

7. Submission of Thesis for Taught Doctoral Programmes

7.1 Preparation for thesis

Students of taught doctoral programmes are required to submit a thesis and pass the oral examination within the prescribed period of time for graduation. The eligibility of a student for award of a degree is assessed by the Thesis Assessment Committee on the basis of:

- (a) The thesis;
- (b) An oral examination; and
- (c) A written examination, if required.

The Graduate School has published a document titled *Research and Thesis Writing*, which focuses on the structure of a thesis and provides advice on the areas of research and thesis writing techniques. The publication comprises six chapters:

- Chapter 1: Beginning research – advises how to select a research topic and work with a Supervisor
- Chapter 2: Effective use of information – guides students through searching for information online and helps them develop skills and techniques for using library resources
- Chapter 3: Structuring a thesis – outlines the main components of the structure of an academic thesis
- Chapter 4: Writing a thesis – focuses on the actual writing of a thesis
- Chapter 5: Proofreading – focuses on proofreading and suggests a number of ways of checking for inconsistency in thesis content and structure at micro and macro levels
- Chapter 6: Guide to thesis formatting – contains information about the requirements for formatting a thesis, based on the regulations of the Graduate School

The publication is the output of a concerted effort of various CUHK departments. Students are advised to read the document carefully at the beginning of their studies and consult it later on whenever deemed appropriate. It is accessible from the GS Platform (Students) on the Graduate School website.

7.2 Procedure

The procedure relating to thesis submission is summarized in the following table, with more elaborations available in the ensuing sections.

| Event/Time | Tasks of Students | Tasks of Graduate Divisions |
|--|--|--|
| Declaration of intention to submit thesis – submit to Graduate School (GS) four months before actual submission | Complete and submit Form TAS-1 with 1-2 pages summary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division to approve proposed date of submission and thesis title; - Graduate Division to forward signed Form TAS-1 to GS, with nominations of Thesis Assessment Committee members on Form TAD-1A (for master's) or TAD-1C (for doctoral). |
| Appointment of examiners – after approval of nomination | | Head of the Graduate Division to inform Internal Examiners (IE) of their appointment. |
| Change of thesis title – after approval of thesis title | Complete and submit Form TAS-2 to Graduate Division for approval | Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division to approve and forward signed Form TAS-2 to GS. |
| Change of Thesis Assessment Committee | | Complete Form TAD-2A/TAD/S1 and forward to GS. |
| Deferment of submission of thesis – delay in submission of thesis beyond the original proposed date | Complete and submit Form TAS-3 to Graduate Division for approval | Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division to approve the application and forward signed Form TAS-3 to GS. |

| Event/Time | Tasks of Students | Tasks of Graduate Divisions |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Submission of thesis – according to the proposed date of thesis submission</p> | <p>Check the applicable submission method at GS Platform (Student).</p> <p><i>Conventional Procedure:</i></p> <p>(i) Upload the first draft of thesis to VeriGuide http://veriguide1.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/porta/plagiarism_detection/index.jsp;</p> <p>(ii) Complete the “Academic Honesty Declaration Statement”, which will be sent from VeriGuide to the student via email after uploading;</p> <p>(iii) Submit the required documents to GSO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - *Copies of thesis for dispatch to External Examiner(s); - An abstract of thesis/portfolio in both Chinese and English; - Completed Forms TAS-4, TAS-5, TAS-6 and the “Academic Honesty Declaration Statement”; | <p>Graduate Division to distribute thesis and Form TAD-3 (Thesis Assessment Report) to IEs.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Receipts of examination fee and publication fee (for doctoral students); and <p>(iv) Submit *copies of thesis (for IEs) to Graduate Division.</p> <p><i>New Online Procedure:</i></p> <p>(i) Upload the following documents to CUSIS (the thesis will be transferred to VeriGuide via CUSIS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First draft of thesis/portfolio; - An abstract of thesis/portfolio in both Chinese and English; - Completed Form TAS-5 with endorsement from the Supervisor and Head of Graduate Division; - Receipts of examination fee and publication fee (doctoral); and <p>(ii) Submit *copies of thesis (for IEs) to Graduate Division.</p> <p>(*Number of copies depends on the number of examiners)</p> | |
| <p>Oral examination – after submission of thesis to Division and GS</p> | <p>Attend an oral examination</p> | <p>Graduate Division to arrange oral examination <u>within two months</u> after thesis submission.</p> |

| Event/Time | Tasks of Students | Tasks of Graduate Divisions |
|---|---|--|
| Assessment reports – immediately after oral examination | | Head of the Graduate Division to collect IEs' reports and complete Form TAD-5. |
| Assessment results – available upon completion of assessment process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may check progress on GS Platform (Students); - act according to instruction of Graduate Division/GS. <p>(For follow-up actions on different final grades, please refer to the relevant sections below.)</p> | <u>Head of the Graduate Division to:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete and return Forms TAD-5, TAD-6, TAD-7 to GS with a copy of IEs' reports; - copy the above Forms to Supervisor, with a copy of all examiners' reports; - copy Form TAD-6 (with Part A of examiners' assessment report) to student for information and follow up action. <p><u>Supervisor</u> to give advice to student, if applicable.</p> |

7.3 Declaration of intention to submit thesis

Students have to declare their intention to submit the thesis by completing and returning the “Declaration Form on Intention to Submit Thesis/Portfolio” (Form TAS-1) to the Graduate Division and Graduate School four months before actual submission. Form TAS-1 includes the proposed date of submission and the thesis title (with 1-2 pages of summary/abstract of thesis) for approval by the Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division.

If the intended date of submission is more than three months ahead of the end of the original normative study period, permission of the Graduate Council is required. Since the normative study period will end three months after the intended date of submission, permission to shorten the normative study period will be handled at the same time. A separate application for shortening the normative period is not needed.

Students are not allowed to submit theses during leave of absence or if the External Examiner(s) has/have not yet accepted the invitation to serve on the Thesis Assessment Committee.

7.4 Thesis Assessment Committee

Upon approval of the thesis title and the proposed date for submission, the Graduate Division will nominate members of the Thesis Assessment Committee to evaluate the student’s thesis for award of the degree sought and provide the student with an opportunity to defend the thesis. The composition of the Thesis Assessment Committee is as follows:

- (a) Chairperson – the Head of the Graduate Division or his/her representative with an academic title of Associate Professor or above at CUHK. The Supervisor/Co-supervisor should NOT serve as the Chairperson of the Committee.
- (b) At least three Internal Examiners –
 - (i) the Head of the Graduate Division or his/her nominee as Chairperson;
 - (ii) the student’s Supervisor; and
 - (iii) a third Internal Examiner from within or outside the Graduate Division.

The Internal Examiners must be academic staff of the University. An academic staff who left the University may continue to serve as Supervisor/Co-supervisor/Internal Examiner of the student within three months from retirement/resignation.

- (c) External Examiner – An External Examiner must not be an academic staff of the University. Anyone who has been a teaching staff of the University and who has taken part in the teaching of the candidate, even in a visiting capacity, within the last three years of the assessment or anyone who is expected to join the University before the assessment is completed is not eligible for appointment as External Examiner. In addition, an External Examiner must be at least Senior Lecturer in the Commonwealth system or Associate Professor in the American system of high academic qualifications with considerable and recent experience in university teaching. In special circumstances, External Examiners without university affiliation but have the rank of Associate Professor (or equivalent) or above are appointed on the basis of relevant professional experience. Two External Examiners will be appointed to assess the thesis of a part-time

doctoral student who is a current full-time staff member of the University at the rank of Assistant Professor or above. All nominations of External Examiners must be approved by the Senate and University Council.

7.5 Submission of thesis

Students are not allowed to submit theses for examination unless the External Examiners have accepted the invitation. Students should not contact the External Examiners on matters related to the thesis.

Students should submit their theses to the Graduate School according to the proposed schedule, unless permission for deferment has been obtained.

For details please refer to the *General Information for Thesis Preparation and Submission – A Guide for Research Postgraduate and Taught Doctoral Students*.

Upon reviewing the student's thesis and the originality report generated by VeriGuide, the Chairperson of the Thesis Assessment Committee notifies the Graduate School and Graduate Division if the thesis can be sent to the External Examiner for assessment. If the Supervisor finds that the thesis is not suitable for submission, he/she will forward the thesis to the Internal Examiners for a decision. If there is any disagreement among the Internal Examiners, the case will be referred to the Head of the Graduate Division.

It is advisable to note the following before a student submits his/her thesis:

(a) Timing

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

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

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

(b) Formatting

There are specific requirements for thesis formatting such as order of contents, margins, paper size, citation styles, etc. For details, please refer to *Guide to Thesis Formatting* of the *Research and Thesis Writing* available on the GS Platform (Students) for illustrations and samples.

(c) Number of copies

The number of copies to be submitted depends on the number of members serving on the Thesis Assessment Committee. Students should check with their Graduate Division the number of copies required. Except for the copy for External Examiner(s) which should be submitted electronically to the Graduate School, student must submit all other copies directly to the

Graduate Division. The Graduate School will send the thesis to the External Examiner(s) for assessment.

(d) Required documents and fees

The thesis must be submitted together with the completed forms and required fees. Please study the *General Information for Thesis Preparation and Submission – A Guide for Research Postgraduate and Taught Doctoral Students* carefully well in advance to familiarize with the requirements.

7.6 Oral examination

After dispatch of the thesis to the Examiners, an oral examination will be held by the Thesis Assessment Committee. Normally, such an examination will be held within two months after the submission of the thesis. Requests for delay should be submitted by the Graduate Division to the Dean of the Graduate School for approval.

The presence of an External Examiner at the oral examination is compulsory for doctoral programmes. Where the External Examiner is unable to be present at the oral examination, a second External Examiner will be appointed to attend the oral examination and undertake the same responsibilities as the first External Examiner.

The Graduate Division will inform the student of the details of the oral examination at least one week in advance. The oral examination covers not only the subject matter of the student's thesis but also knowledge in related fields deemed essential to the field of specialisation. The Chairperson of the Thesis Assessment Committee chairs the oral examination and ensures that questions are fair and that the student is given adequate opportunity to answer them.

Even if the Examiners consider that a student's thesis is not of the standard for the award of the degree sought, a student may, at the discretion of the Thesis Assessment Committee, be given an oral examination to defend his/her thesis.

7.7 Written examination

Any written examination, if required, will be arranged by the Graduate Division. The Graduate Division should keep a record of the written examination and provide the record if circumstances require.

7.8 Thesis grades and follow-up actions

Examiners are normally given a period of five weeks for assessment of the thesis. Students may check the progress of this assessment process on the GS Platform (Students). Upon receipt of all Examiners' reports, the Chairperson of the Thesis Assessment Committee will decide on a final grade within four weeks and through the "Notification to Student on Results of Thesis/Portfolio Assessment" (Form TAD-6) inform the student of the final assessment result and the required follow-up actions, if any. If revisions are required, the Supervisor must ensure that corrections are made satisfactorily within a specified period of time not later than three months.

The grading system of the final grades for the thesis and follow-up actions on different thesis grades are shown in the following table:

| Grade | Status | Follow-up Action |
|-------|---|---|
| I | Pass | (a) If revision is not required, the student will be recommended for award of degree. (b) If revision is required, the revised thesis should be inspected by Supervisor(s) before the student is recommended for award of degree. Documents to be submitted to GS: - final version of thesis; - completed Form TAS-7; and - completed "ProQuest Publishing Agreement" (for doctoral students). |
| II | This submission NOT passed. Re-submission allowed and re-examination required | Students should: - revise and re-submit the thesis to the Thesis Assessment Committee (repeat submission process mentioned in earlier sections); and - pay the re-submission fee and continuation fee (if applicable). |
| III | Failure - no re-submission allowed | Graduate Division to submit recommendation to discontinue the student from studies for consideration by GCExCo. |

7.9 Re-submission

A student whose thesis is not passed but re-submission is allowed and re-examination is required must re-write and re-submit the thesis to the satisfaction of the Thesis Assessment Committee before being recommended for the award of degree. The re-submission must be made within 12 months from the date of the official notification of the result of the first examination and within the student's prescribed maximum period of study.

A student who fails to re-submit the final version of thesis within one year from the date as specified by the Thesis Assessment Committee will be required to discontinue studies.

Apart from ruling in regard to thesis re-submission, the Thesis Assessment Committee may decide whether or not the student should be re-assessed by oral examination.

Only one re-submission of thesis is allowed unless exceptional approval is granted by GCExCo on extension of the re-submission deadline and/or further re-submission of the thesis.

7.10 Deferment of submission of thesis

To apply for deferment of submission of a thesis beyond the originally proposed date, the form for "Application for Deferment of Submission of Thesis/Portfolio" (Form TAS-3) should be completed and forwarded to the Supervisor and Head of the Graduate Division for approval and then to the Graduate School for record. Deferment must NOT exceed the maximum study period. The deferment of the thesis submission may result in a delay of the graduation.

7.11 Submission of final version of thesis

Students are required to submit an electronic copy of the final version of their theses. For details please refer to the *General Information for Thesis Preparation and Submission – A Guide for Research Postgraduate and Taught Doctoral Students*.

7.12 Copyright of theses

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

For theses submitted before the effective year, the University retains the copyright of each of the theses submitted. A request may be made to the Dean of the Graduate School to grant permission to release this copyright to anyone intending to use a part or whole of the materials in any thesis in a proposed publication. Students/graduates are expected to give due acknowledgement of their Supervisors' guidance (in case of a translation, students should seek the approval of the original author). Photocopying of theses may be made for "fair use" for the purposes of research or private study, without the express permission of the Dean of the Graduate School, in accordance with the prevailing guidelines for copyrighted works.

7.13 Confidentiality of thesis

Normally, requests for keeping theses confidential will not be approved. Students and Supervisors who wish to protect potential patent rights (which will belong to the University if the work is done as part of normal duties) should exercise care to exclude sensitive material from the theses.

With effect from December 2014, a one-year "restricted access" is granted automatically to the final version of thesis submitted by a postgraduate student. The said period is extended to two years and made applicable to students who submit the final version of their theses after the change comes into effect on 22 April 2022. Access to the table of contents and full text of the thesis will be blocked during this period after which the thesis will be open for public access unless approval from GCExCo is granted. Students may opt out of the "restricted access" if they wish to release their theses immediately for open access.

Approval for confidentiality for theses for reasons other than patent application may be granted only in exceptional circumstances, normally up to three years (including the "restricted access" period). Each case will have to be submitted to GCExCo for consideration.

Students (including graduates) are advised to make requests for extending and modifying the restricted access period in writing at least one month prior to the date the restriction shall lapse. Retroactive

requests for extending the restricted access period received after the said deadline will not be approved.