6. Progress towards Graduation

6.1 Graduation requirements

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

6.2 Course requirements

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

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

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

Students should take at least one taught course in each term, unless otherwise stated in the Study Scheme or approved by the Graduate Division Head concerned.

In addition, students’ research progress is monitored through taking “Thesis Research” courses. The minimum number of units to be taken by RPg students in each Term is given below. Each unit is regarded as equivalent to approximately 3 hours of study/research per week by the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Full-time (no. of units)</th>
<th>Part-time (no. of units)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MPhil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD (pre-candidacy)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD (post-candidacy)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3 Postgraduate students taking undergraduate courses

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

(a) Taking undergraduate courses as make-up requirements
An RPg student with a first degree in subject A admitted to a postgraduate degree programme in subject B may have to make up some undergraduate courses in subject B.

(b) Taking undergraduate courses which are not required
RPg students may take other undergraduate courses, typically in a different subject, purely for broadening purpose or interest (e.g., calligraphy or music), or to develop other skills (e.g., language, including a third language).

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

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

6.4 Research thesis and oral examination

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

6.5 Candidature for doctoral degree

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

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

(a) course requirements;
(b) Candidacy Examination/Qualifying Examination; and
(c) thesis proposal and defence of the proposal.

The Candidacy Examination or Qualifying Examination contains a written component of one or more papers, which cover the basic disciplinary knowledge expected of a PhD student. The subject coverage is not specific to each student, but is the same for a broad subject category within each Graduate Division (e.g., applied physics, Chinese linguistics). The Graduate Division may specify
that certain papers can be replaced by passing relevant courses at specified grades. There may be an additional oral component.

6.6 Candidacy Examination and Qualifying Examination

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

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

For "articulated" programmes, the maximum period to pass the candidacy requirements, counted from first entry to the "articulated" programme, is tabulated below. A PhD student (pre-candidacy) who failed to pass the candidacy requirements within this maximum period is required to discontinue studies at the University:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD (entering with a research master’s degree)</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>32 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD (entering without a research master’s degree)</td>
<td>36 months</td>
<td>48 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

6.7 Improving Postgraduate Learning

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

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

The online module “Observing Intellectual Property and Copyright Law during Research” is compulsory for all RPg students. Relevant information can be accessed from the CLEAR website at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear/prodev/ipl.html.
Different programmes may require students to complete specific IPL modules, such as “General Safety”, “Chemical Safety” or other laboratory safety courses, depending on the nature of the research project. Students should consult their Graduate Divisions or Supervisors for details.

6.8 Research Ethics Training

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

All RPg students admitted in 2017-18 and thereafter are required to complete the online RET module on “Publication Ethics” and obtain a valid Publication Ethics Certificate for graduation. More information on RET is accessible at https://www.research-ethics.cuhk.edu.hk/web/.

6.9 Other requirements

Graduate Divisions may prescribe additional graduation requirements for students of their particular field of research. For example:
- Language requirement, e.g., knowledge of spoken Cantonese and written Chinese may be required for some courses taught in Cantonese and English.
- Graduate Divisions may specify a minimum cumulative GPA (e.g., 2.0) for graduation.
- Additional requirements for individual students may be set by the Graduate Division or Supervisor, depending on the academic progress of the students.

6.10 Course and unit exemptions

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

(a) check their eligibility by reading the Policy on Course and Unit Exemption for Postgraduate Students (available in the Postgraduate Student Handbook);
(b) consult the Graduate Division concerned on the possibility of granting course and unit exemption;
(c) complete the prescribed online application form and attach any required supporting documents for submission to the Graduate Division via CUSIS; and
(d) pay the required fee.

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

6.11 Study Plan and Progress Report for RPg Studies

In order to improve supervision, ensure timely progress and encourage broader training, the Graduate School requires each RPg student, together with his/her Supervisor or, if no Supervisor has been assigned yet, a divisional adviser, to complete an online Study Plan and Progress Report for RPg studies on an annual basis.
The report is divided into two parts: the 1st part deals with the requirements of the whole Programme, students/Supervisors are required to complete this part once throughout the whole study period. The 2nd part is an annual account on the courses/other requirements completed by the students in each study year.

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

6.12 Departmental duties and teaching assistance

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

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

6.13 Language policy

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

(a) At the time of admission, ensure a proper alignment of the language proficiency of students with the language of instruction adopted by the programme.

(b) After admission, ensure that students have the opportunity to continue strengthening their language proficiency.

(c) Provide students with opportunities to be exposed to Chinese language and culture, particularly those without such exposure prior to admission, before their graduation.

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

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