The information provided in this Handbook is correct at the time of printing. It may be changed from time to time by the appropriate University authority. In the event of inconsistency between information contained in this Handbook and a University regulation or guideline, or where an interpretation is required, the decision of the University authority shall be final. The Handbook does not form any part of a contract between any person and the University.

(Version: August 2015)
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Preface

Pursuing a research degree is a significant undertaking. For many students, it is a rather different type of study from the coursework programs they are familiar with. This Handbook has been prepared with the purpose of helping students understand their responsibilities and rights as research students, and the policies related to various aspects of research studies.

This Handbook may also serve as a useful reference for faculty members and administrative staff who may need to advise students on procedural matters concerning research studies at the University.

For students taking a research degree, the onus is on them to find out what they need to do or know about their program of study and the related University regulations. Ignorance of the rule does not exempt a student from the requirement to comply with the rule. We hope this booklet serves as a handy reference for these students throughout their course of study.

Students should refer to the Academic Regulations of the University at http://publish.ust.hk/acadreg/ for policies related to their study. As the content of this Handbook may change from time to time, readers are advised to refer to the online version (http://pg.ust.hk/rpghandbook) for the most updated information.

Office of Postgraduate Studies
August 2015
1. Regulations for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity

1.1 The HKUST Academic Honor Code

Honesty and integrity are central to the academic work of HKUST. Students must observe and uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty in all the work they do throughout their program of study.

As members of the University community, students have the responsibility to help maintain the academic reputation of HKUST in its academic endeavors.

Sanctions may be imposed on students if they are found to have violated the regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.

1.2 Student Conduct

The University expects good conduct from students. Complaints against a student for misconduct should be referred to the Dean of Students. Where the Dean of Students is satisfied that there has been misconduct, the Dean may impose sanctions. In serious cases, or where the Dean of Students determines that the University’s interests will be best served, the Dean may refer the case to the Student Disciplinary Committee.

The student may submit an appeal against the decision of the Dean of Students or the Student Disciplinary Committee to the Provost or the President respectively.

1.3 Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the basic to the work of all students at the University, and to scholarly and scientific work in general. Academic integrity and honesty are critical values in upholding HKUST’s reputation as a community of scholars and its claim to the ‘intellectual property’ created by staff and students. Students are required to act
truthfully and honestly in their academic pursuit, and acquaint themselves with the University’s policy on academic integrity and discipline. It is the policy of the University that there should be zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Students who are found to have violated the principle of academic integrity will be subject to academic disciplinary actions.

The tenets of academic integrity may be violated in a number of ways. The offenses stated below are by no means exhaustive and the determination of academic misconduct is based on a consideration of the broader context of the students’ possible intent to mislead an instructor or the University as to their academic achievement, status, or qualifications. “Students” as used here includes currently registered students as well as those who have graduated or left the University.

The University’s approach to cases of academic misconduct is fundamentally educational. The process for dealing with these cases is designed to enable students to better understand the nature of academic misconduct and the high standards of academic integrity that are expected. The sanctions available in confirmed cases of misconduct are intended to signal the importance that the University places on maintaining these high standards and to communicate this to students.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

**Cheating:** conduct designed to mislead those responsible for making a judgment on a student’s academic performance or standing, including:

i. Unauthorized conveyance or receipt of examination or test questions.

ii. The giving, receiving or utilizing of unauthorized information or assistance in completing an assignment, test or examination.

iii. Breaches of the regulations for examinations set out in the Annex of the Regulations for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

iv. Impersonating another student or allowing oneself to be impersonated by another student in participating in a test or examination.

v. Submission of academic work containing purported statements of fact or references to sources that have been fabricated.
vi. Presenting for credit work that has already been accepted for credit in another course.

Plagiarism: the presentation of work which originates from other sources as one’s own without appropriate attribution to the source. It includes but is not limited to the presentation of someone else’s work/argument in one’s own words without acknowledgement, in theses, examinations, tests, term papers, and other assignments, for credit in a course or program of study or toward the fulfillment of degree requirements.

The University views plagiarism (whether intentional or unintentional) as a serious offence. Students should practice with extreme care when conducting research.

1.4 Policies and Regulations

University policies and regulations on governing student conduct, academic integrity and research conduct are available online at:

i. Regulations for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity

ii. Procedural Framework Governing Violations of Academic Integrity
    [https://www.ab.ust.hk/ccss/Senate.htm](https://www.ab.ust.hk/ccss/Senate.htm)

iii. Policy on Research Conduct and Integrity
2. Policies and Practices Governing Research Activities

2.1 Intellectual Property Policies

The University has established policies defining the characteristics, development, procedures, responsibilities, and ownership of intellectual property for students, faculty and staff and all other agents, employees and fellows of the University. Policies are organized into four different areas of interests: Copyright, Patents, Software, and Trade and Service Marks. As part of University policy, all students, faculty and staff and all other agents, employees and fellows of the University are required to agree to and abide by these policies as a condition of admission, employment and contract for services. The University may make changes to these policies from time to time.


2.2 Guidelines and Procedures for Research Practices

The University community has a collective responsibility to ensure that proper research practices are carried out in accordance with both international and University standards and regulations at all times, to be vigilant in guarding against serious lapses, and to report violations if they occur. All research conducted at the University whenever involving animals, human participants, and risks to participants’ safety should be reviewed for research practices. Under the auspices of the Committee on Research Practices, there are three Committee/Panels to review such practices. They are:

- Animal Ethics Committee;
- Human Participants Research Panel; and
- Safety Panel

Guidelines and Procedures for Research Practices at the University are available online at [http://www.vprg.ust.hk/rgs/eng/research_policies_n_guidelines/research_practices.html](http://www.vprg.ust.hk/rgs/eng/research_policies_n_guidelines/research_practices.html).
3. Admissions

3.1 General Admission Requirements

To qualify for admission to the University, applicants must meet (i) the general University admission requirements; (ii) the specific admission requirements of the program applied for; and (iii) the English language admission requirement.

University and program admission requirements are minimum requirements for admission. Meeting these minimum requirements does not guarantee admission. Applicants who possess other qualifications equivalent to the University requirements for admission may submit applications for consideration on the basis of individual merit.

Applicants seeking admission to an MPhil degree program should have obtained a bachelor’s degree from a recognized institution, or an approved equivalent qualification; and satisfied the specific requirements prescribed by the school and department concerned as to their fitness to pursue postgraduate study.

Applicants seeking admission to a PhD degree program should have obtained a bachelor’s degree with a proven record of outstanding performance from a recognized institution, or presented evidence of satisfactory work at the postgraduate level on a full-time basis for at least one year, or on a part-time basis for at least two years; and satisfied the specific requirements prescribed by the school and department concerned as to their chosen subject of research, as well as their fitness to undertake the research.

Details of the admission requirements of the University and individual programs are available at http://pg.ust.hk/admissions.

3.2 English Language Requirement for Admission

Applicants whose first language is not English and whose bachelor’s degree or equivalent qualification was awarded by an institution where the medium of instruction was not English, are required to fulfill one of
the following minimum English language requirements:

- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) – a paper-based test score of no less than 550; or an internet-based test score of no less than 80; or
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) - an overall score of 6.0 with no sub-score lower than 5.5.

_N.B. TOEFL and IELTS scores are valid for two years from the test date._

In addition to the above, individual schools or departments may stipulate higher English language proficiency requirements.

### 3.3 Application for Admission

Applicants should observe the application procedures set out by the Postgraduate Outreach and Admissions Team (PGOA) of the Office of Postgraduate Studies (PGSO).

Applications for admission to postgraduate programs in Fall Term are normally invited from September in the previous year. Applicants are strongly advised to apply well before the application closing dates. Application deadlines for individual programs may vary and should be checked prior to submitting an application. Non-local applicants are particularly encouraged to submit their applications early in order that they have sufficient time to apply for an entry permit or a student visa.

Selected applicants may be invited for an admission interview. Successful applicants will receive an offer (firm or conditional) of admission from PGOA. Applicants receiving an offer will be expected to accept or decline the offer and pay a non-refundable deposit by a date specified on the admission offer letter. Detailed application procedures are set out at [http://pg.ust.hk/admissions](http://pg.ust.hk/admissions).

### 3.4 Non-local Applicants

The University welcomes applications from non-local students who are seeking admission at the postgraduate level.
For admission purposes, non-local students are defined as those who enter Hong Kong for the purpose of education with a student visa/entry permit issued by the Director of Immigration, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). This is applicable to all non-local students including visiting and inbound exchange students.

(i) Student Visa or Entry Permit

All non-local students must obtain approval from the Immigration Department of the HKSAR (HKImmDept) before the commencement of their studies. Without such an approval, they are not allowed to register for any program of study at the University. Students who are unsure of whether or not they need a visa/entry permit should check with the HKImmDept directly (Tel: 2824 6111; Email: enquiry@immd.gov.hk).

Upon approval by the HKImmDept to enter Hong Kong for the purpose of pursuing the specified program of study at HKUST, Chinese Mainland residents and Chinese residents from Taiwan and Macao residents will be issued an entry permit label. Non-local students from other places will be issued a student visa.

Students have to apply for student visas/entry permits after they have completed the admission offer acceptance process. Chinese Mainland residents must apply for the entry permits through the University. Other students are strongly advised to apply for the student visas/entry permits through the University though they may choose to file an application on their own. While students have to initiate the student visas/entry permits application process, PGOA will provide appropriate assistance.

The HKImmDept normally takes six to eight weeks to process a student visa/entry permit application. Students who are Chinese Mainland residents will receive the entry permit labels from PGOA, and have to apply for an “Exit-entry Permit for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao” and “Relevant Exit Endorsement” at the Public Security Bureau Office where their household registrations are kept. This process will take an additional 2 weeks.
(ii) Costs of Study

In addition to tuition fees, costs associated with staying and living in Hong Kong include accommodation, medical and living expenses. Non-local students should carefully consider the financial aspects of their study in Hong Kong before coming to Hong Kong.

An average HKUST student spends approximately HK$100 per day for meals on-campus. The cost of meals off-campus varies and is substantially higher. Depending on the spending pattern of individuals, personal miscellaneous expenses on local transportation, laundry, sundries and entertainment, etc. will be about HK$600-HK$1,000 per week. More information about the cost of living in Hong Kong can be found at http://studyinhongkong.edu.hk/en/live-in-hong-kong/cost-of-living.php.

(iii) Employment During Study

During the Fall and Spring Terms, full-time research postgraduate (RPg) students are not allowed to engage in any full-time or part-time employment with the University or any other employer. This applies to both local and non-local students regardless of whether or not they are receiving Postgraduate Studentship (PGS) awards.

As a general guideline, RPg students who are not receiving PGS may apply to take up on-campus part-time work during the regular Fall and Spring Terms, and full-time research assistantship (RA) work within the University during Winter and Summer Terms. Such applications should be supported by the student’s supervisor, the PG coordinator of the home department, and the Associate Dean (PG) of the school before they are submitted to PGSO for consideration on a case-by-case basis. For further details, please refer to Section 9.2 of this Handbook.

3.5 Deferred Admission

Under special circumstances, students may apply in writing to PGOA for deferred admission to a subsequent term. Requests will be considered on an individual basis by the relevant school/department who will notify the applicant of the outcome. All approvals for deferred admission are valid for not more than two consecutive regular terms, after which re-application for admission to the University must be made.
3.6 Re-admission

Students who have withdrawn from the University may apply for admission into any program of study by following the regular admission procedures. However, those who are required to withdraw from the University due to academic reasons or failure to meet the prescribed conditions set for re-enrollment at the end of an academic leave may not apply for re-admission into the same program.

For re-admitted students, course grades and credits taken within five years prior to re-admission and not used to earn any academic qualification at the University or elsewhere may be used to fulfill requirements of the new program of study, subject to approval of the major department.
4. English Language Requirement

4.1 Medium of Instruction and Assessment

English is essentially the medium of instruction at the University. It is, therefore, crucial for students to possess an adequate level of English proficiency in order to (a) become more effective learners in their respective disciplines through the medium of English; (b) be able to disseminate their research effectively to an English-speaking audience and readership; and (c) enhance their educational and career prospects.

4.2 Spoken English Test for New Research Postgraduate Students

In order to ensure RPg students have the oral and aural skills for effective postgraduate studies and classroom teaching, at the start of their first term of study at HKUST, all new full-time RPg students are required to take a Spoken English Test, the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA), administered by the Center for Language Education.

The duties assigned to Teaching Assistants (TAs) will involve direct class interaction with undergraduate (UG) students in English. Such interaction may include the conduct of tutorials, assistance in laboratory sessions, and engagement in other UG class activities. It is important that RPg students who perform TA duties have an adequate mastery of spoken English. ELPA provides a useful assessment of the spoken English ability of those whose mother tongue or first language is not English, to determine if they can effectively perform those duties in English.

For more information concerning the design of ELPA, how to register a timeslot for the test, and how native English speakers can apply for exemption, please refer to the ELPA FAQ page at http://cle.ust.hk/tests/elpa/postgraduates/.
4.3 English Language Enhancement Courses

Students whose spoken English test score is below the threshold score or who failed to take the test in their first term of study at HKUST are required to take and pass an English language course, LANG 5000 *Foundation in Listening and Speaking for Postgraduate Students*, which has been designed to help improve their spoken English proficiency. Prior to their passing LANG 5000, students will not be permitted to take up TA duties involving direct classroom interaction with students or any teaching-related duties involving communication with students in spoken English.

Some departments may link the performance of students in LANG 5000 with the PGS rate that students receive. Departments have the discretion to reduce the PGS rate by 25% for students who fail LANG 5000 for the second sitting.

In addition, some programs require their students to take and pass additional language courses as part of the program requirements.
5. Professional Development Course

5.1 Professional Development Course (PDC)

To enhance the educational experience of RPg students of the University, the University has introduced Professional Development Courses (PDCs) to provide our MPhil and PhD students with a comprehensive set of essential transferable skills to enhance their personal growth and career development.

The PDC requirements of each school/department may vary. A summary of PDC requirements is available at http://pg.ust.hk/pdc. RPg students can find out more details about their individual PDC courses from their department/program office. Students are expected to register for the course in their first term of study in their program. Their course grade in the non-terminal terms will be a PP (“Permitted to Proceed”) with a final P/F grade being awarded in their terminal course term.

5.2 Online Administration System for PDCs

An online PDC administration system has been designed to help students enroll in PDC activities.

The system allows students to enquire what type of activities, and when they will be offered and to check on the activities for which they have already registered. It also maintains a list of the activities that students have already completed.

Through the PDC system, students can
- View their PDC requirements;
- Search event offerings and schedules;
- Enroll in PDC offerings; and
- Track their progress in fulfilling PDC requirements for their program.

Students can access the PDC system via myPortal at my.ust.hk, or the Administrative Service platform at https://www.ab.ust.hk/as/as_admin_serv.htm.
6. Fees

6.1 Tuition Fees

Tuition fees are payable in two equal installments at the beginning of each regular term. The tuition fee for the 2015/16 academic year is:

- **Full-time** – HK$42,100 per annum
- **Part-time** – HK$42,100 per annum *(for RPg students admitted from 2014/15 onward)*
- HK$21,050 per annum *(for RPg students admitted before 2014/15)*

6.2 Partial Fees

RPg students who are studying beyond the normative period of study and in their final stage of thesis writing may apply to register as Continuing Student, and pay a reduced tuition fee. The tuition fee for Continuing Student is a quarter of the full-time tuition fee, rounded up to the nearest five dollars per regular term, and has to be settled in full in a single payment:

- Continuing Student – HK$5,265 per regular term

Students who graduate in a term when they register as Continuing Student are not eligible for tuition fee refund (Session 6.3 below) even if they complete their program requirements within the first three months of the regular term concerned.

6.3 Refund Policy

Tuition fees paid are normally not refundable.

To encourage RPg students to complete their studies at the earliest possible time, a refund mechanism has been introduced. RPg students who are studying beyond the normative period of study and have met all program and residency requirements within the first three calendar months of the start of a regular term are entitled to a refund of 50% of the
tuition fee paid for that regular term. The students must have submitted their final thesis within the three-month period. This refund mechanism is applicable to both full-time and part-time students who have only their research thesis to complete for submission in the last term of study.

Students who have enrolled for courses other than MPhil/Doctoral Thesis Research in the last term are not entitled to the refund.

### 6.4 Caution Money

Each new student is required to pay a deposit of HK$300 as caution money when they first register. Charges will be made against this deposit if there are any unpaid claims against the student, such as outstanding library dues. The balance will be refunded if the student leaves the University before graduation. At graduation, the student is required to restore the balance of the caution money to its original level and the full amount of the caution money will be credited against the graduation fee.

### 6.5 Graduation Fee

On completion of the program of study and before the degree or diploma is awarded, each student is required to pay a graduation fee of HK$300. The fee is normally settled by transferring the full amount of the caution money.

### 6.6 HKUST Students’ Union Fee

Students joining the HKUST Students’ Union are required to pay an initial entry fee and thereafter an annual subscription. These fees are set by the Union and collected by the University on behalf of the Union. The entry fee, applicable to students admitted for the first time, is HK$100 and the annual subscription fee is HK$100.
6.7 Late Charges

Students may be required to pay late charges for failure to complete certain University procedures by stipulated deadlines. These include fines for overdue library books. Late charges are levied in accordance with the rules and regulations set by respective offices.

6.8 Charges for On-campus Student Accommodation

Rooms in the University Apartments are air-conditioned and the charges do not include electricity charges for air-conditioning. All charges are paid in advance in installments.

- Single rooms  –  HK$ 28,780 - $ 33,964 per residential year*  
  (excluding utility charges)

- Double rooms  –  HK$ 17,882 per residential year*  
  (excluding utility charges)

* The 2015/16 residential year covers the period from 14 August 2015 to 30 June 2016. The rates of charges are subject to further adjustment and confirmation.

6.9 Compulsory Medical Insurance

University policy stipulates that compulsory medical insurance is mandatory for all registered full-time degree-seeking non-local undergraduate and postgraduate students studying at HKUST on student visa/entry permit. Students are required to purchase this insurance from the University.

The compulsory medical insurance aims to provide better resources and safety net for non-local students in the event that they need prompt, appropriate and affordable medical services locally or outside of Hong Kong. While students may use the free general consultations and medications of the campus clinic, they might need other medical services such as hospitalization in some circumstances. There are always long waiting lists for public hospital services in Hong Kong, while medical costs in private hospitals are high.
All new and continuing non-local full-time degree-seeking students starting their study in Fall Term must pay a medical insurance fee of HK$531 with the tuition fee. Students who commence their study at HKUST in Spring Term on or after 1 February each year shall pay HK$310 for the medical insurance coverage till the end of August. This arrangement also applies to students on exchange or overseas research attachment.

Further details about student insurance schemes can be found on the website of the Scholarships and Financial Aid Office at http://sfao.ust.hk/insurance/info.html.

### 6.10 Other Fees and Charges

Other fees and charges students may come across include, but are not limited to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Per-copy Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application for Testimonial</td>
<td>HK$20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application for Transcript of Studies#</td>
<td>HK$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(excluding mailing charges)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement of Student ID Card</td>
<td>HK$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application for Award Certification Letter*</td>
<td>HK$20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement of Diploma (excluding mailing charges)</td>
<td>HK$400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A free copy of transcript will be issued to students upon graduation or withdrawal from the University.

* A free copy of certification letter will be issued to students upon graduation.
7. Scholarships, Awards and Financial Assistance

7.1 Postgraduate Studentships (PGS)

Postgraduate awards in the form of studentships are allocated to full-time RPg students of the University to provide them with financial assistance to cover daily subsistence, tuition fees and other related expenses during the course of their study. The studentship award is provided to ensure that RPg students do not need to be concerned with looking for other sources of income to support themselves. Full-time RPg students should devote full efforts to their studies.

Awards are based on academic merit, English language proficiency, and the suitability of the RPg students for the proposed program of study, as is the selection of applicants for admission to postgraduate studies at HKUST.

All recipients of PGS, including awardees of the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS) and the Asian Future Leaders Scholarship Program (AFLSP), may be required to engage in ancillary duties related to teaching and/or research, which supplement their formal degree program. The nature of these assignments may vary from time to time according to need.

RPg students, except HKPFS and AFLSP awardees, may receive a monthly PGS of up to HK$15,000 in the 2015/16 academic year. The actual PGS rate a student receives is determined by the home department. The PGS rate, which is reviewed annually, may be adjusted upward or downward. The PGS rates for an academic year are normally announced at the beginning of Spring Term of the previous year.

For details, please refer to the “Terms and Conditions of Postgraduate Studentships” provided in Appendix III of this Handbook.

7.2 Scholarships

The University administers a number of scholarships and awards on behalf of individual and corporate donors. Most are offered to students...
on the strength of academic merit and the recommendations of a school or department. Other scholarships may have conditions specified by the donors. Details are available on the website of the Scholarships and Financial Aid Office at http://sfao.ust.hk/scholarships/intro_postgraduate.html.

7.3 Government Student Financial Assistance

Students who have the right of abode in Hong Kong or have resided or have had their home in Hong Kong continuously for three complete years immediately prior to the commencement of their studies, are eligible to apply for financial aid from the Student Finance Office (SFO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. Holders of student visas are not eligible to apply for any financial aid from SFO, irrespective of their number of years of residence in Hong Kong.

Full-time students are eligible to apply for the Tertiary Student Finance Scheme (TSFS), and the Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students (NLSFT). Part-time students are eligible to apply for the Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme (ENLS).

(i) Tertiary Student Finance Scheme (TSFS)
Under this scheme, means-tested awards are offered in the form of grants and/or loans. Grants are given for tuition fees and academic expenses while loans are for living expenses. The level of financial assistance is related to the applicant’s family income and financial status. Grants need not be repaid; loans are to be repaid at a relatively low interest rate within a specified period after graduation or upon leaving the University.

(ii) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme (NLSFT)
NLSFT is to complement the TSFS to provide financial assistance in the form of loans. This scheme offers loans up to the amount of tuition fees to applicants who do not apply for assistance or who fail to receive assistance from the TSFS. It also allows students who receive assistance from the TSFS to obtain loans up to the difference between the maximum assistance and the amount they receive under the TSFS, subject to the NLS loan maximum (equivalent to the tuition fees payable) not being exceeded. Loans awarded are not means-
tested. Students have to repay the loan at a cost recovery interest rate within a specified period after graduation or upon leaving the University.

(iii) **Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme (ENLS)**
Under this scheme, non-means-tested financial assistance is provided to students studying part-time, in the form of a loan up to the amount of tuition fees. Students have to repay the loan at a cost recovery interest rate within a specified period after graduation or upon leaving the University.

Application forms and further details are available on the SFO website at [http://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/sfo/eng/schemes/pst.htm](http://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/sfo/eng/schemes/pst.htm) or the website of the Scholarships and Financial Aid Office. Students with financial difficulties are urged to apply for government assistance as soon as it is open for application.

### 7.4 University Loans and Bursaries

Students with additional financial needs may apply for loans and bursaries administered by the University. In general, these funds are used to supplement, but not substitute for, government financial assistance.

Details of loans and bursaries are available at [http://sfao.ust.hk/sfa/info_university.html](http://sfao.ust.hk/sfa/info_university.html).
8. Registration in Programs

8.1 Definition

Enrollment in programs involves payment of tuition and other prescribed fees where appropriate and completion of the registration process. Failure to enroll in the program in any regular term will result in automatic withdrawal from the program and the University, unless a formal approval of Leave from Study has been obtained (see Section 8.6). Moreover, a student must be officially registered in the program in the regular term when the student is being considered for graduation from the program concerned.

8.2 Double Registration

Unless prior permission from the Academic Registrar is obtained, students are not permitted to concurrently register for another program at this University or at another tertiary institution. If students are found to be registered elsewhere without seeking prior approval, they will normally be required to discontinue their study at this University.

Students who wish to apply for simultaneous registration are required to submit an “Application for Double Registration” (form RR-29)* to the Academic Records and Registration (ARR), Academic Registry together with appropriate documentary evidence. Students will be notified of the result of the application in writing.

8.3 Late Registration

Non-local postgraduate students admitted to the University in a particular academic year must complete registration in their programs by the end of the add/drop period in the Fall or Spring Term. Under special circumstances, students may apply in writing to ARR, Academic Registry via the department for late program registration for the term concerned.
8.4 Mode of Study

The MPhil and PhD are research degrees, and students in some disciplines may be required to participate in research on a full-time basis.

Students may apply to their department, prior to the beginning of any term, for transfer from full-time to part-time or from part-time to full-time status. When such a transfer is allowed, the remaining program requirements will be determined.

Full-time research students are expected to be in attendance on a year-round basis. For part-time students, attendance shall be as above except on a part-time basis as defined by the requirements of their programs of study.

8.5 Duration of Study

The normative period of study for an MPhil degree in full-time mode is two years. The normative period of study for completing a PhD degree in full-time mode is four years after the first degree with a reduction of one year if a relevant research master’s degree was earned prior to entering the PhD program.

The maximum time allowed for degree completion is five years for a master’s degree, and eight years for a doctoral degree. Time limits for part-time study are the same as for full-time study. The time limits are in effect whether or not the student is in continuous registration. That is, period of approved Leave from Study (see Section 8.6), and suspension period are also counted toward the maximum time allowed for degree completion.

8.6 Leave from Study

Students are discouraged from interrupting their program of study. In exceptional circumstances with sufficient justification, students may apply for Leave from Study for one regular term, subject to the approval of the major department. Applications for Leave from Study for two consecutive regular terms require the approval of the Dean or the Dean’s
designee. Applications for Leave from Study for more than two consecutive regular terms will normally not be considered. Any exception to this rule requires the approval of the Office of Postgraduate Studies.

The approved period of Leave from Study will be counted toward the time limit for completion of the program being pursued (see Section 8.5).

To apply for Leave from Study, students should submit an “Application for Leave from Study” (form RR-8a)* together with the appropriate supporting documents to the department for approval before the start of the proposed leave period.

### 8.7 Retention of Student Status

Research postgraduate (RPg) students who submit their theses for examination at least four weeks before the commencement of the following regular term, and who are unable to sit for their thesis examinations before the start of the following regular term through no fault of their own, are allowed to retain their student status for a period not longer than four weeks into the following regular term.

Those students whose date of submission of thesis copies for examination falls short of the four-week period prior to the start of a regular term are not eligible to apply for retention of student status.

Students are required to submit an “Application for Retention of Student Status (for Research Postgraduates)” (form RR-36)* to ARR, Academic Registry within two weeks after they have submitted their thesis copies to departments for examination purpose.

During this four-week non-fee paying period, these students are still regarded as students of the University and are entitled to normal student services. However, they are not entitled to receive postgraduate studentships nor to University student accommodation.

The respective thesis examinations should be held within the first three weeks of the following regular term, leaving at least one week for the candidates to submit the final version of their theses. In the event that
students are unable to submit their final theses before the end of the four-week period, they are required to register as regular students to maintain their student status. They have to complete program registration, class enrollment and pay the tuition for the term concerned.

8.8 Continuing Student Status

RPg students who are studying beyond the normative period of study and in their final stage of thesis writing may apply to register as Continuing Student, and pay a reduced tuition fee (see Section 6.2). Students’ previous mode of study, whether full-time or part-time before changing to this status, will remain unchanged. The application “Application for Continuing Student Status of Research Postgraduate Students” (form RR-45)*, duly considered and endorsed by the thesis supervisor, and department head/PG coordinator has to reach ARR, Academic Registry at least four weeks before the start of the term the Continuing Student status is to be effected.

Continuing Students, regardless of their mode of study, are not eligible to receive any forms of financial assistance, and are not entitled to University student accommodation. There is no time limit for RPg students to register as Continuing Students. However, the maximum study period allowed for degree completion still holds. Once having registered for the Continuing Student status, students are not allowed to change back to regular student status.

8.9 Changes of Registration

A student may change from one program of study to another with the permission of the major department to which the student wishes to transfer. If a transfer is approved, that department will determine which credits from the student’s former program apply to the new program. Normally, the transfer will not be effected until the following regular term. Students who wish to transfer to another program of study in the middle of a term should obtain the prior approval of the major department and the Dean or the Dean’s designee. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, requests for program transfers to be effected in the middle of a term are not supported.
For students who have transferred from one program of study to another, the maximum time for degree completion will be counted from the first day of registration at the University.

To apply for program transfer, students are required to submit “Application for Program Transfer/Change of Academic Load (PG)” (form RR-6a)* to the receiving department for consideration.

8.10 Registration Beyond Program Completion

Students who have completed their program requirements are not allowed to continue their registration for the same program of study in subsequent terms.

8.11 Withdrawal from the University

Students who withdraw or are required to withdraw from the University must complete clearance procedures as specified by the Academic Registrar. Only those who have completed the formal procedures for withdrawal will be entitled to receive refund of caution money and a free copy of the transcript of studies.

To apply for withdrawal and refund of caution money, students should complete and return the “Application for Withdrawal of Study” (form RR-12)* form to ARR, Academic Registry.

* All forms are downloadable from the ARR, Academic Registry website under the section “Useful Information and Forms” at http://arr.ust.hk/reg/in/in_forms/forms_std_student/forms_std_student.html.
9. Study Commitment

9.1 Study Commitment

Students admitted to a full-time program are expected to study full-time for their programs, and are cautioned that outside work commitments may impede their academic performance.

Full-time RPg students are provided with Postgraduate Studentships (PGS) award (See Section 7.1) to ensure that they need not be concerned with looking for other sources of income to support themselves. Although study-related work or internship may be desirable experiences to have, it may not be critical to the studies being pursued. Full-time RPg students should devote full efforts to their studies.

9.2 Internship & Employment During Study

All full-time MPhil and PhD students should not take up any employment or internship outside their research studies regardless of whether or not they are receiving PGS awards.

During the Fall and Spring Terms, full-time RPg students, both local and non-local, are not allowed to engage in any full-time or part-time employment with the University or any other employer. The only exception is that full-time RPg students who are not receiving PGS may take up no more than 10 hours per week on-campus part-time work, subject to the prior approval of the student’s supervisor, the departmental PG coordinator, the Associate Dean (PG) of the school, and the Office of Postgraduate Studies (PGSO).

During Winter or Summer Term, with the prior approval of the supervisor, the departmental PG coordinator, the Associate Dean (PG) of the school, and PGSO, RPg students may engage in full-time research assistantship (RA) work within the University. In such cases, the PGS will be temporarily suspended during the period of employment as research assistants. Students who wish to take up an RA appointment should seek the prior approval of PGSO via their home department before they commit themselves for Winter or Summer RA work.
In addition, non-local RPG students must satisfy the conditions of their stay laid down by the Immigration Department of the HKSAR.

Further details can be found on the PGSO website at http://pg.ust.hk/guides_n_forms/students/rpg_employment.pdf.

### 9.3 Annual Leave

With the prior approval of the home department, full-time RPG students may have up to 21 calendar days’ leave in an academic year (1 September to 31 August). This leave is inclusive of Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays that lie within the leave period. Those who arrive late will have their annual leave pro-rated.

Unused leave for one year cannot be carried forward to the next academic year. The decision on whether or not a leave request should be granted rests jointly with the thesis supervisor of the student and the departmental PG coordinator.
10. Curriculum Requirements

10.1 Adherence to the Curriculum

Each student enrolled in a specific program is subject to the requirements of the major department and the University. All postgraduate students must adhere to the curriculum of the year of entry throughout their program of study.

Departments should, as far as possible, deliver the curriculum advertised unless due to special circumstances, changes to the original curriculum are necessary or advantageous.

Students should ensure that they understand the program requirements and plan ahead to complete their program within the permitted duration of study. Deviations from University requirements must be approved by the Office of Postgraduate Studies. Deviations from school/departmental requirements, or requirements of major programs must be approved by the Dean or the Dean’s designee.

Detailed curriculum requirements for students admitted in the current academic year are published at http://publish.ust.hk/prog_crs/pgprog/ and for students admitted in previous years at http://pg.ust.hk/progcatalog/.

10.2 Thesis Research

Research postgraduate programs focus on original research by the students. In addition to coursework requirements, RPg students will undertake thesis research under the direction of their supervisors.

Further guidelines on thesis research are provided in Section 15 of this Handbook.

10.3 Residency Requirement

Full-time RPg students are required to be on campus full-time and consequently in such geographical proximity as to be able to participate
fully in University activities associated with the program. Residency provides students with an opportunity to become immersed in the intellectual environment of the University. Also included in residency are periods during which students’ research requires off-campus field or non-HKUST laboratory work.

The residency requirement for a full-time MPhil degree is two regular terms; and that for a full-time PhD degree is three regular terms if a relevant research master’s degree was earned prior to entering the PhD program, but four regular terms for those who do not. A term of residency of part-time students counts as a one-half term of residency.

Students who have not completed their thesis work should continue registration on a full- or part-time basis, without interruption.

10.4 PhD Qualifying Examination

Students enrolled on PhD programs are required to pass a qualifying examination within a stipulated period in order to obtain the PhD candidacy. The qualifying examination may be conducted through the oral or written mode, or both. Those who fail the qualifying examination after two attempts are not allowed to continue with their doctoral studies. Individual programs may have stipulations concerning the timeframe that students should take the qualifying examination and when the qualifying examination should be retaken in the case of failure in the first attempt.
11. Course Registration (Class Enrollment)

11.1 Definition

Course registration (Class enrollment) deals with the selection of and registration in appropriate courses for a specific term. Class enrollment in a specific course for a term requires approval from the major department. The student’s program registration will be revoked without formal enrollment in any course. Students should ensure that they have properly enrolled in the courses specified for a term. Students whose names are not on the class enrollment list will not be allowed to sit for examinations of the courses concerned and will not be awarded any grades for the courses.

Students should acquaint themselves with the general rules for postgraduate course registration (class enrollment) and departmental course requirements for the program. They should also refer to the online Course Catalog at http://publish.ust.hk/prog_crs/pgcourse/ and read the course description and requirements carefully before selecting a course.

11.2 Credit Requirements

Credit requirements for postgraduate programs apply only to course and project work, not to thesis research. Unless restricted by program regulations, a maximum of six credits of approved undergraduate courses at 4000-level may be used for postgraduate credit. Of the six credits, no more than three may be from the student’s major department.

11.3 Study Load

The normal study load of full-time research degree students is ten credits per regular term whereas the maximum study load for those in part-time mode is eight.

Students registered as Continuing Student can only enroll in the thesis research course.
11.4 Enrollment in Thesis Research Course

Students should ensure that they enroll on the appropriate thesis research course when they begin their thesis research work. They should continue to register in the thesis research course until they have submitted their thesis.

11.5 Background, Prerequisites, Co-requisites, Exclusions and Co-listed Courses

A course may require a certain general level of desired prior knowledge as background. Students should ensure that they have the necessary background to undertake a course, and may seek help from their supervisors or departmental PG coordinator.

If a course designates other courses as its prerequisites, students must have taken and passed the prerequisites before they may enroll in the course, unless exemption is granted by the course offering department. If a course designates other courses as its co-requisites, students must have taken the co-requisites prior to, or at the same time as, the specified course. Exemption from prerequisite or co-requisite requirements requires the approval of the instructor of the course concerned.

If a course has exclusions specified, students are not allowed to enroll in the course if they have already taken and passed any of the stated exclusions. Also students are not allowed to enroll in a course together with any of its stated exclusions in the same term.

A co-listed course is a course offered under more than one course code. Differences in assessment schemes or assignments for students enrolled in different classes will be explained to students at the beginning of the class. Students may enroll in and earn credits for only one of the co-listed versions of the course.

11.6 Course Auditing

With the permission of the course instructor, postgraduate students may enroll in a course as an auditor, who attends a course and participates in
activities up to and including the writing of the final examination but not receiving a formal grade.

Subject to satisfactory completion of the requirements set by the course instructor, the course will be designated “AU” on the student’s transcript; otherwise the course will be removed from the class enrollment record. The credit load of audit courses is counted toward the study load of a student.

11.7 Course Add/Drop and Course Withdrawal

Students may make changes to their course registration (class enrollment) during the add/drop period which is scheduled at the beginning of each term. Changes made in this period will not be reflected in the student’s record.

Requests to add or withdraw from courses after the add/drop period will not be accepted except under extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student. Students wishing to request for course add or withdrawal after the add/drop period will be required to provide the department with full justification for making the application. The request has to be supported by the course instructor concerned, and endorsed by the department head, and the Dean or the Dean’s designee before it is forwarded to the Academic Records and Registration (ARR), Academic Registry for consideration. If approval is granted for course withdrawal, the Withdrawal without Penalty Grade “W” will be recorded on the student’s transcript as the course grade.

To apply for course add or withdrawal after the add/drop period, students are required to submit an “Application for Class Enrollment/Withdrawal after Add/Drop Period” (form RR-22)* to the department for approval.

* All forms are downloadable from the ARR, Academic Registry website under the section “Useful Information and Forms” at http://arr.ust.hk/reg/in/in_forms/forms_std_student/forms_std_student.html.
12. Course Substitution and Credit Transfer

12.1 Course Substitution

Course substitution may be granted if the student can provide evidence, such as a transcript and course syllabus, that a course is equivalent in content and level to another course taken elsewhere, for which a satisfactory grade has been obtained. The course taken previously should be equivalent to an undergraduate course at 4000-level or above.

Application for course substitution must be made to the major department during students’ first term of study after admission. The application must first be reviewed by the course instructor on the equivalency in course content and level; if supported, approval from the department head/PG coordinator is required.

If approved, no credits will be given for the exempted course, and the student will be required to take an approved alternative course to fulfill program requirements.

12.2 Credit Transfer

Credit transfer may be granted to students in recognition of previous studies completed elsewhere at an appropriate level as recognized by the University. Students applying for credit transfer must provide evidence, such as a transcript and course syllabus, to illustrate that a course is equivalent in content and level to another course taken elsewhere, for which a satisfactory grade has been obtained.

Applications must be made to students’ major department during their first term after admission. For students who complete studies elsewhere during their registration at HKUST, for example on an exchange program, applications must be submitted to the department for approval within one month after students’ return to their study at HKUST. Late applications will not be considered.
Applications must first be reviewed by the course instructor; if supported, approval from the department head/PG coordinator is required. The number of transfer credits to be granted will be determined by the major department following a review of past academic records and the level of equivalence to HKUST courses concerned. Conditions on the granting of transfer credits to RPg students are as follows:

i. Credits earned at the undergraduate level can only be used for credit transfer purpose if the credits had not been used to earn another academic qualification, and that the course must be at 4000-level or above;

ii. Transfer credits cannot be granted in recognition of non-coursework experience or research work completed either at the University or at other institutions; and

iii. Credits for transfer must be at grade ‘B’ or above.

Transfer credits granted will not be included in the calculation of grade averages but the courses approved for credit transfer will be reflected on students’ transcripts.

12.3 Transfer of Course Grades and Credits on Resumption of Studies

Students who had previously withdrawn from their program of study at the University but who, after a period of time, are re-admitted to a program at the University, may be allowed to transfer their previous course grades and credits to the new program of study, subject to approval. Such a transfer of course grades and credits is restricted to courses which had been completed within five years prior to the resumption of study at the University. In addition, these credits must not have been used to earn any academic qualifications either at the University or elsewhere.
13. Course Grading

13.1 Assignment of Course Grades

Grades with grade points assigned are the default grades for courses. Other grading scheme may only be used where this is approved for the course.

Grades given in each course are based on student performance in the final examination, tests, essays and reports, presentations and other forms of classroom participation, assignments, and laboratory exercises, although not all these elements may be present in each course. A failing grade in the laboratory component, if any, of a course may result in a failure in the whole course. The instructor in each course will announce the course grading scheme to the class in the first week of lectures.

13.2 Grades for Postgraduate Courses

Students receive grades and grade points for each course in which they are enrolled. Grades range from A+ to F. The grades C- to D-, and E, are not used in postgraduate courses. For the purpose of calculating the grade point averages, numerical grade points are assigned to each course grade, except HP, P, LP, U, Y, AU, I, P, PP, T and W which are not included in the calculation of the grade point averages. Grades and grade points for courses are shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Excellent Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Good Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>Marginal Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Grading

**P/F Grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Pass, Ungraded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HP/P/LP/U/Y Grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>High Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Low Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>Audited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Permitted to Proceed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Transferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Withdrawal without Penalty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1. A failed course (graded F) will not be credited toward a degree.
2. The Pass, Ungraded (P) grade is given only for courses that are indicated in the course description in the Course Catalog that they will be graded as such.
3. The HP, P, LP, U and Y grades are for use exclusively on courses of the Kellogg-HKUST Executive Master of Business Administration and the HKUST Executive Master of Business Administration programs offered by the School of Business and Management.
4. An Unsatisfactory (U) grade will not be credited toward a degree.
5. An Incomplete (Y) grade is used when there is initial delay in coursework. This grade must be converted to a regular grade within a specified deadline; otherwise it will be converted to a U grade.
6. The Audited (AU) grade will be assigned when an auditing student has completed, to the satisfaction of the instructor, any conditions established at registration as an auditor. If the conditions are not met, the course will be deleted from the student's record.
7. An Incomplete (I) grade is used when work is necessarily delayed through no fault of the student, such as a medical problem or an equipment breakdown. This grade must be converted to a regular grade at least one working day before the start of the following regular term; otherwise it is converted to an “F” grade. The “I” grade given to students on postgraduate diploma and postgraduate certificate programs must be converted to a regular grade within one month from the last day for grade reporting for courses, which is normally the sixth working day from the last day of examinations for the rest of the courses. Otherwise it is converted to an “F” grade.
8. When progress in thesis or project work is satisfactory but not scheduled for completion at the end of a regular term, the “Permitted to Proceed” (PP) grade is used.
9. The Withdrawal without Penalty (W) grade is given when a student is granted special approval for withdrawal from a course after the add/drop period.
13.3 Grade Reports

After the examination period, students are required to check their own course grades which are available online on the web-based student information system. Course grades will be posted on this web-based system as soon as they become available, but not later than six working days from the last day of the examination period for the term.

13.4 Grade Averages

A grade average (GA) is the weighted average grade obtained in a group of courses where each course is given a weight equal to its credit value. Transfer credits, exchange credits, and courses graded HP, P, LP, U, Y, AU, I, P, PP, T and W are not included in the calculation.

There are three grade averages. The term grade average (TGA) is the grade average covering all courses taken in a specific term. The cumulative grade average (CGA) is based on all the courses taken by the student up to the time of calculation. Students’ TGA and CGA will be calculated at the end of each of the four terms. At graduation, a graduation grade average (GGA) will be calculated from the courses that are presented for an academic award. The GGA for graduation for all postgraduate programs must at least be 2.850.

13.5 Grade Review

A student may apply for a grade review of a course in which the student was enrolled in the term just completed. Students who consider that a mistake has been made in the process of calculating or determining a grade for a course may apply for a grade review. They should first discuss the matter with the course instructor as soon as the course grades are released. Where a clerical or administrative error has been made, the course offering department will report the revised grade to Academic Records and Registration (ARR), Academic Registry.

If the student’s concern remains unresolved after this informal discussion, the student may submit a request for a grade review to the head of the course offering department in writing within two weeks from the day on which grades are released:
Course Grading

i. Stating the grounds for the request for review;
ii. Describing the relevant facts; and
iii. Providing supporting evidence.

If a review is granted, the department head will arrange for the review within three weeks after the release of the grade.

Requests for review of course grades should normally be resolved at the department level. Students who wish to appeal against the decision of the department must do so in writing to the Dean of the School within two weeks of receiving the decision stating the grounds for the appeal. Upon receipt of the written request, the Dean will determine whether or not a further review of the grade should be granted and how the review will be conducted. The Dean’s decision is final.

13.6 Course Repeats

A course with a grade lower than C shall not be credited toward a program although it will be reflected in the student’s record. Only two courses (excluding audited courses) in a postgraduate program may be retaken, and each may be repeated only once. The new grade obtained at the second attempt will replace the previous grade in the calculation of the grade averages.

13.7 Illness or Other Circumstances Affecting Assessment

If students wish the University to take into account medical reasons or some other extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control that have affected their performance in an examination, or ability to attend an examination, or to complete other assessment activities, they must report the circumstances of the case in writing and provide appropriate supporting documents to ARR, Academic Registry within one week of the scheduled date of the assessment activity.

The Academic Registrar will review the case and make recommendations to the Dean or the Dean’s designee. The student will be notified of the result of the request within one week from the date the request is lodged with ARR, Academic Registry. The make-up examination, if any, will be
held within five weeks after the regular examination period. The format of the make-up examination will be decided by the course instructor concerned.
14. Progression and Academic Standing

14.1 Academic Standing

The academic standing of all postgraduate students is reviewed at the end of each regular term and assessed by their departments. Unsatisfactory performance may result in students being denied the opportunity to continue their study. In order for postgraduate students to attain good academic standing, they must, at the end of each term,

i. obtain a cumulative grade average (CGA) of 2.850 or higher; and
ii. show a reasonable progress toward program completion.

Students who fail to maintain good academic standing in a term will be issued a letter of warning by the department head.

14.2 Academic Leave and Academic Dismissal

Students who fail to maintain good academic standing in two consecutive regular terms will have their records reviewed by the department and may be required to take academic leave and have their study suspended. The academic leave will last from one to three regular terms during which students may apply for re-enrollment in their program of study at the end of their suspension period. If this application for re-enrollment is approved, certain conditions may apply and the student must regain good academic standing in the term immediately following re-enrollment. Students will be dismissed from the University if the conditions are not met. If re-enrollment in the program is not granted by the expiry of the academic leave, the suspension will be converted to a dismissal from the University.

14.3 Annual Progress Reports

All RPg students are required to submit by the end of June every year a written review of their study progress in the past twelve months, and describe their study plan for the twelve months ahead, using an online proforma designed for this purpose.
Progression and Academic Standing

The progress report will be read by members of the Thesis Supervision Committee (TSC), and their evaluation will be discussed with the student concerned. The progress report will also be reviewed by the PG coordinator of the home department, and necessary action may be taken to address issues of concern.

Students who fail to submit the duly completed and approved report form to the Academic Records and Registration (ARR), Academic Registry by the stipulated deadline may not be allowed to register for their program of study for the following year.

In April/May each year, the annual progress reporting system will be open for access via myPortal at my.ust.hk, and the Administrative Service platform at https://www.ab.ust.hk/as/as_admin_serv.htm.

The first part of the report form is to be completed by the student who should enclose a brief self-assessment summary report at the time the report form is submitted to the thesis supervisor. The second part is an assessment of the work done by the student as well as the progress made since the previous report by the thesis supervisor and TSC.

Thesis supervisors are required to discuss the content of the report with their students and let them read the report, as one of the main purposes of the annual progress report is to allow supervisors to advise students on their research progress, the expectations of TSC and whether their progress is acceptable to TSC. Thesis supervisors should note that terminating the study of a student due to poor performance or slow progress without prior written warning may constitute student grievance.

Should a particular student's progress is found to be unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory, the department or program office is requested to issue a warning letter to the student specifying the expectations and the courses of action for performance improvement. The warning letter should also stipulate the possible consequences, such as reduction or suspension of Postgraduate Studentships, if the improvement is not satisfactory. A copy of the warning letter should be forwarded to ARR, Academic Registry for record purpose.
15. **Guidelines on Thesis Research**

15.1 **Thesis Supervision**

Each RPg student will be assigned a thesis supervisor who oversees the student’s research. Both the thesis supervisor and the student are expected to actively involve in the thesis research process. The establishment and maintenance of good relationship between the thesis supervisor and the student are founded on mutual respect and open communication. In addition, to ensure the quality of thesis research and to enhance the learning experience of RPg students, a Thesis Supervision Committee (TSC) will be established for each student.

Please refer to the “Guide on Thesis Supervision” (Appendix IV) for details.

15.2 **Preparation of Thesis**

The thesis shall conform in layout, binding and presentation which is suitable for library cataloging and shelving. Thesis takes its place in the library as a product of original thinking and research, and it is therefore, designed to appear in a form comparable to published works.

Please refer to the “Guidelines on Thesis Preparation” (Appendix V) for details of the requirements on thesis.

15.3 **Scheduling Thesis Examinations**

Students who wish to appear before a Thesis Examination Committee (TEC) must indicate to their department at least six weeks before the proposed date of thesis examination, and deliver to their department sufficient hard or electronic thesis copies at least four weeks before the thesis examination. A copy will be put on display prior to the thesis examination for perusal by departmental faculty, students, other members of the University community, and members of the public.

MPhil students should refer to “Guidelines on Procedures for Scheduling MPhil Thesis Examinations” (Appendix VI) for details.
PhD students should refer to the “Guidelines on Procedures for Scheduling PhD Thesis Examinations” (Appendix VII) for details.

15.4 Thesis Examination Committee

The thesis examination is mandatory for students enrolled in research postgraduate programs and is conducted by TEC.

For MPhil thesis examinations, upon the recommendations of TSC of the candidate being examined, the department head/program director shall appoint an MPhil TEC to examine the candidate who has expressed the intention of defending his/her thesis.

An MPhil TEC shall consist of at least three faculty members, including:

i. A Chairperson;
ii. The thesis supervisor(s); and
iii. One other faculty member.

Please refer to the “Guidelines on the Appointment and Roles of Chairpersons and Examiners of MPhil Thesis Examination Committees” (Appendix VIII) for details.

For PhD thesis examinations, upon the recommendations of the department and the school, the Office of Postgraduate Studies (PGSO) shall appoint a PhD TEC to examine the candidate who has expressed the intention of defending his/her thesis.

A PhD TEC shall consist of:

i. A Chairperson from outside the student’s major department;
ii. The thesis supervisor(s);
iii. Two academic staff members, in addition to the thesis supervisor(s), from the student’s major department;
iv. One academic staff member, other than the thesis supervisor(s), from outside the department; and
v. One examiner external to the University who has expertise in the field being examined.
Please refer to the “Guidelines on the Appointment and Roles of Chairpersons and Examiners of PhD Thesis Examination Committees” (Appendix IX) for details.

15.5 Conduct of Thesis Examinations

The thesis examination takes place in a single session and comprises four parts, the first two of which are open to all members of the University and departmental guests. The third part is closed to all but the candidate and the TEC, and the fourth is a closed session of the examiners in the absence of the candidate.

The first part is an oral presentation by the candidate, emphasizing the major elements of the research and the results obtained.

The second part is an open questioning session, involving members of the TEC and others in attendance.

The third is a closed session involving a less formal discussion between the candidate and TEC on the candidate’s research. At the end of this part of the examination, the candidate must leave the examination venue.

The fourth and final part is a closed session involving only TEC to assess the quality of the thesis, and the performance of the candidate during the examination. In arriving at a decision, the votes of members of TEC carry equal weight. The Chairperson is responsible for advising the Committee the vote of the external examiner in absentia, if applicable. A report on the thesis examination is then prepared by the Chairperson, together with members of TEC.

Please refer to the “Guidelines on the Conduct of MPhil and PhD Thesis Examinations” (Appendix X) for details.

15.6 Thesis Examination Results

A thesis examination can have one of the following results:

- Passed;
- Passed subject to minor corrections;
• Passed subject to major corrections;
• Failed but may be resubmitted; or
• Failed.

15.7 Post-thesis Examination Arrangements and Submission of Final Thesis

A “Failed” grade results in the automatic withdrawal of the candidate from the program of study and termination of registration at the University.

In all other cases, the candidate must submit a final version of the thesis by the deadline as required by the University or a date specified by TEC, whichever is earlier. In the event that a candidate misses the specified deadline, the candidate will be viewed to have failed to meet the thesis examination requirements of the University and will be deemed to have failed the requirements of the degree program being pursued.

If the delay in submitting the final thesis copies is no fault of the candidate, he/she may appeal for an exception to be made for the above rules to be lifted. Appeal supported by the thesis supervisor should be submitted to PGSO via the PG coordinator with the endorsement from the relevant school.

Please refer to the “Guidelines on the Conduct of MPhil and PhD Thesis Examinations” (Appendix X) for details on the submission of final thesis.
16. Graduation

16.1 Graduation on Completion of Studies

When students have completed the degree requirements for an award, or are enrolled in courses that will complete the requirements for an award, they will be included in the list of potential graduates.

To be considered for graduation, an MPhil or PhD student must:

i. Complete the courses specified for the program;
ii. Achieve a graduation grade average of at least 2.850 in the courses used to satisfy the program requirements;
iii. Attain a pass in the thesis examination;
iv. Complete the program within the specified time limit; and
v. Meet the residency requirements of the program.

16.2 Graduation Grade Average (GGA)

At graduation, a graduation grade average (GGA) will be calculated from the courses that are presented for an academic award. The GGA for graduation for all postgraduate programs must at least be 2.850.

If a student has taken more courses than required by the degree, upon the recommendation of the department, certain courses included in the calculation of CGA can be excluded from the GGA calculation to improve GGA of the student. Otherwise, all courses taken will be included.

16.3 Graduation Approval and Award of Degrees

Endorsement by School Boards or their Postgraduate Studies Committees is required to confirm the graduation list and any special recommendations by departments for degree completion. Departmental and school recommendations are then considered and approved by the Committee on Postgraduate Studies (CPS), as delegated by the Senate.
Graduation

The University confers degrees twice a year, once in May/June and once in November. The official degree diploma is issued only after degree conferment.

16.4 Congregation

The Congregation is the formal graduation ceremony at which students are awarded their degrees by the Chancellor or other officers of the University as stipulated in the University Statutes. This graduation ceremony is held in Fall Term of each year at a time and place determined by the University.

Attendance at the Congregation is not compulsory. The degree will be awarded \textit{in absentia} to those graduands who are not present at the ceremony.

16.5 Degree Diploma

Diplomas are normally distributed to graduates within one month after the conferment of the degree. Diplomas show in Chinese and English the following:

- Name of the graduate, in the same words and format as shown on the graduate’s Hong Kong Identity Card, with the surname capitalized and appearing first, followed by a comma and the given names;

- Degree title, which is shown the same as the program title, with no option/stream/concentration given; and

- The date of degree conferment.
17. Appeals and Grievance Channels

17.1 Appeals

A student may make an appeal in writing to the Associate Dean of the relevant school responsible for postgraduate studies for matters related to his/her study.

17.2 Grievance Channels

If students have any grievance about their program, their thesis work, their study or supervision arrangements, channels are readily available to help them settle their grievance and alleviate their concerns.

When a student encounters any difficulty or has any concern that he/she feels should be conveyed to or discussed with the University, the first stop should normally be the PG coordinator. If this does not work or is not appropriate for some reasons, the next level for voicing grievance is to the department head. If the issue cannot be settled satisfactorily in the department, the student may approach the Associate Dean of the school responsible for postgraduate studies for advice. In the event that the issue still cannot be resolved within the school, the next stop is the Office of Postgraduate Studies. If the issue-in-question involves existing academic policies, the matter may be referred to the Committee on Postgraduate Studies or Senate for consideration.

In general, if the grievance is of a personal nature, the student may consider talking to a student counselor of the Counseling and Wellness Center of the Student Affairs Office for advice.
Appendices
Appendices

Appendix I

Committee on Postgraduate Studies (CPS)

A. Terms of Reference

1. To advise and make recommendations to the Senate on policies and regulations, and to monitor and review procedures, quality and performance relating to postgraduate studies, including, but not limited to:

   i. General program requirements;
   ii. Program development including new programs recommended by School Boards;
   iii. Program quality control, including examinations and award of degrees;
   iv. Matters from the School Boards relating to postgraduate studies and student appeals;
   v. Selection and admission of postgraduate students;
   vi. Collection and maintenance of student records;
   vii. Student fees and financial assistance; and
   viii. Other matters as may be required by the Senate.

2. To submit to the Chairman of the Senate no later than 31 July each year a written report covering the period 1 July – 30 June on the activities of the committee during the previous academic year.

B. Powers

1. To co-opt such additional voting members as may be required but not exceeding one-third of the formal Committee membership.

2. To form any working groups as considered necessary.
### C. Membership *(Information as of 1 July 2015)*

**Chairman**  
Appointed by the Chairman of the Senate  
Professor Ravindra GOONETILLEKE

**Member and Secretary**  
Associate Vice-President for Research and Graduate Studies, *ex-officio*  
Professor Charles W W Ng

**Members**

(a) Deans of Schools or designees  
- **Science**  
  - Professor Penger TONG  
- **Engineering**  
  - Professor King Lun YEUNG  
- **Business & Management**  
  - Mr Sean FERGUSON  
- **Humanities & Social Science**  
  - Professor Cameron CAMPBELL  
- **HKUST Fok Ying Tung**  
  - Professor Furong GAO  
- **Graduate School**

(b) One representative to be selected by each School Board  
- **Science**  
  - Professor Jianzhen YU  
- **Engineering**  
  - Professor Richard H Y SO  
- **Business & Management**  
  - Professor Riki TAKEUCHI  
- **Humanities & Social Science**  
  - Professor Yimin LIN

(c) **Academic Registrar, *ex-officio***  
Dr Trevor WEBB (Acting)

(d) One postgraduate student representative each from each School to be nominated by the Students' Union  
- **Science**  
  - Mr Guangze GAO /PhD(MATH)  
- **Engineering**  
  - Mr Nan ZHANG /PhD(CIVL)  
- **Business & Management**  
  - Miss Yue FENG /PhD(IS)  
- **Humanities & Social Science**  
  - Mr Hao DONG/PhD(SOSC)

(e) **Co-opted Member**  
Head of Interdisciplinary Programs Office or designee  
Professor Alexis K H LAU
Appendices

D. Term

For student members, a staggered term of one or two years, renewable; and for others, two years, renewable.
## Important Dates in the 2015-16 Academic Year

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### Events

- 15/7: Program Registration – New UG students (1st round)
- 12-13: Program Registration – New UG students (2nd round)
- 15, 17: Program Registration – New PG students
- 15: Last day of Summer Term, 2014-15
- 24-27: Class Enrollment starts – All UG students *
- 28-30: Class Enrollment starts – All PG students *
- 31: Last day for submission of final thesis examination results and thesis copies for Summer 2014-15

### General Holidays

- 3: The 70th anniversary day of the victory of the Chinese people's war of resistance against Japanese aggression
- 28: The day following the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival
- 1: National Day
- 21: Chung Yeung Festival
- 25: Christmas Day
- 26: The first weekday after Christmas Day

* Asterisk indicates a validation period for class enrollment will be arranged prior to these dates.

**Public holiday**

**Boldtype**: Important dates for students to note
## Appendices

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| | | | | 1 | Spring Term commences | 1-17 | Add/Drop Period | 18/2-2/3 | Extended Drop Period – for PG courses only |
| 24-29 | Mid-Term Break |

### March

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| 9 | Last day of Spring Term classes | 10-16 | Study Break | 17-28 | Spring Term Examinations | 28 | Last day of Spring Term |
| 14 | The Birthday of the Buddha |

### June

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17 | Last day for submission of final thesis examination results and thesis copies for Spring |

| | | | | | | | | | 20/6-13/8 | Summer Term |

| | | | | **1** | The Birthday of the Buddha |

### General Holidays

1 | The first day of January |
8 | Lunar New Year’s Day |
9 | The second day of Lunar New Year |
10 | The third day of Lunar New Year |
25 | Good Friday |
26 | The day following Good Friday |
28 | Easter Monday |
4 | Ching Ming Festival |
2 | The day following the Labor Day |
14 | The Birthday of the Buddha |
9 | Tuen Ng Festival |
1 | Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day |
Appendix III

Terms and Conditions of Postgraduate Studentships (PGSs) 2015/16
(Version July 2015)

A. Purpose of the Award

1. Postgraduate awards in the form of studentships are allocated to full-time research postgraduate students (RPgs) of the University to provide them with financial assistance to cover their daily subsistence, tuition fees and other related expenses during the course of their study. The studentship award is provided to ensure that RPgs do not need to be concerned with looking for other sources of income to support themselves. Full-time RPgs should devote full efforts to their studies.

2. Awards given are based on academic merit, English language proficiency, and the suitability of the RPgs for the proposed program of study, as is the selection of applicants for admission to postgraduate studies.

3. PGS awards may be funded by the University, research grants secured by faculty members, donations, or a combination of these. The terms and conditions for PGS awards described here apply to all PGS awards, regardless of their source of funding.

B. Eligibility

Only full-time regular RPgs of the University, except those on “Off-campus Study” status, are eligible to apply for PGS. Applicants who may simultaneously be recipients of government grants and loans will be treated like all others in the selection process. Holders of other scholarships/awards may receive PGS provided that this does not violate the terms and conditions of the other scholarship(s)/award(s). The studentship is conditional on demonstrated competency in English that satisfies the requirements of the University as well as the home department of the student concerned.
C. Administration

The allocation and administration of PGSs to RPgs is the responsibility of the department the RPgs are registered with.

D. Amount and Duration of the Awards

1. The maximum PGS amount in the 2015/16 academic year is HK$15,000, except for awardees of the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS) and the Asian Future Leaders Scholarship Program (AFLSP). The actual PGS rate a student receives is determined by the home department. The PGS rate, which is reviewed annually, may be adjusted upward or downward.

2. All new full-time RPgs are required to take a spoken English test administered by the Center for Language Education at the start of the first term of their study at HKUST. Students whose test score is below the threshold score are required to take and pass an English language course, LANG5000, which has been designed to help improve their spoken English proficiency.

3. RPgs whose spoken English test score was below the threshold score or who failed to take the test in their first term of study at HKUST are not allowed to take up teaching assistant duties involving direct classroom interaction with students or any teaching-related duties involving communication with students in spoken English until they have passed LANG5000. Departments may link the performance of students in LANG5000 with the PGS rate that RPgs receive by reducing the PGS rate by 25% for students who fail LANG5000 for the second sitting.

4. PhD students who have passed their qualifying examination and have done well in their work may receive, in the next term following the passing of the qualifying examination, a higher PGS rate of no more than HK$15,520. The award of the higher PGS rate is not automatic, nor is it an entitlement for post-qualifying PhD students. The actual PGS rate for these PhD students is determined by the home department. Any PGS amount higher than HK$15,520
should be endorsed by the Office of Postgraduate Studies (PGSO) on a case-by-case basis. Neither UGC nor RGC funding may be used to support a higher rate of PGS to RPgs. The department’s commitment to pay these higher rates can only be on an annual basis as the continued provision of PGS in subsequent years will depend on the performance and the study progress of the PGS recipients as well as funding availability.

5. For recipients of PGS, who occupy campus accommodation, room rental will be deducted from the PGS amount. Campus accommodation policies and details of accommodation arrangements can be obtained from the Student Housing and Residential Life Office, a sub-office of the Office of the Dean of Students.

6. PGS award commences at the time when an RPg begins his/her studies at the University. PGS may be offered, at most, for one academic year only. Awards for the 2016/17 academic year will be reviewed and determined before the beginning of Fall Term, 2016/17, subject to the availability of funding and satisfactory performance of the awardees.

7. As a general rule, PGS recipients who are studying beyond their normative period should be supported by sources other than UGC and RGC funding.

E. Other Conditions

1. PGS recipients, including HKPFS and AFLSP awardees, are not employees of the University, and PGS / HKPFS / AFLSP award is not taxable income.

2. As the provision of PGS award is to ensure that subsistence living of recipients is covered, RPgs should devote full-time efforts to their studies. During the regular Fall and Spring Terms, full-time RPgs are not allowed to engage in any full-time or part-time employment with the University or any other employer. This applies to both local and non-local students regardless of whether or not they are receiving PGS.
3. The only exception to the above rule mentioned in Para E2 is that full-time RPgs who are not receiving PGS may take up no more than 10 hours per week on-campus part-time work, subject to the prior approval of the student’s thesis supervisor, the departmental PG coordinator, Associate Dean (PG) of the school, and PGSO. Non-local RPgs must also satisfy the conditions of their stay laid down by the Immigration Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKImmDept).

4. During Winter or Summer Term, with the prior approval of the student’s thesis supervisor, the departmental PG coordinator, Associate Dean (PG) of the school and PGSO, an RPg may engage in full-time research assistantship (RA) work within the University. In such cases, the PGS will be temporarily suspended during the period of employment as a research assistant. Students who wish to take up an RA appointment should seek the prior approval of PGSO via their home department before they commit themselves for Winter or Summer RA work. Non-local RPgs must also satisfy the conditions of their stay laid down by HKImmDept.

5. All recipients of PGS, including HKPFS and AFLSP awardees, may be required to engage in ancillary duties related to teaching and/or research, which supplement their formal degree program. The nature of these assignments may vary from time to time according to need. However, they are limited to 36 effective hours per month on average. “Effective hours” include both contact hours and preparation time. In the case of research-related duties, if the duties performed by an RPg are directly related to his/her own thesis research or project, the 36-hour limit should not apply. Such duties are not considered to be “work” as mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

6. With the prior approval of the home department, PGS recipients may have up to 21 calendar days’ leave in an academic year (1 September to 31 August). This leave is inclusive of Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays that lie within the leave period. Those who arrive late will have their annual leave pro-rated. Unused leave for one year cannot be carried forward to the next academic year. The decision on whether or not a leave request
should be granted rests jointly with the thesis supervisor of the RPg and the departmental PG coordinator.

**F. Termination**

1. PGS recipients not performing satisfactorily in their program of study, including their ancillary duties, or who fail to demonstrate competency in English that satisfies their home department, may lose their award or receive a partial award, but normally with at least one month’s written notice given by their home department. Engagement in unauthorized work mentioned in Paras E2 - E4 above may also lead to the termination of PGS.

2. The PGS award is conditional on the PGS recipient undertaking and continuing full-time research postgraduate studies at HKUST. Unauthorized leave will result in the immediate cancellation of PGS without prior notification. One month’s advance notice is not required in such circumstances.

3. A PGS recipient who takes more leave than is allowed (see Para E6) may have his/her PGS payment suspended with no prior warning. For those who take leave from study or are required to take academic leave, their PGS will stop from the time they start their leave, or earlier as advised by the home department.

4. The payment of PGS will cease in the month the recipient has completed his/her program of study at the University, i.e. the month when a student submits his/her final thesis to the Academic Records and Registration, Academic Registry.

5. Under exceptional circumstances and with the support of Dean’s Office concerned and the PG Secretariat of PGSO, the termination of a PGS award may be immediate without prior notification.

6. HKPFS and AFLSP awardees are also required to comply with the terms and conditions of the respective awards.
Appendix IV

Guide on Thesis Supervision

(Version July 2015)

A. Appointment of the Thesis Supervisor

1. Each RPg student will be assigned a thesis supervisor who oversees the student’s research from the time the student embarks on his/her research.

2. In cases where non-academic professionals or academic members carrying titles of Visiting or Adjunct faculty, Research Assistant Professors, or Visiting Scholars, are invited to supervise the research work of an RPg student, they can only be appointed as the co-supervisor, but not the prime supervisor of the student. In addition, the appointment of non-academic professionals as a co-supervisor requires the prior approval from the PG Secretariat of the Office of Postgraduate Studies.

B. Thesis Supervision Committee

1. To ensure the quality of thesis research and to enhance the learning experience of RPg students, a Thesis Supervision Committee (TSC) will be established for each student.

2. For MPhil students, the TSC is normally formed within their first year of study. The TSC for PhD students is normally formed within their second year of study before they attempt their qualifying examination.

3. In most cases, the formation of a TSC is initiated by the thesis supervisor. The student may be consulted in the process. The authority to approve and appoint TSCs usually rests with the departmental PG studies committee.

4. MPhil and PhD research is conducted under the general supervision of a TSC of at least two members, one of whom is the
designated the supervisor and committee chairperson.

5. For both MPhil and PhD TSCs, at least one committee member must normally have had experience, at the University or elsewhere, as the designated supervisor of the thesis research work of at least two PG students who have successfully completed their degrees.

6. For PhD TSCs, at least one member of the committee must normally have had experience, at the University or elsewhere, in the supervision of at least one PhD student who has successfully completed the degree.

7. Members on a TSC usually have research expertise relevant to the student’s area of research.

8. TSC members should meet regularly with the student under their supervision to ensure that the student’s academic and research progress is satisfactory. The student, the thesis supervisor and the TSC are required to complete an annual progress report which serves to document the study progress of the student.

9. When a thesis supervisor goes on sabbatical leave, he/she will usually continue to supervise his/her students through various means. In the case of a thesis supervisor leaving the University, another member on the TSC should be appointed as a temporary thesis supervisor until a replacement thesis supervisor has been identified.

C. Responsibilities of the Thesis Supervisor

A thesis supervisor is expected to provide the student with advice at every stage in the planning and conduct of research and in the writing of the thesis, and to ensure that replacement supervision is available to the student during any significant period of absence. A thesis supervisor is expected to:

1. Provide guidance about the nature of research, the standard expected, the planning of the research program, the review of literature, the selection of coursework, and appropriate training in research techniques;
2. Establish, at the beginning of the student’s research, a framework for supervision, including arrangements for regular meetings. The stages of progress the student is expected to have completed at various points should also be agreed on;

3. Meet with the student regularly following the agreed schedules and with a clear agenda, and be accessible to the student at other appropriate times when he/she may need advice;

4. Ensure that the student’s research:
   • Falls within his/her own area of expertise;
   • Can be completed with the resources available;
   • Can be completed within the prescribed period of study; and
   • Is suitable for the degree program the student aims to undertake.

5. If applicable, discuss any hazards involved in the research work and how these can best be dealt with, ensuring that safety procedures are followed;

6. Provide advice on the publication of research work, ensuring that attribution is discussed before publication;

7. Deal promptly with any research problems the student may encounter;

8. Adhere to the schedule for submission of the annual progress report to the Academic Records and Registration (ARR), Academic Registry;

9. Advise the student promptly of unsatisfactory progress with regard to any aspect of his/her study, and put this advice in writing if such unsatisfactory progress is considered likely to interfere with satisfactory completion of the research by the agreed deadline;

10. Guide the student in the preparation of the thesis examination;

11. Identify prospective examiners for the student’s Thesis
Examination Committee;

12. Treat the student professionally, ensuring proper credit for his/her work; and

13. Be on the lookout for signs of behavioral changes, stress and depression, absence from classes, laboratory sessions or appointments with no prior notification, reclusion, or erratic behavior in the student being supervised. The department head and PG coordinator should be notified if any of the above behavior has been observed or reported. If necessary, the student should be referred to the Counseling and Wellness Center of the Student Affairs Office for professional advice.

D. Responsibilities of the Student

An RPg student is expected to:

1. Discuss with the thesis supervisor and TSC the type and scope of guidance he/she needs, and agree on regular meeting times;

2. Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties with the supervisor, however elementary they may seem, before they become serious;

3. Attend supervisory meetings well prepared and with a clear agenda for the meeting; and be accessible to the thesis supervisor and/or TSC during the course of study;

4. Make satisfactory academic and research progress following the advice of the thesis supervisor and TSC;

5. Discuss with and obtain the approval of the thesis supervisor regarding any changes in the direction of his/her research focus and its implications;

6. Provide a brief self-evaluation summary report to be attached to the annual progress report for submission to ARR, Academic Registry through the thesis supervisor as part of the annual review
process;

7. Ensure that the thesis is completed and submitted within the period stipulated by the University for assessment;

8. Abide by the rules and regulations governing postgraduate studies of the University; and

9. Ensure that all work done by others which are used in the thesis is properly acknowledged.

**E. Relationship between Thesis Supervisors and Students**

1. The establishment and maintenance of good relationship between the thesis supervisor and the student are founded on mutual respect and open communication. A successful relationship relies on the devotion of both the thesis supervisor and the student.

2. To avoid unnecessary disruption, the student and the thesis supervisor should inform the other party as soon as they are aware that there is a possible change in their status, e.g. a student plans to withdraw from the program of study or a thesis supervisor may take sabbatical leave.

3. In the event that a good working relationship has failed to develop and that the student and/or the thesis supervisor believes that, for this reason, satisfactory study progress cannot be made, either party may approach the PG coordinator for advice. The PG coordinator should, in consultation with the department head/Associate Dean of the relevant school responsible for postgraduate studies, consider the matter carefully. If appropriate, the PG coordinator may recommend a change of the thesis supervisor.

**F. Joint Supervision with Non-academic Institutions**

1. The joint supervision of RPg students between academic institutions and the corporate sector is a universal trend which has
been gaining popularity in overseas countries. This is an encouraging development as it allows academic and corporate personnel to work together on research topics of common interests. This type of collaboration helps increase mutual understanding as well as provides opportunities for the establishment of closer and longer-term relationship between the corporate and academe. This complementary relationship also allows faculty from institutions to work with research staff of major corporations on application-oriented research.

2. The principles, limitations and framework for joint supervision of RPg students between the corporate sector and the University are provided in the “Guidelines on Joint Supervision of RPgs with Non-academic Institutions” which is available at [http://pg.ust.hk/guides_n_forms/students/joint_supervision_nonacademic_guidelines.pdf](http://pg.ust.hk/guides_n_forms/students/joint_supervision_nonacademic_guidelines.pdf).
Appendices

Appendix V

Guidelines on Thesis Preparation
(Version July 2015)

A. Introduction

1. The guidelines described in this document have been established so that theses are presented in a form suitable for library cataloging and shelving. The document takes its place in the library as a product of original thinking and research, and it is, therefore, designed to appear in a form comparable to published works.

2. This document covers the general rules of format and appearance. Students should consult their Thesis Supervision Committee (TSC) for specific content requirements.

3. It is the student’s responsibility to read and follow the requirements presented here and to submit documents of an appropriate quality for publishing. The final copies will not be accepted with corrections, insufficient margins, or if they are of insufficient quality for publishing online, etc.

4. Because of refinement in requirements, students should not use existing library or departmental copies of theses as examples of proper format.

B. Originality

1. An MPhil thesis shall

   1.1 Consist of the student’s own account of his/her investigations;

   1.2 Be either a record of original work or of an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge and shall provide evidence that the field has been surveyed thoroughly;

   1.3 Be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument;
1.4 Give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings and include a discussion on those findings; and

1.5 Include a full bibliography and references.

2. A PhD thesis shall

2.1 Consist of the student’s own account of his/her investigations and must indicate how they appear to him to advance the study of the subject;

2.2 Form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence or originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power;

2.3 Be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument;

2.4 Give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings, and include a discussion on those findings, and indicate in what respects they appear to the candidate to advance the study of the subject;

2.5 Include a full bibliography and references; and

2.6 Be of a standard to merit publication in whole or in part or in a revised form (for example, as a monograph or as a number of articles in learned journals).

C. Components

1. A thesis should contain the following parts in the order shown:

1.1 Title page, containing:
  • the thesis title;
  • the full name of the candidate;
  • the degree for which the thesis is submitted;
Appenices

• the name of the University, i.e. The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology; and
• the month and year of submission, e.g. August 2016.

1.2 Authorization page;
1.3 Signature page;
1.4 Acknowledgments;
1.5 Table of contents, list of figures and tables;
1.6 Abstract;
1.7 The thesis body;
1.8 A thorough bibliography or reference list; and
1.9 Appendices and other addenda, if any.

Sample thesis pages are provided at http://pg.ust.hk/guides_n_forms/students/thesis_sample_page.pdf.

2. Abstracts
Every copy of the thesis must have an English abstract. Abstracts must provide a concise summary of the thesis in 300 words or less.

3. Acknowledgments
The student is required to declare, in the acknowledgments section, the extent to which assistance has been given by his/her faculty and staff, fellow students, external bodies or others in the collection of materials and data, the design and construction of apparatus, the performance of experiments, the analysis of data, and the preparation of the thesis (including editorial help). In addition, it is appropriate to recognize the supervision and advice given by the thesis supervisor(s) and members of TSC.

4. Final Version
The final version of the thesis must be free from typographical, grammatical and other errors when submitted to the Academic
Records and Registration (ARR), Academic Registry. While this is the responsibility of the student, the supervisor and the department head/program director should not sign off on theses that are not, to the best of their knowledge, error free.

D. Language, Style and Format

1. Language
Theses should be written in English. Students in the School of Humanities and Social Science who are pursuing research work in the areas of Chinese Studies, and who can demonstrate a need to use Chinese to write their theses should seek prior approval from the school via their supervisor and the divisional head. If approval is granted, students are also required to produce a translation of the title page, authorization page, signature page, table of contents and the abstract of thesis in English.

2. Scripts and Page Format

2.1 A thesis should be presented in a permanent and legible form either in original typescript, or a comparably permanent process.

2.2 Paper and print quality are vitally important for legibility. Normally, international size A4 (297mm x 210mm) 80 to 90 gsm woodfree white paper of good quality should be used for the thesis. Exceptionally, paper other than international A4 size may be used when the nature of the thesis requires it. Any thesis not typed or printed on the correct size of paper will not be accepted.

2.3 The final thesis copies should be printed on both sides of the paper.

2.4 A conventional font, size 12-point, 10 to 12 characters per inch must be used. One-and-a-half line spacing should be used throughout the thesis, except for abstracts, indented quotations or footnotes where single line spacing may be used.
2.5 All margins should be consistently 25mm (or at a maximum of 30mm) in width. The same margins should be used throughout a thesis. Exceptionally, margins of a different size may be used when the nature of the thesis requires it.

3. Pagination

3.1 Pagination of the body of the text and appendices is to be in Arabic numerals centered at the bottom of the page. The pagination begins with the first page of the first chapter and continues throughout the rest of the text. Pages with tables, maps, photographs, etc. are to be numbered as well. Open a new page only after each chapter or section but not a subsection.

3.2 Pagination of materials preceding the body of the text is to be in small Roman numerals centered at the bottom of the page.

4. Footnotes, References and Appendices

These should conform to a scholarly style appropriate to the discipline. Footnotes may be placed at the bottom of the page, at the end of each chapter or after the end of the thesis body. Consistency of formatting for footnotes and references is required throughout the thesis.

5. Figures and Illustrations

Figures, tables, graphs, etc., should be positioned according to the scientific publication conventions of the discipline. Charts, graphs, maps, and tables that are larger than a standard page should be provided as appendices.

6. Photographs/Images

6.1 High contrast photos reproduce well. Photographs with a glossy finish and those with dark backgrounds should be avoided.

6.2 Images should be dense enough to provide 300 ppi for printing and 72 dpi for viewing.
7. Additional Materials

7.1 Other illustrative materials which cannot be conveniently bound in the text (such as maps and slides) should be packed in such a way that they can be bound with the thesis. If the amount of such materials is substantial, it should be gathered into a supplementary volume and packed in a rigid container similar in format to the bound thesis. All loose materials should be marked with the candidate’s name and degree for which the work is submitted so that it can be readily linked with the thesis, and a list of the loose items should be provided.

7.2 Raw files, dataset, media files, and high resolution photographs/images of any format can also be included.

E. Creating PDF files for E-thesis Submission

1. Dissertations and theses are submitted for publishing in PDF format. Providing a properly generated PDF file ensures the manuscript can be read using different platforms (Windows, Mac, etc.), and that it displays as intended. Proper file generation also facilitates the indexing of the paper.

2. Before sending the PDF file for printing and submission to Proquest please ensure the following:

2.1 All fonts should be embeddable and embedded.

2.2 Image resolution should be dense enough to provide 300 ppi for printing and 72 dpi for viewing.

2.3 Multiple PDF files should be combined into one single file.

2.4 PDF file should NOT be encrypted, as text cannot be extracted from encrypted PDFs for full text indexing or storage. Encrypted PDF files will NOT be accepted by Proquest.
Appendices

Further information is provided at http://pg.ust.hk/guides_n_forms/students/thesis_create_pdf.pdf.

F. Thesis Submission

1. For examination purpose, sufficient hard or electronic thesis copies are to be submitted to the department at least four weeks before the thesis examination.

2. On successful completion of the thesis examination, students must submit two identical clean unbound original hard copies of the thesis to their department, which will arrange for the appropriate signatures of approval to be obtained. The department will then forward the signed copies to ARR, Academic Registry for follow-up action. When bound, one copy will be retained by the department and one by the Library as an archival copy in the open collection for the student author and other interested visitors to access on campus.

3. Before submission of the final version of the printed thesis copies to the department, students should submit an electronic copy of their final thesis to the Electronic Theses database of the University Library via https://lbapps.ust.hk/ths/th_submit.pl. Students are also required to provide a printout of the HKUST Electronic Thesis Submission Acknowledging email when they submit the final thesis hard copies to the department for forwarding to ARR, Academic Registry as proof.

4. In addition, students are required to complete two online survey forms (http://pg.ust.hk/exit-checklist) and submit them together with the final thesis hard copies to the department.

G. Copyright

1. Until now, the University’s Copyright Policy does not speak directly to thesis copyright, yet it has become common for students to wish to copyright their theses in their own names.
2. According to the advice of the Vice-President for Research and Development (VP-RD) of July 1999, based on existing policy, copyright in materials produced by “university-assisted individual efforts” should vest jointly in the University and the Member of the University if significant University support (library and computers excluded) was involved. However, after considering the need for rapid publication to contribute to literature, and the administrative process required, VP-RD had agreed to let students hold sole copyright ownership of their thesis.
Appendix VI

Guidelines on Procedures for Scheduling MPhil Thesis Examinations
(Version July 2015)

1. MPhil students, who have already completed all the coursework requirements for the degree, wishing to appear before a Thesis Examination Committee (TEC) must indicate to the department at least six weeks before the proposed date of the thesis examination by submitting the proforma “Notice of Intention to take MPhil Thesis Examination”. Inadequate notice served for taking the thesis examination will result in required postponement of the thesis examination. To avoid unnecessary delay in graduation, students are advised to schedule their thesis examinations well in advance, and avoid conducting thesis examinations toward the end of a term, in order to allow sufficient time for revisions and other post-examination arrangements.

2. Should the content of the thesis involve commercially sensitive information, the thesis supervisor(s) is advised to approach the Technology Transfer Center well in advance to discuss the possibility of obtaining patent protection before the department makes announcement about the thesis examination to the public.

3. To encourage the participation of members of the University community, thesis examinations should not be scheduled on Sundays and public holidays.

4. The student has to complete Part I of the proforma, and seek the endorsement of the thesis supervisor in completing Part II, before submitting the proforma to the department for an MPhil TEC to be appointed. TEC membership should be confirmed no less than four weeks before the scheduled examination date.

5. The department is responsible for identifying examiners to serve on the examination committee following the “Guidelines on the Appointment and Roles of Chairpersons and Examiners of MPhil Thesis Examination Committees” (Appendix VIII). The department is also
responsible for checking the availability of examiners, and making appointments to TEC members. Liaison with examiners to make arrangements for the thesis examination should not be done by the candidate being examined.

6. No less than four weeks before the thesis examination, the student has to deliver sufficient hard or electronic thesis copies ready for examination purpose to the department. If the student fails to meet the thesis submission deadline, he/she may be required to postpone the thesis examination. The PG coordinator should confirm the actual date of receipt of the thesis copies (by endorsing Part IV of the proforma), and forward the proforma to the PG Secretariat.

7. The department should distribute the thesis copies to the Chairperson and members of the MPhil TEC immediately, such that members are given sufficient time to review the thesis. The department should also ensure the receipt of the thesis copies by the examiners. A thesis copy will be put on display at the department prior to the thesis examination for perusal by faculty, students, other University members, and members of the public. To increase public awareness of the scheduled thesis examination, announcements (in the form of posting at the University Calendar, emails and/or posters, etc.) should be made accordingly.

8. On receiving the duly endorsed proforma, the PG Secretariat will check the information provided in the proforma to ensure that the arrangements of the thesis examination conform to the University guidelines. If deviations from the University guidelines are identified, the department concerned will be requested to withhold or postpone the thesis examination (disregarding whether the student has duly submitted the thesis or not) until the clearance of the PG Secretariat has been sought.

9. One working day before the thesis examination is held, the department is required to send an email reminder to members of the MPhil TEC, specifying the date, time and venue of the thesis examination. The email should be copied to the PG Secretariat at pgsec@ust.hk for its record.
Appendices

10. If changes are to be made after the proforma “Notice of Intention to take MPhil Thesis Examination” has been filed, the department concerned is required to obtain, via school, the prior approval of the PG Secretariat by writing to pgsec@ust.hk before the changes can be effected.

11. The “Notice of Intention to take MPhil Thesis Examination” and all relevant documents on the thesis examination will be forwarded to the Examinations and Graduation Section of the Academic Records and Registration (ARR), Academic Registry for record. In addition, the Health, Safety and Environment Office (HSEO) will also be notified for performing safety clearance check where applicable.

12. For enquiries regarding the arrangements for scheduling MPhil thesis examinations, please contact the PG Secretariat by email (pgsec@ust.hk).
Procedures for Scheduling an MPhil Thesis Examination

At least 6 weeks before exam

Student completes Part I of the proforma “Notice of Intention to take MPhil Thesis Examination”.

Thesis supervisor completes Part II of the proforma.

Department appoints a TEC in Part III of the proforma.

At least 4 weeks before exam

Student submits sufficient hard or electronic thesis copies ready for examination purpose to the department.

PG coordinator certifies receipt of the thesis copies in Part IV of the proforma.

Department dispatches the thesis copies to the Chairperson and examiners, and makes announcement to the public.

PG Secretariat receives the endorsed proforma and sends it to ARR, Academic Registry for record/action. HSEO will be notified to follow up on safety clearance where applicable.

Changes to membership or schedule?

Yes

No

Department seeks, via school, clearance from the PG Secretariat.

Thesis exam date

Student takes the MPhil thesis examination.
Appendix VII


(Version July 2015)

1. PhD students, who have already completed all the coursework requirements for the degree, wishing to appear before a Thesis Examination Committee (TEC) must indicate to the department at least six weeks before the proposed date of the thesis examination by submitting the proforma “Notice of Intention to take PhD Thesis Examination”. Inadequate notice served for taking the thesis examination will result in required postponement of the thesis examination. To avoid unnecessary delay in graduation, students are advised to schedule their thesis examinations well in advance, and avoid conducting thesis examinations toward the end of a term, in order to allow sufficient time for revisions and other post-examination arrangements.

2. Should the content of the thesis involve commercially sensitive information, the thesis supervisor(s) is advised to approach the Technology Transfer Center well in advance to discuss the possibility of obtaining patent protection before the department makes announcement about the thesis examination to the public.

3. To encourage the participation of members of the University community, thesis examinations should not be scheduled on Sundays and public holidays.

4. The student has to complete Part I of the proforma, and seek the endorsement of the thesis supervisor in completing Part II, before submitting the proforma to the department for a PhD TEC to be recommended by the department head/program director. The department office is responsible for checking the availability of examiners. Liaison with examiners to make arrangements for the thesis examination should not be done by the candidate being examined. The proforma should then be forwarded to the school concerned for identification of a Chairperson of the committee from outside the student’s department.
5. After the department head/program director and the Dean or the
Dean’s designee have signed Part III of the proforma endorsing the
proposed membership of TEC, the proforma together with the
curriculum vitae of the recommended external examiner should be
sent to the PG Secretariat (pgsec@ust.hk) for handling.

6. Upon receipt of the yet-to-be completed proforma, the PG
Secretariat will check the proposed TEC membership to ensure that
it complies with the “Guidelines on the Appointment and Roles of
Chairpersons and Examiners of PhD Thesis Examination Committees”
(Appendix IX). If the proposed membership is in line with the
guidelines, a confirmation email will be sent to the department. If
deviations from the University guidelines are identified, the
department concerned will be requested to withhold or postpone
the thesis examination (disregarding whether the student has duly
submitted the thesis or not) until the clearance and confirmation of
the PG Secretariat has been sought. Confirmation from the PG
Secretariat on the proposed membership of TEC should be sought
no less than four weeks before the proposed examination date.

7. No less than four weeks before the thesis examination, the student
has to deliver sufficient hard or electronic thesis copies ready for
examination purpose to the department. If the student fails to meet
the thesis submission deadline, he/she may be required to
postpone the thesis examination. The PG coordinator should
confirm the actual date of receipt of the thesis copies (by endorsing
Part IV of the proforma), and forward the proforma to the PG
Secretariat.

8. The department should distribute the thesis copies to the
Chairperson and examiners as soon as possible upon confirmation
of the membership of the PhD TEC, such that members are given
sufficient time to review the thesis. The department should also
ensure the receipt of the thesis copies by the examiners. One thesis
copy will be put on display at the department prior to the thesis
examination for perusal by faculty, students, other University
members, and members of the public. To increase public
awareness of the scheduled thesis examination, announcements (in
the form of posting at the University Calendar, emails and/or
posters, etc.) should be made accordingly.
9. On receiving the duly endorsed proforma, the PG Secretariat will formally issue an appointment to the Chairperson and examiners of TEC. Department head/program director, the PG coordinator, and the Associate Dean (PG) of the relevant school will also be notified of the TEC membership and details of the scheduled thesis examination.

10. **One working day** before the thesis examination is held, the department is required to send an email reminder to members of the PhD TEC, specifying the date, time and venue of the thesis examination. The email should be copied to the PG Secretariat at pgsec@ust.hk for its record.

11. If changes are to be made after the membership of TEC has been approved, the department concerned is required to obtain, via school, prior approval of the PG Secretariat by writing to pgsec@ust.hk, before the changes can be effected.

12. In the event a Chairperson or examiner declines the appointment to serve on TEC, the school/department is responsible for nominating a replacement Chairperson/examiner for the consideration of the PG Secretariat as soon as possible. The PG Secretariat may request the thesis examination to be postponed if the time allowed for the replacement Chairperson/examiner to review the student’s thesis prior to the thesis examination is considered insufficient.

13. The “**Notice of Intention to take PhD Thesis Examination**” and all relevant documents on the thesis examination will be forwarded to the Examinations and Graduation Section of the Academic Records and Registration (ARR), Academic Registry for record. In addition, the Health, Safety and Environment Office (HSEO) will also be notified for performing safety clearance check where applicable.

14. For enquiries regarding the arrangements for scheduling PhD thesis examinations, please contact the PG Secretariat by email (pgsec@ust.hk).
Procedures for Scheduling a PhD Thesis Examination

At least 6 weeks before exam

- Student completes Part I of the proforma “Notice of Intention to take PhD Thesis Examination”.

- Thesis supervisor completes Part II of the proforma.

- Department head/program director recommends a TEC in Part III of the proforma.

- School office identifies a Chairperson for the committee and endorses Part III of the proforma.

- PG Secretariat receives the proforma and reviews the proposed committee membership.

Membership in order?

No

Yes

At least 4 weeks before exam

- Student submits sufficient hard or electronic thesis copies ready for examination purpose to the department.

- PG coordinator certifies receipt of the thesis copies in Part IV of the proforma.

- Department dispatches the thesis copies to the Chairperson and examiners, and makes announcement to the public.

- PG Secretariat receives the endorsed proforma and issues an appointment to the Chairperson and Examiners. The proforma will be sent to ARR, Academic Registry for record/action. HSEO will be notified to follow-up on safety clearance where applicable.

Changes to membership or schedule?

Yes

- Department seeks, via school, clearance from the PG Secretariat.

No

Thesis exam date

- Student takes the PhD thesis examination.
Appendices

Appendix VIII

Guidelines on the Appointment and Roles of Chairpersons and Examiners of MPhil Thesis Examination Committees

(Version July 2015)

A. Composition and Appointment of an MPhil Thesis Examination Committee

1. Upon the recommendation of the Thesis Supervision Committee of the candidate being examined, the department head/program director shall appoint an MPhil Thesis Examination Committee (TEC) to examine the candidate who has expressed the intention of defending his/her thesis.

2. An MPhil TEC shall consist of at least three faculty members, including:
   
   i. A Chairperson;
   
   ii. The thesis supervisor(s); and
   
   iii. One other faculty member.

3. All members of the MPhil TEC are voting examiners and must be present throughout the examination.

4. Approval of the Office of Postgraduate Studies must be sought, via school, in advance if the composition of the proposed membership of an MPhil TEC varies from the above requirements.

B. Roles of the Chairperson and Examiners

1. Chairperson

   1.1 The role of the Chairperson is to ensure that:

   


1.1.1 The examination is conducted in accordance with the regulations and requirements of the University, and in a fair and unprejudiced manner.

1.1.2 The questions addressed to the candidate are fair and clearly expressed.

1.1.3 The examiners are all given sufficient opportunity to ask questions and the candidate is given sufficient opportunity to respond to the questions.

1.1.4 There is sufficient opportunity of questions from the floor addressed to the candidate.

1.1.5 The recommendations of individual examiners are carefully considered, such that an overall recommendation may be arrived at in a fair and unprejudiced manner.

1.1.6 The recommendation of TEC reflects the majority view of the examiners.

1.1.7 The recommendation of TEC conforms to the regulations of the University that govern thesis examinations.

1.2 The Chairperson may cancel a scheduled thesis examination if on the day of the thesis examination,

1.2.1 There is no sign of the candidate 15 minutes after the scheduled time of commencement of the thesis examination; or

1.2.2 There is no show of an examiner 15 minutes after the scheduled time of commencement of the thesis examination.

1.3 Toward the end of the thesis examination, the Chairperson is required to (i) collect Part 2 of the “Report on Thesis Examination Result for Research Postgraduate Degrees” from all
the examiners and (ii) complete Part 3 and Part 4.1 of the report, with the assistance of the examiners.

The complete set of documents should be forwarded to the department head/program director or the thesis supervisor as appropriate. For details, please refer to Section D of “Guidelines on the Conduct of MPhil and PhD Thesis Examinations” (Appendix X).

1.4 The Chairperson is also required to submit a “Chairperson’s Report on MPhil Thesis Examination” to the PG Secretariat within one week from the date of the thesis examination, reporting any irregularities observed during the conduct of the thesis examination.

2. Examiners

2.1 The role of the examiners includes the following:

2.1.1 Examiners must thoroughly read the thesis prior to the examination, and must critically assess the quality of the research, the originality of the thesis and its impact on the field of study.

2.1.2 Examiners should prepare questions and discussion materials, to be asked of the candidate during the thesis examinations.

2.1.3 As a result of the reading of the thesis and the performance of the candidate in the examination, the examiners must be satisfied that:

i. The candidate has clearly demonstrated the ability and skills to conduct an intellectual study, and arrive independently at a successful conclusion.

ii. The thesis represents either the candidate’s own original contribution to the discipline or well-
organized and critical exposition of existing knowledge.

iii. The candidate, both verbally and in writing, is able to present his/her thesis clearly, systematically, and coherently.

iv. The candidate has convincingly and lucidly defended his/her thesis.

2.1.4 Examiners must each submit Part 2 of the “Report on Thesis Examination Result for Research Postgraduate Degrees” to the Chairperson at the end of the thesis examination.

2.1.5 To arrive at a final assessment of the quality of the thesis and the performance of the candidate, the examiners, in open consultation with the Chairperson, must jointly arrive at a recommendation which reflects the majority view. The examiners then adopt the majority decision.

2.1.6 The examiners should assist the Chairperson to prepare the “Report on Thesis Examination Result for Research Postgraduate Degrees” recommending the outcome of their assessment of the thesis examination.
Appendix IX

Guidelines on the Appointment and Roles of Chairpersons and Examiners of PhD Thesis Examination Committees

(Version July 2015)

A. Composition and Appointment of a PhD Thesis Examination Committee

1. Upon the recommendations of the department and the school, the Office of Postgraduate Studies (PGSO) shall appoint a PhD Thesis Examination Committee (TEC) to examine the candidate who has expressed the intention of defending his/her thesis.

2. A PhD TEC shall consist of:

   i. A Chairperson from outside the student’s major department;
   ii. The thesis supervisor(s);
   iii. Two academic staff members, in addition to the thesis supervisor(s), from the student’s major department;
   iv. One academic staff member, other than the thesis supervisor(s), from outside the department; and
   v. One faculty external to the University who has expertise in the field being examined.

3. The Chairperson from outside the student’s major department is selected by the school office from a pool of senior faculty holding the rank of Associate Professor or above nominated annually by the Dean. He/she should have had experience in the conduct of PhD thesis examinations. An online database of qualified potential chairpersons is maintained by the PG Secretariat on the website at http://pg.ust.hk/guides_n_forms/staff/thesis_exam/potentialchairpersons.pdf.

4. The external examiner must be a faculty holding the rank of Associate Professor or above. A person who has been on the teaching staff of HKUST, even in a visiting or adjunct faculty capacity, within the past three years, or who will join the University
service before the assessment is completed, is not eligible for appointment as an external examiner.

5. The external examiner should normally be professionally detached from the thesis supervisor(s) and the student. A person who has engaged in close research collaboration with the supervisor(s) or the student within five years prior to the conduct of the thesis examination, including advisor/advisee relationship in research studies, and joint work in research projects or co-authored publications, should not serve as an external examiner.

6. Other than the thesis supervisor(s), at least two other examiners (including the external examiner) must hold the rank of Associate Professor or above. If a thesis supervisor holds the rank of Professor, at least one other examiner must hold the rank of Professor and be present at the thesis examination, and one other examiner must hold the rank of Associate Professor or above.

7. The Chairperson presides over the examination, but is not one of the voting members. There are normally five voting examiners on a PhD TEC, four internal and one external to the University.

8. The Chairperson and all examiners must be present throughout the thesis examination. In exceptional cases where the external examiner from an overseas institution is unable to attend the examination, a written report should be submitted by the external examiner prior to the thesis examination.

9. If the composition of the proposed membership of a PhD TEC varies from the above requirements, approval of PGSO must be sought in advance.

**B Roles of the Chairperson and Examiners**

1. Chairperson

1.1 The role of the Chairperson is to ensure that:
1.1.1 He/She skims through the thesis in order to get a rough understanding of the structure and organization of the thesis.

1.1.2 The examination is conducted in accordance with the regulations and requirements of the University, and in a fair and unprejudiced manner.

1.1.3 The questions addressed to the candidate are fair and clearly expressed.

1.1.4 The examiners are all given sufficient opportunity to ask questions and the candidate is given sufficient opportunity to respond to the questions.

1.1.5 There is sufficient opportunity of questions from the floor addressed to the candidate.

1.1.6 In the case of the external examiner from an overseas institution not being able to attend the examination, the comments and questions raised in his/her written report are addressed to the candidate by the Chairperson and the responses are reported to the external examiner after the examination.

1.1.7 The recommendations of individual examiners are carefully considered, such that an overall recommendation may be arrived at in a fair and unprejudiced manner.

1.1.8 The recommendation of TEC reflects the majority view of the examiners.

1.1.9 The recommendation of TEC conforms to the regulations of the University that govern thesis examinations.

1.2 The Chairperson may cancel a scheduled thesis examination if on the day of the thesis examination,
1.2.1 There is no sign of the candidate 15 minutes after the scheduled time of commencement of the thesis examination; or

1.2.2 There is no show of an examiner 15 minutes after the scheduled time of commencement of the thesis examination; or

1.2.3 The external examiner neither attends the thesis examination in person nor submits a written report prior to the conduct of the thesis examination.

1.3 Toward the end of the thesis examination, the Chairperson is required to (i) collect Part 2 of the “Report on Thesis Examination Result for Research Postgraduate Degrees” from all the examiners (including the “External Examiner’s Report” provided by the external examiner in absentia), and (ii) complete Part 3 and Part 4.1 of the report, with the assistance of the examiners.

The complete set of documents should be forwarded to the department head/program director or the thesis supervisor as appropriate. For details, please refer to Section D of “Guidelines on the Conduct of MPhil and PhD Thesis Examinations” (Appendix X).

1.4 The Chairperson is also required to submit a “Chairperson’s Report on PhD Thesis Examination” to the PG Secretariat within one week from the date of the thesis examination, reporting any irregularities observed during the conduct of the thesis examination.

2. Examiners

The role of the examiners includes the following:

2.1 Examiners must thoroughly read the thesis prior to the examination, and must critically assess the quality of the research, the originality of the thesis and its impact on the field of study.
2.2 Examiners should prepare questions and discussion materials, to be asked of the candidate in the thesis examination.

2.3 As a result of the reading of the thesis and the performance of the candidate in the examination, the examiners must be satisfied that:

i. The candidate has clearly demonstrated the ability and skills to conduct a major intellectual study, and arrive independently at a successful conclusion.

ii. The thesis represents the candidate’s own significant and original contribution to the discipline that is publishable in major international journals.

iii. The candidate, both verbally and in writing, is able to present his/her thesis clearly, systematically, and coherently.

iv. The candidate has convincingly and lucidly defended his/her thesis.

2.4 Both internal and external examiners must each submit Part 2 of the “Report on Thesis Examination Result for Research Postgraduate Degrees” to the Chairperson at the end of the thesis examination.

2.5 To arrive at a final assessment of the quality of the thesis and the performance of the candidate, the examiners, in open consultation with the Chairperson, must jointly arrive at a recommendation which reflects the majority view. The examiners then adopt the majority decision.

2.6 The examiners should assist the Chairperson to prepare the “Report on Thesis Examination Result for Research Postgraduate Degrees” recommending the outcome of their assessment of the thesis examination.
2.7 An external examiner from overseas, who is unable to attend the thesis examination, should submit an “External Examiner’s Report on PhD Thesis Examination” to the PG Secretariat at least five working days prior to the conduct of the examination. Before completing the report, the external examiner may conduct a telephone interview, or through other means of communication to seek clarification with the candidate. The report will be forwarded to the Chairperson, who will ask the questions on behalf of the external examiner in absentia in the examination session. If deemed necessary, the candidate may also provide the external examiner with a written response to the questions raised.
Appendix X

Guidelines on the Conduct of MPhil and PhD Thesis Examinations

(Version July 2015)

A. Introduction

1. The thesis examination is mandatory for those enrolled in research postgraduate programs and is conducted by a Thesis Examination Committee (TEC).

2. An MPhil TEC consists of three faculty members appointed by the department head/program director. One is the thesis supervisor and another is appointed as Chairperson.

3. A PhD thesis examination normally consists of a Chairperson and five voting examiners appointed by the Office of Postgraduate Studies. The examiners include the thesis supervisor(s), two academic staff members from the candidate’s major department, one academic staff member from outside the department, and one faculty external to the University who has expertise in the field being examined.

B. Conduct of Thesis Examination

1. A thesis examination takes place in a single session and comprises four parts, the first two of which are open to all members of the University and to departmental guests. The third part is closed to all but the candidate and TEC, and the fourth is a closed session of TEC in the absence of the candidate.

2. The first part is an oral presentation by the candidate, emphasizing the major elements of the research and the results obtained. The candidate is expected to apportion no more than 60 minutes for the presentation.
3. The second part is an open questioning session, involving TEC members, and others in attendance. During this part of the examination, all questions are addressed through the Chairperson and any dialogue limited to the candidate and the individual questioner.

4. The third part is a closed session involving a less formal discussion between the candidate and TEC on the candidate’s research. Other than the candidate and TEC, other personnel are not allowed to attend this part of a thesis examination. However, in exceptional circumstances, with the prior agreement of the candidate, the thesis supervisor and the Chairperson of TEC, other personnel may be allowed to attend this part of a thesis examination as observers. It should be noted that observers are not permitted to participate in the examination or affect the examiners in their assessment of the thesis examination. At the end of this part of the examination, the candidate and any observers must leave the examination venue.

5. The fourth and final part is a closed session involving only TEC to assess the quality of the thesis, and the performance of the candidate during the examination. In arriving at a decision, the votes of members of TEC carry equal weight. The Chairperson is responsible for advising the Committee the vote of the external examiner in absentia, if applicable.

C. Outcome of Thesis Examination

A thesis examination can have one of the following results:

- Passed;
- Passed subject to minor corrections;
- Passed subject to major corrections;
- Failed but may be resubmitted; or
- Failed.
Appendices

D. Reports on Thesis Examination

Report on Thesis Examination Results for Research Postgraduate Degrees

1. The examination result will be reported in a proforma entitled “Report on Thesis Examination Results for Research Postgraduate Degrees”. The Chairperson of TEC shall collect Part 2 of the report from all the examiners and complete Part 3 and Part 4.1 of the report. The report, duly signed by all members of TEC, must include all comments that TEC or the Chairperson wishes to make on the conduct of the examination, the quality of the thesis, the contribution of the thesis to the field of study, the performance and competency of the candidate in the thesis examination, or any other remarks relating to the thesis and the examination.

2. If a thesis has been graded “Passed”, “Failed but may be resubmitted” or “Failed”, the Chairperson should forward the duly completed report to the head of the candidate’s department. After signing the report, the department head/program director will forward it to the Dean or the Dean’s designee for endorsement, and finally to the Academic Records and Registration (ARR), Academic Registry together with the final thesis copies for follow-up action and record.

3. If a thesis has been graded “Passed subject to minor corrections”, the Chairperson should pass the entire set of documents to the thesis supervisor who should keep the report until the candidate has submitted a revised thesis to his/her satisfaction before the deadline as described in Para E2 below. The full set of documents, with the final thesis copies, should then be forwarded to the department head/program director and the Dean or the Dean’s designee for endorsement before passing to ARR, Academic Registry for action and record.

4. If a thesis has been graded “Passed subject to major corrections”, the Chairperson should pass the entire set of documents to the thesis supervisor who should keep the report until the candidate has submitted a revised thesis to the satisfaction of TEC before the deadline as described in Para E3 below. The full set of documents, with the final thesis copies, should then be forwarded to the
department head/program director and the Dean or the Dean’s
designee for endorsement before passing to ARR, Academic
Registry for action and record.

Chairperson’s Report on Thesis Examination

5. The Chairperson is also required to submit a “Chairperson’s Report
on PhD/MPhil Thesis Examination” to the PG Secretariat within one
week from the date of the thesis examination, reporting any
irregularities observed during the conduct of the thesis
examination.

E. Post-Thesis Examination Arrangements

1. If a thesis has been graded “Passed” with no corrections required,
the candidate must, within one week, submit two identical clean
unbound original copies of the thesis to ARR, Academic Registry
via the department together with the completed “Report on Thesis
Examination Results for Research Postgraduate Degrees” to complete
the degree requirements.

2. For candidates who have passed their thesis examination but
subject to minor corrections, their final thesis copies must be
submitted to ARR, Academic Registry with the completed “Report
on Thesis Examination Results for Research Postgraduate Degrees”
report within three months from the date of the thesis examination,
or a date specified by TEC, whichever is earlier. This requirement
is applicable regardless of the mode of registration of the candidate.
The corrections are to be made to the satisfaction of the thesis
supervisor. Candidates should allow sufficient time for the thesis
supervisor to check and verify their final version of the thesis
before the clean unbound original copies are submitted to ARR,
Academic Registry via the department to complete the degree
requirements.

3. For candidates who have passed their thesis examination but
subject to major corrections, their final thesis copies must be
submitted to ARR, Academic Registry with the completed “Report
on Thesis Examination Results for Research Postgraduate Degrees”
within 12 months from the date of the thesis examination, or a date specified by TEC, whichever is earlier. This requirement is applicable regardless of the mode of registration of the candidate. The revised thesis requires the approval of the full TEC. The Committee may recommend that a re-examination be held before a final assessment is arrived at. If a re-examination is required, the TEC membership should be the same as that for the first examination, unless otherwise recommended by the department or the PG Secretariat. If the members are satisfied with the revised thesis, the clean unbound final thesis copies must be forwarded to ARR, Academic Registry via the department to complete the degree requirements.

4. The result “Failed but may be re-submitted” requires that the entire examination process be repeated, including the re-establishment of a TEC. The membership of the Committee may or may not be the same as that for the first examination. At least six months must pass before the second thesis examination can be conducted. A candidate who has failed in the second attempt of thesis examination will result in the automatic withdrawal of the candidate from his/her program of study and termination of registration at the University.

5. A “Failed” grade results in the automatic withdrawal of the candidate from the program of study and termination of registration at the University.

F. Submission of Final Thesis

1. On successful completion of the thesis examination, students must submit two identical clean unbound original hard copies of the thesis to their department, which will arrange for the appropriate signatures of approval to be obtained. The department will then forward the signed copies to ARR, Academic Registry for follow-up action. When bound, one copy will be retained by the department and one by the Library as an archival copy in the open collection for the student author and other interested visitors to access on campus.
Before submission of the final version of the printed thesis copies to the department, students should submit an electronic copy of the final thesis to the Electronic Theses database of the University Library via [http://library.ust.hk/th_submit.pl](http://library.ust.hk/th_submit.pl). Students are also required to provide a printout of the HKUST Electronic Thesis Submission Acknowledging email when they submit the final thesis hard copies to the department for forwarding to ARR, Academic Registry as proof.

2. In addition, students are required to complete two online survey forms ([http://pg.ust.hk/exit-checklist](http://pg.ust.hk/exit-checklist)) and submit them together with the final thesis hard copies to the department.

3. If a candidate misses the deadline for the submission of the final thesis copies, the candidate will be viewed to have failed to meet the thesis examination requirements and will be deemed to have failed the requirements of the degree program being pursued. If the delay in submitting the final thesis copies is no fault of the candidate, he/she may appeal for an exception to be made for the above rules to be lifted. The appeal supported by the thesis supervisor should be submitted to the PG Secretariat via the PG coordinator with the endorsement from the relevant school.