assessment is completed, is not eligible for appointment as External Examiner. In addition, they must be at least Senior Lecturers in the Commonwealth system or Associate Professors in the American system, unless no other suitable academic of appropriate rank

(world-wide) is available, taking into consideration the language used in the thesis. Two External Examiners will be appointed to assess the thesis of a part-time doctoral student who is a full-time academic staff member of this University at the rank of Assistant Professor or above. All nominations of External Examiners must be approved by the Senate and University Council.

- 6.4 The Supervisor(s)/Co-supervisor(s), Internal Examiners and External Examiners evaluate if the student's thesis meets the requirement for the award of the degree sought and provide the student with an opportunity to defend the thesis.

7. Submission of thesis

- 7.1 Under the conventional procedures, students may put the hardcopy of their thesis and relevant attachments into a brown envelope and deliver the package directly to the Graduate School (except for hardcopies of thesis to Internal Examiner(s) which should be submitted to the Graduate Division directly).

Students who have difficulties in returning to the campus may upload all required document items to a secured link (e.g. Microsoft one drive) according to the requirement of thesis submission. Students are required to send the link to the Graduate School at gradschool@cuhk.edu.hk with the following format:

- i) Subject: Submission of the first draft thesis ii)

Email content:

- a. Student name;
- b. Student ID;
- c. Degree and programme
- d. Link for downloading your submission

The Graduate School has launched the Online System for Thesis Monitoring to automate the process for submission of the first draft and final version of theses on 14 December 2020. The requirement to submit hardcopy theses will be replaced by submission to the online system. To mitigate the effect of change for current students, the online arrangement is applicable to the students whose External Examiner's nominations have been approved on 14 December 2020 or thereafter.

Students should refer to 7.4 below for the relevant submission procedures.

- 7.2 You must submit your thesis (bound in a temporary form) according to the proposed schedule, unless permission to defer has been obtained. You are not allowed to submit thesis if you are on leave or the External Examiner(s) has not yet accepted the invitation.
- 7.3 You may refer to the *Guide to Thesis Formatting* of the "Research and Thesis Writing" (available at Graduate School Platform (Students)) for details on the format.

7.4 In submitting your thesis, please observe the following requirements:

(i) Number of copies of thesis/portfolio

The number of copies to be submitted depends on the number of members of your Thesis Assessment Committee (please check with your Graduate Division). Except for the copy/copies to External Examiner(s) to be submitted to the Graduate School Office, all other copies must be submitted directly to the Graduate Division. If External Examiners are required, you should submit a hardcopy/hardcopies of your thesis to the Graduate School Office which will be sent to the External Examiner(s) for assessment. Students whose External Examiner's nominations are approved on 14 December 2020 or thereafter should upload the thesis to the Online System for Thesis Monitoring via CUSIS.

(ii) Abstract of thesis

With each copy of thesis submitted, you must also enclose an abstract, in both Chinese and English:

(a) For Master's thesis: 200-500 words

(b) For doctoral thesis: Not more than 800 words (Chinese) and 500 words (English)

(iii) Length of thesis

In science subjects, the length of the thesis should normally not exceed 75,000 characters in Chinese or 50,000 words in English.

In other subjects, the normal length is up to 150,000 characters in Chinese or 100,000 words in English.

(iv) Required Documents

Under Conventional Procedures (i.e., Hardcopy Submission): The following documents must accompany the thesis submitted to the Graduate School Office:

(a) "Thesis Submission Form" (TAS-4)

(b) "Approval Form for Submission of Thesis/Portfolio" (Form TAS-5) signed by the Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division concerned.

(c) Receipt for examination fee paid

Doctoral and Master's students are required to pay a thesis examination fee of HK\$2,400 and HK\$2,000 respectively.

(d) Receipt for publication fee of doctoral thesis paid (for doctoral students only)

Doctoral students are required to pay a fee of HK\$195 for publication of doctoral thesis on ProQuest (an organization that provides access to theses, dissertations and other aggregated databases).

(e) "Checklist for Submission of Thesis/Portfolio" (Form TAS-6)

(f) "Academic Honesty Declaration Statement" from VeriGuide

Under New Procedures (i.e., Online Submission to the Thesis Monitoring System via CUSIS):

- (a) "Approval Form for Submission of Thesis/Portfolio" (Form TAS-5) signed by the Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division concerned.
- (b) Receipt for examination fee paid

Doctoral and Master's students are required to pay a thesis examination fee of HK\$2,400 and HK\$2,000 respectively.

- (c) Receipt for publication fee of doctoral thesis paid (for doctoral students only)
Doctoral students are required to pay a fee of HK\$195 for publication of doctoral thesis on ProQuest (an organization that provides access to theses, dissertations and other aggregated databases).

8. Dispatch of thesis and assessment report forms to External Examiners

Hardcopy Submission:

- (a) The Graduate School will send its copy of the thesis to the External Examiner(s) that has/have been appointed to the Thesis Assessment Committee.
- (b) Normally, the thesis will be sent overseas by airmail. To speed up delivery for earlier graduation, you may request the Graduate School to send your thesis by courier, provided the delivery charges are paid by you.

Online Submission to the Thesis Monitoring System via CUSIS:

The External Examiner will be informed by an email notifying them to complete the Thesis Assessment Report via the online system.

9. Oral examination

- 9.1 After dispatch of the thesis to the examiners, an oral examination will be held by the Thesis Assessment Committee. Normally, such an examination will be held within two months after the submission of the thesis for both doctoral and Master's students.
- 9.2 Presence of an External Examiner at the oral examination is required for doctoral programmes only. It is, however, not compulsory for Doctor of Education, Doctor of Nursing, Doctor of Psychology, and Doctor of Social Science students. Where the External Examiner has been appointed is unable to be present at the oral examination, a second External Examiner who will attend the oral examination and have the same responsibilities as the first external examiner will be appointed. Students should not contact the External Examiner(s) on matters related to thesis examination.

- 9.3 The Graduate Division will inform the student of the date and venue of the oral examination.
- 9.4 The oral examination covers not only the subject matter of the student's thesis but also knowledge in related fields deemed essential to his/her field of specialization.
- 9.5 The Chairperson of the Thesis Assessment Committee controls the conduct of the oral examination to ensure that questions are put fairly and that the student is given adequate opportunity to answer them.
- 9.6 Even if the examiners consider that a student's thesis is not of sufficient standard for the award of the degree sought, a student may, at the discretion of the Thesis Assessment Committee, be given an oral examination to defend his/her thesis.

10. Assessment result of thesis

- 10.1 Examiners, if appointed, are normally given a period of five weeks for assessment of thesis. Students may check the progress of the assessment process via GS Platform (Students) at <https://www.gradsch.cuhk.edu.hk/pgstudent/main.htm>

- 10.2 The thesis grading system is as follows:

| Grade | Status | Action |
|-------|--|--|
| I | Pass | If revision is not required, the student will be recommended for award of degree. If revision is required, the Supervisor shall confirm that the revised thesis meets the revision requirements before the student is recommended for award of degree. |
| II | This submission NOT passed. Re-submission allowed and re-examination required | Revised thesis/portfolio to be resubmitted to Thesis Assessment Committee for reassessment. |
| III | Failure - no re-submission allowed | Student to discontinue studies. Graduate Division to submit recommendation for consideration by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council. |
| IV | Recommended for award of research Master's degree (for research doctoral programme) only | Research doctoral student recommended for award of research Master's degree. Graduate Division to provide justification for consideration of the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council. |

11. Follow-up actions on different final grades

11.1 Upon receipt of all examiners' reports, the Thesis Assessment Committee Chairperson will decide on a final grade within four weeks and, on the "Notification to Student on Results of Thesis/ Portfolio Assessment" (Form TAD-6), inform the student of the final assessment result and the follow-up actions required.

11.2 Grade I (Pass)

11.2.1 Hardcopy Submission: If revision is not required, the student should be informed to submit the final version of thesis (for a doctoral student, also the completed ProQuest Publishing Agreement Form) to the Graduate School within two weeks by completing the "Form for Submission of Thesis/Portfolio (Final Version) for Archive/Publication" (Form TAS-7).

Online Submission to the Thesis Monitoring System via CUSIS: If revision is not required, the student should upload the final version of thesis to CUSIS by completing the "Form for Submission of Thesis/Portfolio (Final Version) for Archive/Publication" (Form TAS-7).

11.2.2 If revisions are required, the Supervisor(s) must ensure that corrections are made satisfactorily by a specified period, normally no later than three months from the date of official notification of the examination result - exceptions to this timeline must be submitted to the Graduate School for approval, and the student should be asked to submit Form TAS-7 by the deadline. The corrections are subject to the confirmation of the Supervisor(s).

11.2.3 If the student exceeds the maximum period of study, s/he should submit an application to extend the maximum study end date for the approval of the GCEXCo. The student should submit the final version of thesis according to the method specified in point 11.2.1.

11.2.4 With effect from the 2021-22 academic year, the University will have three degree conferment dates in each year, i.e. 31 March, 31 July, and 15 October.

Students are required to submit the final thesis before the deadline as stipulated below in order to have their graduation included in the degree conferment date concerned. Subject to the approval of the Senate, students who submit the final version of their thesis before 31 August will normally have the degree conferred in the same year.

| | | | |
|---|-------------|---------|------------|
| Degree Conferment Date | 31 March | 31 July | 15 October |
| Deadline for final thesis submission to GSO | 28 February | 30 June | 31 August |

11.2.5 A student who fails to submit the final version of thesis within one year from the date as specified by the Thesis Assessment Committee shall be required to discontinue from studies at the University, unless otherwise approved by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council.

11.3 Grade II (This submission NOT passed. Re-submission allowed and re-examination required)

11.3.1 If the thesis is given a final grade II by the Thesis Assessment Committee Chairperson, the thesis is not passed. A revised thesis has to be re-submitted to the entire Thesis Assessment Committee within 12 months from the date of official notification of the first examination result and within the student's maximum period of study. If the student exceeds the maximum period of study, s/he should submit an application to extend the maximum study end date.

11.3.2 Apart from re-submitting the thesis, the Thesis Assessment Committee may decide whether or not the student should be re-assessed by oral examination.

11.3.3 Only one re-submission of thesis is allowed unless exceptional approval is granted by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council on extension of re-submission deadline and/or further re-submission of thesis.

11.3.4 Doctoral and Master's students have to pay a fee of HK\$2,400 and HK\$2,000 respectively for resubmission of thesis in a revised form.

11.4 Grade III (Failure - no re-submission allowed)

11.4.1 If the thesis is given a final grade III by the Thesis Assessment Committee Chairperson, the student is required to discontinue from studies at the University.

11.5 Grade IV (Recommended for award of research Master's degree (for research doctoral programmes only))

11.5.1 If the research doctoral thesis is given a final grade IV by the Thesis Assessment Committee Chairperson, award of a research Master's degree may be recommended by the Graduate Division with justification for consideration by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council (GCEExCo).

11.5.2 Upon approval from GCEExCo, the student should be informed to submit the revised version of the M.Phil. thesis, with corrections made satisfactorily and confirmed by the Supervisor(s), to the Graduate School no later than six months from the date the GCEExCo approves the recommendation of a final grade of IV and within the student's maximum period of study. The Graduate School will notify the student of the aforementioned deadline.

11.5.3 If the students will have exceeded the maximum period of study, they should submit an application to extend the maximum study end date for the approval of the GCEExCo.

11.5.4 Failure to submit the final version of the M.Phil. thesis within one year from the above deadline will result in discontinuation of studies at the University, unless special approval is granted by the Graduate Council.

11.5.5 Subject to the approval of the Senate, submission made before 31 August will normally have the degree conferred in the same year. For details, please refer to 11.2.4.

12. Recommendation for award of degree

12.1 You may be recommended for award of the degree sought after:

- (i) you have completed the coursework and other requirements of the programme, if any, and
- (ii) your thesis is deemed satisfactory without any revision or amendment, or
- (iii) amendments have been made to the examiners' satisfaction, and
- (iv) the final version of your thesis has been submitted to the Graduate School.

12.2 The Head of Graduate Division, on the basis of the assessment of the student's thesis and the results of the coursework completed by the student, whether the student has fulfilled the graduation requirements and is recommended for award of degree or otherwise, by completing the "Reply Proforma on Fulfilment of Graduation Requirement" (Form TAD-7). After the endorsement by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council, the Graduate School will issue letters of certification to students who have been recommended to the Senate for award of degree.

13. Submission of final version of thesis for archive/publication

13.1 Completion of the exit survey for research postgraduate and taught doctoral students is mandatory as part of the final thesis/portfolio submission process effective from 2 January 2025. The submission pathway will be available in the Thesis Submission Procedures.

13.2 Hardcopy Submission: Copies of thesis submitted to the examiners for assessment will be returned to you by the Graduate Division. Subsequently, electronic copy of the final version of thesis (with all amendments properly made, if necessary) should be saved in a CD-ROM according to the guidelines provided by the University Library and submitted to the Graduate School for archive/publication. Students should also submit a printout of the thesis abstract (both in English and Chinese), title page and separate page on composition of Thesis Assessment Committee (if applicable), together with the completed "Form for Submission of Thesis/Portfolio (Final Version) for Archive/Publication" (Form TAS-7) to the Graduate School by the time of submission of final version.

Electronic Submission: Students who have difficulties in returning to the campus may upload all required document items to a secured link (e.g. Microsoft one drive) according to the requirement of thesis submission. Students are required to send the link to the Graduate School at gradschool@cuhk.edu.hk with the following format:

i) Subject: Submission of the final thesis ii)

Email content:

- a. Student name;
- b. Student ID;
- c. Degree and programme
- d. Link for downloading your submission

Online Submission to the Thesis Monitoring System via CUSIS: Once a student has uploaded the final version of thesis to the CUSIS with the required documents, the System will transfer the thesis to the University Library upon the confirmation of student's graduation status.

The thesis of doctoral students will be transferred to ProQuest in compliance with the ProQuest Publishing Agreement that sets out the arrangement in respect of online publication.

14. Copyright of thesis

14.1 The University decided in 2007-08 that students should hold the copyright ownership of their theses. However, to provide a wider accessibility of the theses for scholastic and academic purposes, students are requested to sign an agreement to grant the University a worldwide irrevocable, non-exclusive right in respect of the copyright in the theses for the purpose of making copies, abstracts, reproducing or otherwise dealing with the theses by whatever means, including but not limited to, digitizing, storing, reproducing, and distributing the theses in any media and in any format, provided that any and all such acts are only for scholastic and academic purpose and with proper acknowledgement of authorship.

14.2 For theses submitted before the effective year, the University retains the copyright of each of the theses submitted. A request may be made to the Dean of the Graduate School to grant permission to release this copyright to anyone intending to use a part or whole of the materials in any thesis in a proposed publication. The students/graduates are expected to give due acknowledgement of their Supervisors' guidance (in case of a translation, students should seek the approval of the original author). Photocopying of theses may be made for "fair use" for the purposes of research or private study, with the express permission of the Dean of the Graduate School, in accordance with the prevailing guidelines for copyrighted works.

15. Confidentiality of thesis

15.1 Normally, requests for keeping theses confidential will not be approved.

15.2 Students and Supervisors who wish to protect potential patent rights (which would belong to the University if the work is done as part of normal duties) should exercise care to exclude sensitive material from the theses.

15.3 With effect from December 2014, a one-year "restricted access" is granted automatically to the final version of thesis submitted by a postgraduate student. The said period is extended to two

years and made applicable to students who submit the final version of their theses after the change comes into effect on 22 April 2022. Access to the table of contents and full text of the thesis will be blocked during this period after which the thesis will be open for public access unless approval from the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council is granted. Students may opt out of the “restricted access” if they wish to release their theses immediately for open access.

15.4 Approval for confidentiality for theses for reasons other than patent application may be granted only in exceptional circumstances, normally up to three years (including the “restricted access” period). Each case will have to be submitted to the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council for consideration.

15.5 Students (including graduates) are advised to make requests for extending and modifying the restricted access period in writing at least one month prior to the date the restriction shall lapse. The completed request form, duly signed by the Thesis Supervisor and the Division Head, must reach GSO by the stated deadline. Retroactive requests for extending the restricted access period received after the said deadline will not be approved.

(Last updated and revised in November 2025)