

 جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة United Arab Emirates University 	Graduate Studies Policies Manual	Policy Number	GP-03
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3. The PhD Program

Overview

Outlines the framework that governs students' pathway to graduation from the UAEU PhD Program.

Scope



Applies to the PhD Program at UAEU.

Objective

The University is committed to the highest academic and administrative standards in the operation of its graduate programs. This Policy and its related Procedures provide the structures and processes required to manage student application, admission, progress and graduation with respect to the UAEU PhD Program.

Policy

1. The University offers a Program leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), with the name of a Major, i.e. a broad area of specialization (e.g. Mathematics, Psychology, Electrical Engineering, etc.) cited on the degree diploma (certificate) and in the student's permanent academic record.
2. The PhD Program is given effect by this Policy and its related Procedures. The Procedures are the shared responsibility of the Graduate Studies Council and the Dean of the CGS.
3. Supplementary Rules and Regulations for the PhD Program may be proposed by Colleges as appropriate to the PhD Program in the respective College. Supplementary Rules and Regulations must not contradict and cannot annul any part of these Policies and Procedures. Any PhD Rules and Regulations for a College must be approved by the Graduate Studies Council and the Dean of the CGS before their implementation.
4. The University will support the enrollment of gifted National and non-National students, through competitive Scholarships and Fellowships.

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Procedures of Policy No. (3) - The PhD Program



1. Program Administration

The PhD program is administered through the following:

- a) The Doctoral Studies Committee that oversees the implementation of the PhD Program.
- b) The Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies of the respective UAEU College and/or the College's PhD Program Coordinator.
 - (i) The Assistant Dean is normally also the Coordinator of the PhD Program of the College.
 - (ii) In consultation with the Assistant Dean, the Dean of the concerned College may recommend to the Signatory Authority a different faculty member as the College's PhD Program Coordinator.
 - (iii) In consultation with the Assistant Dean, the Dean of the concerned College may also appoint a College PhD Committee consisting of faculty members, and chaired by the College's PhD Program Coordinator. The role of this Committee is to provide support and advice to the College's PhD Program Coordinator. Such a committee may be identical with or different from the College Graduate Studies Committee composed of the Assistant Dean and the Graduate Program Coordinators.
 - (iv) A faculty member who serves as College Coordinator of the PhD Program is expected to demonstrate active scholarship within his or her discipline through a record of recent and substantial publications and presentations, research projects, contributions to professional organizations, and/or membership on editorial or advisory boards of reputable scholarly journals.
- c) The Department's PhD Program Coordinator
 - (i) The Department's Coordinator of the PhD Program is a faculty member recommended by the Department Chair upon consultation with the Assistant Dean, and is approved by the Dean of the College. He/she is usually also the Department's Master's Program Coordinator (or Chair of the Executive Committee for an Interdisciplinary Graduate Program), if a Master's program in the same discipline exists.
 - (ii) A faculty member who serves as the Department's Graduate/PhD Program Coordinator is expected to demonstrate active scholarship within his or her discipline through a record of recent and substantial publications and presentations, research projects, contributions to professional organizations, and/or membership on editorial or advisory boards of reputable scholarly journals.

2. The PhD Advisor

- a) Each PhD student who has been accepted into the PhD program in a Major in the Department will submit to the Department PhD Program Coordinator a proposal to designate a PhD Advisor, before the end of first semester of study. The PhD Advisor must be a faculty member in the Department. The name of the PhD Advisor is to be



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approved by the Assistant Dean, in consultation with the College Dean, and submitted to the Dean of CGS. Any change in PhD Advisors is to be reported to the CGS.

- b) Faculty members who serve as PhD Advisors are expected to have obtained visibility and recognition within their discipline, demonstrated by substantial or sustained research, recent publications at the highest levels of their discipline, and/or leadership in professional organizations at the national and international level. PhD Advisors are expected to be able to direct the independent PhD research of the student. Advisors must have the minimum qualifications as stipulated in the “*Criteria for Selection of Faculty to Participate in Graduate Programs*”.
- c) The student may request a change of PhD Advisor through the PhD Program Coordinator/s and the Assistant Dean, in consultation with the current PhD Advisor. A change of Advisor will normally not be implemented after the student has begun his or her dissertation research, and after the Research Proposal has been approved.

3. The PhD Advisory Committee

- a) The PhD Advisory Committee for a PhD student is appointed by the Dean of the concerned College, upon nomination by the Departmental/College Coordinator/s of the PhD Program in consultation with the concerned student. This action must be taken before the end of the student’s first semester in the program and is communicated to the CGS. The role of the Committee is to oversee the progress of the student and guide him/her towards the successful completion of all degree requirements including courses, examinations, and dissertation research.
- b) The PhD Advisory Committee consists of the student’s PhD Advisor and a minimum of two other full-time UAEU faculty members whose expertise is related to the student’s area of specialization/research, and at least one of whom is at the rank of Associate or Full Professor.
- c) The PhD Advisor is the Chair of the PhD Advisory Committee.
- d) A second faculty member, normally at the rank of Associate or Full Professor, is Co-Chair of the PhD Advisory Committee and will temporarily assume the PhD Advisor’s duties if the PhD Advisor should become permanently unavailable. In this case the Co-Chair will serve as a temporary PhD Advisor until a new PhD Advisor is appointed.
- e) Upon the suggestion of the PhD Advisor in consultation with the student, an External Advisor can be added as an associate member of the PhD Advisory Committee. The external advisor is expected to provide further support and guidance to the PhD student, whose plan may include spending some time at the external advisor’s organization for training or research.
- f) Changes in the membership of the PhD Advisory Committee may be requested by the student through the Coordinator/s of the PhD Program. They must be approved by the Assistant Dean, and communicated to the CGS.
- g) Appointments and changes to the PhD Advisory Committee must be in accordance with the “*Criteria for Selection of Faculty to Participate in Graduate Programs*”.
- h) The Thesis advisory committee must meet regularly, at least once per semester, to advise the student on the course work as well as the student’s progress in his/her research project, identify any potential concerns/problems and provide possible

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solutions to deal with the difficulties. After each meeting, a short report must be written by the student advisor and submitted to the Assistant Dean of the College.

4. The PhD Examination Committee

- a) The PhD Examination Committee must be composed of at least four members, which include the student Advisor, as Chair of the Committee, two other UAEU faculty members, one of whom must be from outside the Department, and an External Examiner.
- b) The members of the PhD Examination Committee are appointed by the Dean of the CGS, after nomination by the concerned College Dean in consultation with the PhD Program Coordinator, the PhD Advisor and the student. This appointment will be made as early as feasible, but no later than three months prior to the student's targeted dissertation defense date.
- c) The External Examiner must hold a senior-level faculty appointment at a peer level or higher ranked institution outside of the UAEU, and must have expertise in the field of the PhD student's research.
- d) The External Examiner will be expected to review the PhD dissertation on its completion, and to attend the dissertation defense at the UAEU.
- e) The College, with financial support from the CGS, will cover the external examiner's travel (normally in economy class), accommodation, and an honorarium.
- f) Appointments and changes to the PhD Examination Committee must be in accordance with the *Criteria for Selection of Faculty to Participate in Graduate Programs*.

5. Application to the PhD Program



- a) The minimum requirements for admission to the PhD program are:
 - (i) A Master's Degree from an accredited university recognized by the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, in an area appropriate to the academic area to which application is being made.
 - (ii) A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.3 on a 4.0 scale or equivalent, in the Master's degree earned at an accredited university recognized by the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.
 - (iii) A score of 6.5 or higher on the IELTS Academic exam or equivalent, for all disciplines in which the main language of instruction is English or the dissertation must be written in English. This test score must be less than two years old at the time of application.
- b) A minimum IELTS score of 5.0 or equivalent is required for admission into an offering of the PhD Program whose language of instruction is Arabic.
- c) Individual Colleges may set additional and/or higher standards for admission to the PhD Program in the Department/College.
- d) All PhD applications must be reviewed and recommended for admission or rejection by the respective academic Department (or the Executive Committee for an interdisciplinary program) in one of the Colleges.

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- e) All PhD applications recommended by a Department must be reviewed and endorsed by the Doctoral Studies Committee before admission procedures are initiated.
- f) The complete application package must include the following:
 - (i) Completed application form;
 - (ii) Identity documents as required for Emirati students (copies of passport and Khulasat Al-Qaid) and international students (copy of passport).
 - (iii) Two certified copies of official transcripts from all Colleges or universities attended (the applicant must arrange for these to be sent directly to the Office of the Assistant Dean of the relevant College);
 - (iv) An official copy of the applicant's score on the IELTS exam or equivalent (the applicant must arrange for this to be sent directly to the Office of the Assistant Dean of the respective College);
 - (v) Two letters of recommendation from professionals familiar with the student's academic work; and
- g) The deadline for applications is set annually by the Graduate Studies Council and announced on the UAEU website.

6. General Academic Requirements for the PhD Program

- a) The student and the PhD Advisor, in coordination with the student's Advisory Committee, will prepare a plan of study which must be approved by the Department's and/or College's PhD Program Coordinator. The plan of study is to be submitted to the CGS before the end of the student's first semester in the UAEU PhD Program.
- b) A plan of study will:
 - (i) Be relevant to the student's chosen field and the student's need for preparation, as determined by the PhD Advisory Committee;
 - (ii) Specify the general field of interest in which the student proposes to conduct major research;
 - (iii) List appropriate courses including any Master or Bachelor level courses required as preparation, the language/s in which proficiency is to be established and the method/s by which proficiency is to be achieved; and
 - (iv) List all general requirements of the CGS and any other specific requirements of the Department, Program, College, and University (if applicable).
- c) The student's registration for courses in the first semester will be based on a model study plan prepared by the Department/College PhD program for all new students.
- d) PhD students must complete all degree requirements within a minimum of six (6) and a maximum of twelve (12) semesters after matriculation, excluding leave periods.
- e) One extension of the time limit for a period no longer than two semesters can be requested when mitigating circumstances preclude completion of requirements within the maximum period allowed. Requests have to be recommended by the PhD Advisor, and approved by the PhD Program Coordinator/s, College Dean, and the Dean of the CGS.
- f) PhD students must register for all work to be taken for graduate credits. To be classified as full-time, a PhD student must register for at least nine credit hours of work each regular academic semester. The University publishes a Class Schedule, approximately two weeks before the beginning of registration for the approaching academic semester,

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as well as Registration Guidelines providing details on prerequisites, registration dates, and procedures, including required approvals and signatures.

- g) Students who have completed all required credits but not yet completed their dissertation will be allowed to continue their registration for dissertation work on a zero-credit basis, until the abovementioned time limit is reached.
- h) PhD students are expected to devote a significant portion of their time to their studies and research, and to be on campus with their peers on a regular basis. After completing the residency period, any student who wishes to pursue his/her PhD studies on a part-time basis due to special circumstances must consult his/her Advisor and obtain a written permission from the PhD Program Coordinator. (See also Policy on PhD Scholarships and Fellowships and Graduate Assistantships.)

7. Requirements for the PhD Degree



- a) The PhD degree is granted in recognition of distinctive achievement and scholarly proficiency in a specific area of an academic discipline. This is demonstrated by completing advanced coursework, passing the comprehensive examination, writing a dissertation based on original and independent research and investigation, publishing research papers, and publicly defending the dissertation before the University community.
- b) The place of the traditional dissertation may in some instances be taken by a major artistic or creative project including or accompanied by evidence of independent and rigorous study and research. Such a project requires prior approval by the College Council of the concerned College, the Graduate Studies Council, and the Dean of the CGS.

8. Minimum Credit Requirements in the PhD Program

- a) Completion of at least 24 credit hours of graduate “taught” course work prior to Candidacy. Each student’s plan of study must be approved by his/her PhD Advisory Committee and the PhD Program Coordinator.
- b) Completion of at least 30 credit hours in research.
- c) Other Program requirements as determined by the College of the PhD Program and approved by the Graduate Studies Council and the Academic Council, if applicable.

9. Registration Requirements

- a) The Doctoral Degree is earned on the basis of satisfactory completion of the required courses, the comprehensive examination and the dissertation. Courses taken at other institutions and in other degree programs may be used to satisfy program requirements upon approval of the PhD Advisory Committee and the PhD Program Coordinator/s (see section on “Transfer of Credits” for limitations).
- b) Unless approved in advance by the respective student’s Advisor and the PhD Program Coordinator, PhD students are expected to be enrolled in a minimum of nine credit hours each regular academic semester.

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- c) Students must have an active registration in the academic semester in which they plan to graduate.

10. Residency Requirement



The minimal period in which the PhD Degree can be earned is three academic years of full-time study. Therefore, PhD students will be in residence (full-time enrollment) for a minimum of six (6) full semesters, excluding leaves of absence, except for transfer students whose transfer credits count towards the degree and the residency period. The nature of PhD study requires close contact between the student and his/her Advisory Committee. The individual investigation or other special work leading to the dissertation must be done under the guidance and supervision of a UAEU faculty member.

11. Foreign Language or Other Special Tools of Research

In consultation with the College Dean, the Coordinator of the PhD Program can specify any additional requirements, such as a reading knowledge of a foreign language or a working knowledge of statistics, which are considered essential to mastery of the academic discipline. Such requirements become conditions for the completion of the degree and must be included in the approved program of study.

12. Comprehensive Examination

- a) Every PhD student must pass a Comprehensive Examination designed to evaluate the breadth and depth of the student's knowledge of his or her discipline, as well as the student's scholarly potential.
- b) The Comprehensive Examination is non-credit rated, while a Pass or Fail result for each attempt will be recorded on the student's academic transcript.
- c) Each College/Department may set its own timing for this Comprehensive Examination, but it is in no case to be taken any later than the beginning of the student's fifth semester.
- d) Students taking the Comprehensive Examination must be in good academic standing after completion of the required course work.
- e) The format and conduct of the Comprehensive Examination is the responsibility of the PhD Program in the College in which the student is enrolled. It may consist of individual examinations in several appropriate areas, or of a single combined examination. Where both written and oral examinations are given, the written examination will normally precede the oral examination.
- f) The Rules and Regulations for the Comprehensive Examination in each College must be approved by the College's Council and Dean. The Assistant Dean files a copy of these approved Rules and Regulations with the CGS.
- g) Each College will provide each PhD student with a copy of the Rules and Regulations for the Comprehensive Examination during an orientation held early in the student's first semester in the PhD Program.
- h) The Rules and Regulations for the Comprehensive Examination will outline the nature of the examination, explain the logistics of the exam's administration, and define the

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passing score. Each Department or College will moreover provide appropriate grading rubrics for each Comprehensive Examination.

- i) The Comprehensive Examination may be repeated only once, no later than the end of the student's fifth semester. Requests for exceptions in documented special circumstances can be submitted through the Assistant Dean by the concerned Department's and College's PhD Program Coordinators, for approval by the College Dean and the Dean of the CGS.
- j) A second unsuccessful attempt leads to immediate termination of the student's enrollment in the PhD program, except when a request for an exception to take the examination for a third time is approved. The College may recommend the award of a lesser qualification such as a Master's degree if the student has fulfilled all the relevant graduation requirements, or the transfer of the student to another graduate program if the student meets the relevant admission criteria. In either case, any change in the student's enrollment status must be recommended by the PhD Program Coordinator and approved by the College Dean and the Dean of the CGS.

13. Research Proposal



Upon passing the Comprehensive Examination, a PhD student is required to prepare a concise and complete Research Proposal that clearly defines the research problem and objectives, and outlines the research methodology that the student plans to follow. The proposal's content and format must follow the PhD Research Proposal Preparation Guidelines issued by the CGS. Each College will provide the logistics for submission and approval of Research Proposals for its PhD students.

14. Admission to Candidacy

When a student has passed the comprehensive examination, has satisfied any program requirements for foreign language proficiency or special tools of research, has had his/her Research Proposal approved by the PhD Advisory Committee, and is in good academic standing, the PhD Program Coordinator will recommend the student to advance to Candidacy. The recommendation must be approved by the Dean of the College and the Dean of the CGS. Accordingly, the Dean of the CGS will communicate the decision to advance the student to Candidacy to the Registrar. Admission to Candidacy must take place at least two semesters before the expected completion of the PhD Program.

15. Application for Degree

Each candidate for the award of a PhD must signify the intention to complete the requirements by a particular graduation date by submitting a completed Application for Degree Form. Because this form is used to check requirements, order the Diploma, and enter the student on the commencement program, it must be received in the CGS no later than the end of the third week of classes of the expected academic semester of graduation. Students must normally be registered for graduate work in the semester they plan to graduate.

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16. Journal Paper Requirement



Every PhD student is expected to have at least two research papers considered for publication in peer-reviewed publications/journals before the final defense of his/her dissertation. These papers will be made available to the PhD Examination Committee, who will take the scholarly quality and the formal rigor of the papers into account when they make a recommendation to the Dean of CGS on the award of the degree.

17. Dissertation

The results of the candidate's individual inquiry must be presented in a written dissertation comprising a genuine contribution to knowledge in the particular academic field. The document will also demonstrate the candidate's acquaintance with the literature of the field and the proper selection and execution of research methodology. The physical form of the dissertation must comply with the regulations stated in the Thesis and Dissertation Preparation Guidelines, issued by the CGS.

18. Final Oral Examination and Dissertation Defense

- a) The Final Oral Examination will take the form of a presentation and defense of the dissertation. The Assistant Dean of the concerned College will schedule the Final Examination, in consultation with the CGS. The defense part of the session must be open to all interested parties, will be publicized on campus by the CGS, and take place at least twenty (20) working days before the end of the semester of graduation. The candidate must have an active registration during the semester in which the final examination is taken.
- b) The external member of the Committee is expected to attend the defense. However, if for special circumstances he/she is unable to attend the defense, he/she will send a written report containing the evaluation to the Chair of the Committee prior to the dissertation defense, and will be encouraged to participate through videoconference. The Chair will share the external member's report with the Committee.
- c) Immediately after the presentation, the Committee will convene in a closed meeting to deliberate the student's dissertation and overall performance. It will then prepare and submit, on a form provided by the CGS, a report stating the outcome of the examination, as well as the Committee's recommendation to the PhD Program Coordinator, who will in turn submit copies of the report to the Assistant Dean and to the Dean of the CGS. Based on the outcome, the Coordinator will also submit the relevant grade to the Registrar.
- d) The recommendation concerning the dissertation will be made by a majority vote of the Examination Committee members and show one of the following:
 - (i) Recommendation to approve the dissertation as presented;
 - (ii) Recommendation to approve the dissertation after minor modification and verification by the student's Advisor. Student must submit modified dissertation to the Advisor within five (5) working days of being informed of the decision;
 - (iii) Revision of the dissertation according to stated guidance, and resubmission for review by the Examination Committee within a period of not less than three months; or

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- (iv) Rejection of the dissertation and academic dismissal of the student from the PhD Program. The student may file a written appeal to the Dean of the CGS within five (5) working days from the date of being informed of the decision.
- e) Within three (3) working days of the dissertation defense, the Chair of the Examination Committee will notify the student in writing of the Committee's recommendations and, where applicable, any reason/s for rejection of the dissertation. In cases where revision and resubmission was required, a second and final Oral Examination will be scheduled and will be conducted by an Examination Committee, which will consist of at least two-thirds of the original members of the previous Committee, including the student's Advisor. The Committee's recommendation after the second oral examination can only be either to approve the dissertation as presented or to reject it.
- f) The CGS is responsible for ensuring that the final version of the dissertation meets the standards required of a permanent, published document. After the student successfully passes the oral examination, the candidate submits to the CGS one error-free, unbound copy of the dissertation. This copy will be examined carefully, and the CGS reserves the right to require changes to bring the document up to the standards stated in the *Thesis and Dissertation Preparation Guidelines*.
- g) After making these final changes, the candidate must submit to the CGS an electronic (.pdf) version as well as the required number of copies of the approved dissertation. These copies must be received in the CGS no later than ten (10) working days before the due date for grades for the semester as set by the Registrar's Office.
- h) The bound copies of the dissertation will be distributed as follows:
- (i) One copy to each PhD Examination Committee member;
 - (ii) One copy to the student's Department;
 - (iii) One copy to the CGS; and
 - (iv) Two copies to the University Library.
- i) Students who fail to submit a completed dissertation within one semester following their final defense will be charged a degree completion fee, which is set in advance by the Office of Enrollment, for each semester in which they fail to submit the dissertation. Failure to resubmit within two academic semesters leads to dismissal. Any exceptions to this rule must be requested by the student in advance of the deadline through the PhD Program Coordinator, and be approved by the concerned Assistant Dean and the Dean of the CGS.

19. Recommendation for Degree

Successful candidates will be recommended for the PhD Degree to the Dean of the CGS by the Dean of the College by no later than the date when the semester grades are due to the Registrar's Office (as listed in the University Academic Calendar). Candidates must be in good academic standing to graduate, with no temporary grades ("I" or "N") for courses required for the degree on their transcripts. Accordingly, the Dean of the CGS approves the recommendation and informs the Registrar. The Enrollment Office will verify that the student has met all degree requirements and will proceed with the procedure to clear and approve the student for the award of the PhD degree.