

4. Registration/Residence Requirements/Leave of Absence

4.1 Orientation

Each year in August, OSA arranges an orientation programme for new postgraduate students. The programme covers matters relating to academic study and campus life. Some of the topics are listed below:

- Postgraduate Studies at CUHK
- Improving Postgraduate Learning
- Honesty in Academic Work
- Using Your Library for a Successful Study at CUHK
- Mental Wellness and Postgraduate Studies
- Career Planning and Development at HK
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Campus Crime Prevention and Road Safety
- Introduction of Postgraduate Student Association of The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Useful Guide to Living in HK for Non-local Students

New students are strongly advised to participate in the orientation programme to get acquainted with life in CUHK and - for non-local students - also with life in Hong Kong.

4.2 Student registration

An applicant who has been offered admission to a course of study at the University shall pay the fees and register at the University by the respective deadlines. Anyone who fails to pay fees and register by the specified deadline shall be considered to have declined the offer.

A student shall not be registered simultaneously for another programme of studies leading to the award of a degree, diploma, or certificate at this University or at any other tertiary institution unless an application has been submitted in advance to the Graduate Division concerned, endorsed by the Faculty concerned, and approved by the Graduate Council. A student in breach of this regulation shall be required to discontinue studies at the University.

4.3 Course selection

The Graduate School announces schedules for course selection and course add/drop on its website. Students are able to complete course selection and course add/drop where applicable through CUSIS. All relevant materials, such as study schemes and teaching timetables, are available on CUSIS. If students wish to register course(s) outside their own study schemes, they should make an application to obtain prior approval from the Supervisors and the offering department of the course(s).

Students are able to check their own course register on CUSIS during and after the course selection period. The course register is tentative until approval has been obtained from the Graduate Division

after the add/drop period. Students will be informed when the final course register is available. Enrolment of courses with limited quota is subject to the Graduate Division's confirmation. Students are therefore advised to check their final course register before attending classes.

Courses of each programme listed in the *Postgraduate Student Handbook* will be offered according to resources available each year and are subject to approval by respective Faculty Boards. Students should refer to the "Teaching Timetable" on the Graduate School website for information of course offerings in the current academic year.

According to the Regulations, a student should take at least one course in each term, unless otherwise stated in the study scheme or approved by the Head of the Graduate Division. Students who have already submitted their theses are not required to take any courses.

Only under special circumstances may a student apply for permission to withdraw from a course or enrol in another course after the add/drop period. Such an application with justification and supporting documents, if any, should be submitted to the Supervisor and Graduate Division Head for endorsement and the Dean of the Graduate School for approval. A student who does not complete a registered course without approval to withdraw from it will obtain a failure grade for the course. Students are not allowed to withdraw from a course after the end of the term concerned.

4.4 Residence requirements

Residence requirements as defined below are applicable to all full-time and part-time RPg students:

- (a) A student is classified as being in residence if he/she is attending courses as prescribed by his/her programme and receiving supervision on a regular basis.
- (b) A student who is in Hong Kong except for absences not exceeding three weeks continuously and not exceeding one month aggregate in any one academic year is deemed to be receiving regular supervision, and provided he/she is also attending courses, if required, shall be regarded as in residence.
- (c) A student who is not in Hong Kong is normally deemed to be not receiving supervision, and is regarded as not being in residence. In cases where the student would nevertheless receive adequate supervision on a regular basis while away from Hong Kong, or where the absence from Hong Kong is related to an academic purpose, an application should be made beforehand via the Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division for approval of the Dean of the Graduate School in order to regard the student as being in residence during that period of absence.
- (d) A student may also be regarded as being in residence while being away from Hong Kong if the programme of studies approved by the Graduate Council and the Senate so provides.

Except for periods of approved leave, and except as provided in (b) and (c) above, all students are required to be in residence during their period of study. Residence requirements may be waived for part-time students for up to six months in any academic year, upon the written approval of the Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division.

4.5 Normative and maximum study periods

Students are expected to graduate at the end of the normative study period, except for those who have applied and obtained approval for alteration of their periods of study. Students are normally expected to submit their theses (note: in this document “thesis” shall include – for D.Mus., M.Mus., and M.F.A. students – the student’s portfolio) by the end of the normative study period, i.e., the normal time period allowed for completion of all programme requirements, unless an extension has been granted.

A student who has not submitted his/her thesis and complete the programme requirements within the normative period of study, or the submission is not passed, will be put on “continuing status” until successful completion of the thesis or upon reaching the maximum study period. The student concerned shall apply to the Graduate School for continuation of studies beyond the normative study period. Continuing students shall pay a “continuation fee” per term according to the prevailing policy.

A student must complete the graduation requirements within the maximum study period, which shall include any periods of leave of absence and suspension of studies. A student who has not completed all requirements for graduation within the maximum study period shall be discontinued from studies at the University.

The normative and maximum study periods of different research programmes shall be as follows:

Degree	Normative Study Period		Maximum Study Period	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Ph.D., D.Mus.				
- Students with a research master’s degree	36 months	48 months	84 months	96 months
- Students without a research master’s degree	48 months	64 months	84 months	96 months
Ph.D. (under M.Phil.-Ph.D. Programmes)				
- Students with a research master’s degree	36 months	48 months	72 months	84 months
- Students without a research master’s degree	48 months	64 months	84 months	100 months
M.Phil.	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
M.Mus.	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years
M.F.A.	2 years	--	4 years	--

More details of the study periods can be found in the *General Regulations Governing Postgraduate Studies* on the Graduate School website. Students may check their own normative study end date and maximum study end date via CUSIS (<https://portal.cuhk.edu.hk>).

4.6 Shortening of normative study period

A student who wishes to graduate before the end of the normative study period of his/her respective programme may seek endorsement from the Graduate Division concerned for shortening of his/her

period of study for approval by the Graduate Council, subject to the statutory minimum of 12 months for master's programmes and 24 months for doctoral programmes. The programme requirements must be satisfied by the new end date and in particular the thesis submitted would be graded 'Pass' and if revisions would be required, the Supervisor shall confirm that the revised thesis meets the requirements as decided by the Thesis Assessment Committee before the student would be recommended for award of the degree, and by a specified period - no later than three months from the date of official notification of the examination result.

A student who is approved to shorten the normative study period should settle the full tuition fee for the term (or the 6-month period for Ph.D. students) that he/she has partially attended. The award of PGS will be automatically withdrawn upon the end of the new normative study period.

4.7 Transfer of candidature, change of study programme or study mode

Students may apply for transfer of candidature and/or and change of field of study (or programme) or study mode.

A student who has registered in a research doctoral programme may, on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned and with the approval of the Graduate Council, be transferred to a research master's programme provided that such a transfer takes place before the thesis or portfolio is submitted.

A student who has registered in a research master's programme and has completed the first year of studies may, on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned and with the approval of the Graduate Council, be transferred to a research doctoral programme provided that the student meets the admission requirements of the doctoral programme concerned.

A student admitted under the "M.Phil.-Ph.D. programmes" may be permitted to transfer between M.Phil. and Ph.D. (pre-candidacy) on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned. Transfer from the Ph.D. (post-candidacy) to M.Phil. stream may be permitted exceptionally, on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned and with the approval of the Graduate Council as shown in the diagram below.

The period of study of a student changing from research master's to research doctoral in the same field of study shall count from the commencement date of his/her research master's studies.

Non-articulated M.Phil./Ph.D.	
1. Transfer of candidature (from M.Phil. to Ph.D.): for cases meeting entry requirements and completing the first year of studies	1. Supervisor to endorse 2. Graduate Division Head to approve and report to GCExCo to note
2. Transfer of candidature (from M.Phil. to Ph.D.): for cases not meeting entry requirements but with publications	1. Supervisor and Graduate Division Head to endorse 2. Dean of GS to approve

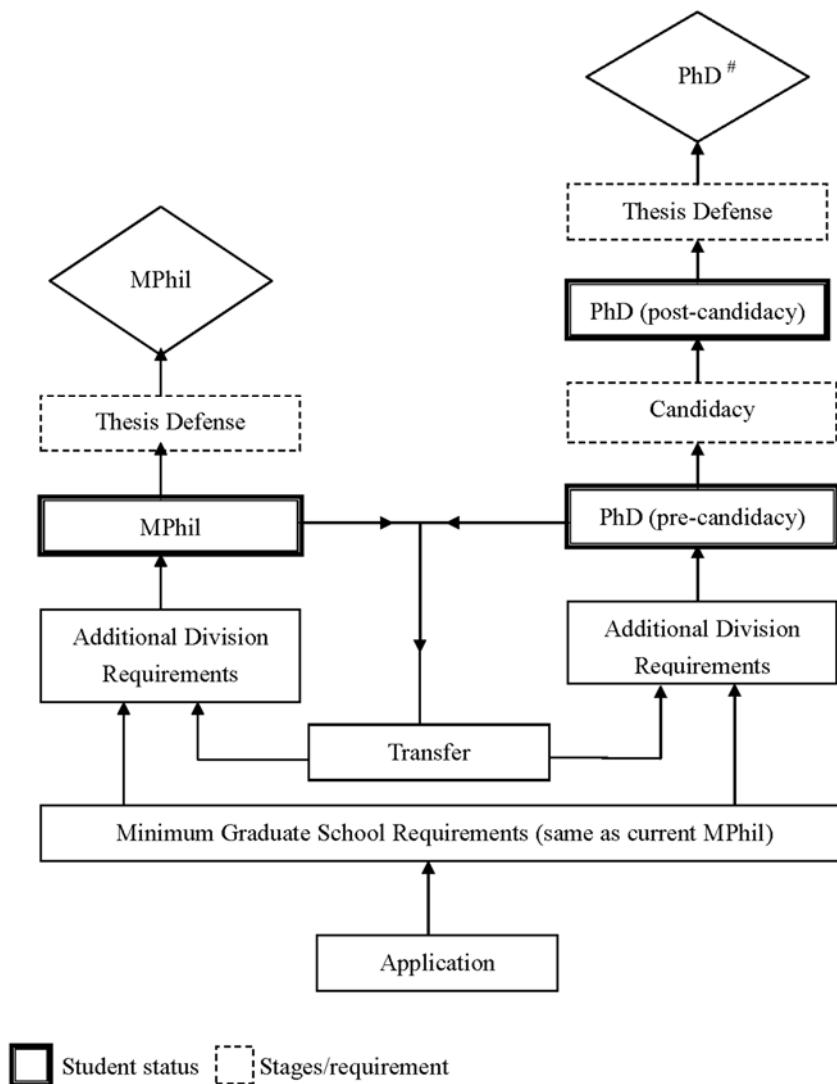
3. Transfer of candidature (from M.Phil. to Ph.D.); other special cases	1. Supervisor and Graduate Division Head to endorse 2. GCEXCo to approve
4. Transfer of candidature (from Ph.D. to M.Phil.)	1. Supervisor and Graduate Division Head to endorse 2. GCEXCo to approve
Articulated M.Phil.-Ph.D.	
5. Transfer of candidature (from M.Phil. to Ph.D. (pre-candidacy) or vice versa	1. Supervisor to endorse 2. Graduate Division Head to approve 3. GCEXCo to note
6. Transfer of candidature (from Ph.D. (post-candidacy) to M.Phil.	1. Supervisor and Graduate Division Head to endorse 2. GCEXCo to approve
Change of study programme	
7. Change to another programme of a different Graduate Division	1. Heads of both Graduate Divisions to endorse 2. GCEXCo to approve
8. Change from one master's programme to another master's programme in the same discipline (e.g., from MSc to M.Phil. of the same Graduate Division), where period of study carried over <u>is equal to or NOT more than 50%</u> of the normative period for the new programme	1. Supervisor/Programme Director to endorse 2. Graduate Division Head to approve and report to GS GCEXCo to note
9. Change from one master's programme to another master's programme in the same discipline (e.g., from MSc to M.Phil. of the same Graduate Division), where period of study carried over is <u>more than 50%</u> of the normative period of the new programme	1. Supervisor/Programme Director and Graduate Division Head to endorse GCEXCo to approve
Change of study mode	
10. Change of the mode of study (full-time/part-time)	1. Supervisor/Programme Director and Graduate Division Head to endorse 2. Dean of GS to approve

Considerations for change of study programme shall be as follows:

1. A student may change from one programme of study to another with the permission of the programme into which the student wishes to transfer.
2. The transfer-in programme will decide on the requirements for admission, as well as, where applicable, the candidacy requirements/the courses, the number of units and grades the student is required to complete for advancement to post-candidacy/fulfilment of graduation requirement of the new programme; and the exemption of any programme-specific requirements based on the student's record.

3. The study period under the new programme should count from the admission date of the original programme the student has been enrolled in and counted toward the maximum duration of study.
4. A student who passed the candidacy requirements of the original programme should not assume to have fulfilled the candidacy requirements of the new transfer-in programme.
5. If the student is required to sit for the candidacy examination of the new programme which cannot be scheduled before the transfer, or has not already fulfilled any other candidacy requirements of the new programme within the time limit for fulfilment of candidacy requirement, Division/student may submit a request for extending the period allowed for completion of the candidacy requirements and, where appropriate, the PGS suspension deadline. In any case, PGS will not be tenable beyond the normative study period.

4.8 Leave of absence



The Thesis Assessment Committee may recommend the award of an M.Phil. degree to a Ph.D. student. In this case full justification is requested for the consideration of the Graduate Council.

In case of illness necessitating absence from classes/required activities exceeding three weeks, a student should submit an application together with a medical certificate signed by a registered medical

practitioner to obtain endorsement from the Graduate Division and permission from the Dean of the Graduate School.

Applications for leave of absence for non-medical reasons are handled as follows:

Leave of Absence	Approval Procedures
Annual Leave (i.e., 14 working days with pay per academic year)	Department Chairperson to approve
Academic Leave	
(i) In-residence leave (for conference and other academic purposes)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within 20% of the normative study period 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division to endorse 2. Department Chairperson to approve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exceeding 20% of the normative study period 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervisor, Head of the Graduate Division and Department Chairperson to endorse 2. Dean of GS to approve
Non-Academic Leave	
(i) No-pay leave (i.e., leave with PGS suspended)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • up to one year cumulatively 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division to endorse 2. Department Chairperson to approve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exceeding one year cumulatively 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervisor, Head of the Graduate Division and Department Chairperson to endorse 2. Dean of GS to approve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exceeding two years cumulatively 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervisor, Head of the Graduate Division and Department Chairperson to endorse 2. GCEXCo to approve

A student who has been absent without approved leave of absence or who is in breach of the residence requirements for a continuous period exceeding one month will be considered as having withdrawn from studies.

4.9 Student visa

As of September 2025, CUHK's enrolment of postgraduate students is over 17,000, including a substantial portion of non-local students from around the world, who must first obtain a student visa or other forms of permission by the Immigration Department of the Government of HKSAR for studying in Hong Kong. Under the refinement measures implemented in March 2014 in relation to Hong Kong's development as a Regional Education Hub, the length of stay for non-local students studying full-time locally-accredited post-secondary local programmes will be aligned with the normal duration of programmes, subject to a maximum of six years. All non-local students must comply with the conditions and requirements attached to their student visa. Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that they hold a valid visa or entry permit from the Immigration Department at

all times during their stay in the HKSAR, failing which they may face the risk of being prosecuted for breach of condition of stay.

The following are some highlights of the immigration arrangements applicable to non-local RPg students:

- (a) Full-time students may take up employment or study-related internships as arranged or endorsed by institutions (Please also refer to Section 4.10 Employment). All students, local and non-local, are required to comply with the CUHK policy on taking up of employment and internships
- (b) All non-local students will be allowed to pursue short-term studies in programmes offered by Hong Kong higher education institutions with degree-awarding powers, provided that the cumulative duration of short-term studies should not exceed 180 days within any 12-month period. All students, local and non-local, are required to comply with the CUHK policy on concurrent registration.
- (c) Non-local recent graduates who wish to apply to stay and work in Hong Kong after graduation are not required to secure an offer of employment upon application. They may be granted 24 months' stay on time limitation only without other conditions of stay provided that normal immigration requirements are met.

Up-to-date information and further details about student visa can be found on the Hong Kong Immigration Department website at www.immd.gov.hk/.

4.10 Employment

I. Paid or Unpaid Employment

(Same principles apply to HKPFS students, subject to RGC's final approval ^(Note 1))

Definition of remunerative engagement

- 1. All kinds of work placements (including internships) that carry a remuneration of a monetary value regardless of the amount or form (e.g. salary, reimbursement of costs, accommodation, travel allowance) are considered as remunerative engagements.
- 2. Research attachment or study associated with scholarships, fellowship, monetary prizes and awards granted through competitions or merit-based selection processes are not considered remunerative engagement. As such, they do not require employment application or approval. Notably, PGS holders may receive such awards without needing to relinquish their studentship. Notwithstanding this, students are advised to file leave applications as appropriate.

Residence requirements

- 3. All students are required to be in residence during their period of study, except for periods of approved leave. Students registered in taught programmes are not required to be in residence between teaching terms. Residence requirements may be waived for part-time students for up to six months in any

academic year, upon the written approval of the Supervisor and the Head of the Graduate Division concerned.

Engagement permissions

4. No employment application and approval are needed for part-time students taking employment.
5. Full-time students, except PGS holders, may take up full-time employment outside of term time *(Note 2)*. No employment application and approval are required in such cases. Notwithstanding this, students are advised to file leave applications as appropriate.
6. Without prior approval of the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council (GCEXCo) or its delegated authority ("prior approval" hereafter), full-time students are not allowed to take up any full-time employment, paid or unpaid, including full-time internships specified in the study scheme during term time *(Note 2)* with an exception given in para. 7 below. Hence, the same requirements and procedures on application and approval pertaining to employment set out in the following sections would also apply to non-remunerative engagements of full-time students as far as practicable. Moreover, without prior approval, PGS holders are not allowed to take up full-time or part-time employment.
7. Exceptionally, full-time students who are approaching the end of the normative study period may take up a full-time employment if the student concerned already completed all programme requirements and submitted the thesis for examination (where applicable), subject to the endorsement of the Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division, and approval of the Dean of Graduate School.

Application procedure and approval conditions

8. Full-time research postgraduate students who wish to take up full-time paid or unpaid employment (including internships) unless otherwise specified in paras. 5 and 7, and PGS holders who intend to engage in full-time or part-time remunerative activities, must apply through their Graduate Division. Approval must be obtained from the GCEXCo or Dean of Graduate School as appropriate **prior to** commencing the engagement *(Note 3)*. For cases involving irregularities, such as retroactive applications or remunerative engagements that are not related to research or study, the Dean of Graduate School will forward the application and supporting justifications to the GCEXCo for consideration.
9. Full-time TPg students are required to apply for and obtain **prior approval** for full-time employment or internships during term time, regardless of whether the internships are officially included in the study scheme of the programme concerned. These applications must include endorsements from both the Programme Director and the Head of the Graduate Division and will be submitted to the GCEXCo for consideration.
10. Graduate Divisions shall note that applications for approval should be submitted to GSO at least 4 weeks before the starting date of the intended engagements while applications involving HKPFS awardees should be submitted at least 5 weeks in advance for immediate transmission to the UGC Secretariat.

11. Applications for taking up a remunerative engagement by PGS holders can only be approved on the condition that the students will **relinquish their PGS and take in-residence leave** during the period concerned, where the amount is less than the PGS, the Dean of Graduate School may decide if the students are allowed to receive partial PGS after netting the remuneration of the engagement.
12. In order to effectively deter and eliminate unregulated engagements the GCExCo at its Third Meeting (2022-23) on 17 February 2023 resolved to introduce the following new measures with effect from 2023-24:

Students who repeatedly fail to obtain the said prior approval during the normative study period will be sent to the Graduate School Disciplinary Committee by the GCExCo for possible disciplinary actions in accordance with prevailing guidelines and procedures.

II. On-Campus Employment by PGS Holders

(Same principles apply to HKPFS students, subject to RGC's final approval (Note 1))

13. PGS holders may take up **part-time on-campus** engagements for up to 50 hours per academic year. If the engagement concerned was requested by the students' Graduate Division, the ceiling would be relaxed to a total of 100 hours per academic year. The approval authority rests with the Head of the Graduate Division.
14. PGS holders who intend to take up part-time employment which **exceeds** the ceiling working hours should apply via their Graduate Division for approval by the Dean of Graduate School **prior** to taking up the engagement *(Note 3)*. Graduate Divisions shall note that applications for approval should be submitted to GSO at least 4 weeks before the starting date of the intended engagements while applications involving HKPFS awardees should be submitted at least 5 weeks in advance for immediate transmission to the UGC Secretariat.
15. In order to effectively deter and eliminate unregulated engagements, the GCExCo at its Third Meeting (2022-23) on 17 February 2023 resolved to introduce new measures in order to effectively deter and eliminate unregulated engagements with effect from 2023-24:

Students who fail to obtain prior approval will be punishable by a fine that is equivalent to 50% of the pay for the first 50 hours in excess of the ceiling and to 80% of the pay for the subsequent segment. Repeated violators during the normative study period will in addition be sent to the Graduate School Disciplinary Committee for possible disciplinary actions. The fine will be deducted from the student's PGS or collected from the student in whichever way the University deems fit.

III. Timely Submission of Change Requests by HKPFS Students and Universities

16. The UGC Secretariat writes that they have, from time to time, received late submissions of request for its approval.
17. Approval on part-time engagement *(Note 1)* and leave application as well as substantial change (e.g. change of department/supervisor/registration date/fellowship period/start date/end date) in relation to the

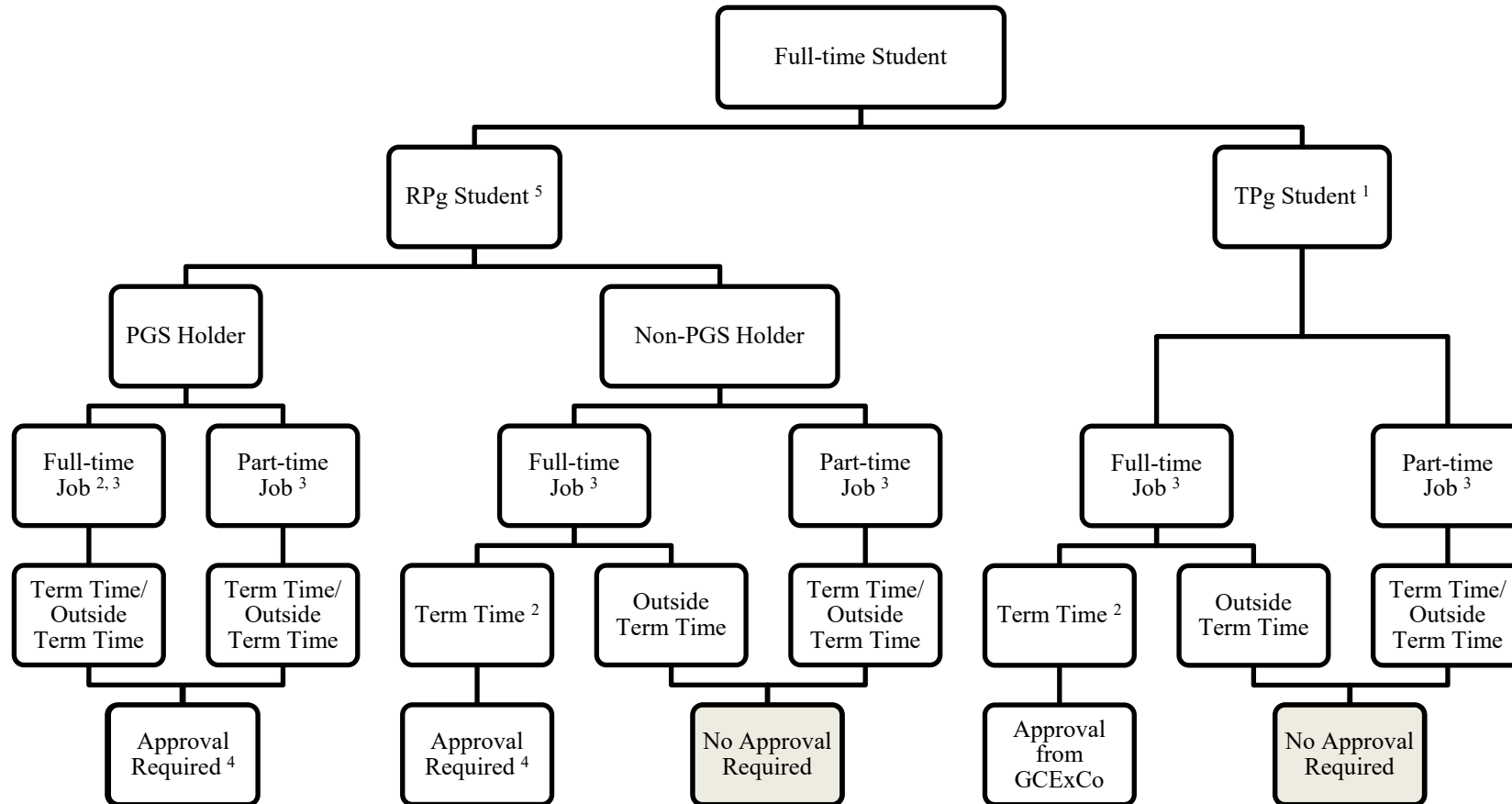
awardee concerned should be sought from the RGC Secretariat one month in advance of the proposed engagement start date or change effective date.

18. In this regard, Graduate Divisions and students should be made aware that such applications should be submitted to GSO (with the appropriate Form and supporting documents) at least 5 weeks in advance as a general rule for our immediate transmission to the UGC Secretariat. Exceptional circumstances for which GCEXCo's approval has to be sought (e.g. leave exceeded the limit or programme change) will take longer than 5 weeks depending on the GCEXCo meeting schedule. Retroactive applications will not be entertained.

Notes:

- 1) An awardee is not permitted to undertake any part-time or full-time paid employment during the fellowship period unless exceptional approval has been given by the RGC with strong justification and support from the affiliated university. According to the Circular Memorandum on "Implementation of Student Helper Engagement Scheme and Computerized Student Helper System" dated 29 August 2017, CUHK full-time students would from then on only be engaged as "Student Helpers" for all forms of campus work outside study. For details, please refer to the said memo and visit the "Student Helper Engagement Scheme" website.
- 2) i) Besides the "summer sessions" stipulated in the "Term Dates for Postgraduate Programmes", all other times are considered "term time". For TPg programmes, however, the intervals between the end of one term and the start of the next are not considered term time.
ii) The operational definition of "full-time employment" refers to a form of employment or engagement that carries 20 or more hours per week. Employment/engagement that carries less than 20 hours per week is considered as "part-time employment".
- 3) GCEXCo agreed at its Third Meeting (2023-24) on 23 February 2024 that the Dean of Graduate School shall henceforth undertake the responsibility of accepting or rejecting these applications, irregularities excepted, according to the prevailing policy as reflected in clause 3.5 of the General Regulations Governing Postgraduate Studies and section 4.10 of the Code of Practice (Research Postgraduate Studies) with immediate effect on behalf of the GCEXCo. In case of irregularities (e.g., applications that are retroactive in nature, remunerative engagements that are neither research nor study related), the Dean of Graduate School will transmit the application and justifications to the GCEXCo for approval.
- 4) Research postgraduate students who apply for "no-pay leave" for taking up remunerative/non-remunerative engagements are not required to obtain approval for participating in the engagement, as their student status during the no-pay leave period will be turned inactive and that they are considered as not being in residence during the period.
- 5) The Flowchart "Approval of RPg and TPg Students' Applications for Taking Up Engagement/Employment" is enclosed for ease of reference.

Approval for Taking Up Employment/Engagement from Postgraduate Students



Notes:

1. Full-time taught postgraduate students who are approaching the end of the normative study period may take up a full-time employment if the student concerned already completed all programme requirements, subject to the endorsement of the Programme Director and Head of Graduate Division, and approval of the Dean of the Graduate School (DGS).
2. Leave application is required. RPg students should apply for in-residence leave.
3. (i) Besides the "summer sessions" stipulated in the "Term Dates for Postgraduate Programmes", all other times are considered "term time". For TPg programmes, however, the intervals between the end of one term and the start of the next are not considered term time.

(ii) The operational definition of “full-time employment” refers to a form of employment or engagement that carries 20 or more hours per week. Employment/engagement that carries less than 20 hours per week is considered as “part-time employment”.

(iii) Full-time students will only be engaged as “Student Helpers” for all forms of campus work outside study.

4. At the Third Meeting (2023-24) of the GCEXCo, it was resolved to delegate the approval authority to DGS to approve or reject applications of:
 - a. taking up part-time on-campus employment by PGS holders which exceed the ceiling working hours (for details please refer to Section II of the Internal Guidelines);
 - b. taking up of remunerative engagements (full-time or part-time) by PGS holders;
 - c. taking up of full-time employment by full-time research postgraduate students who are approaching the end of the normative study period may take up a full-time employment if the student concerned already completed all programme requirements and submitted the thesis for examination (where applicable), subject to the endorsement of the Supervisor and Head of Graduate Division, and approval of DGS.

In case of irregularities (e.g. applications that are retroactive in nature, remunerative engagements that are neither research nor study related), DGS will transmit the application and justifications to the GCEXCo for approval.

5. Research postgraduate students who apply for “no-pay leave” for taking up remunerative/non-remunerative engagements are not required to obtain approval for participating in the engagement, as their student status during the no-pay leave period will be turned inactive and that they are considered as not being in residence during the period.