L.N. 293 of 2008

EDUCATION ACT
(CAP. 327)

Doctor of Philosophy - Ph.D. - Degree Regulations, 2008

IN exercise of the powers conferred upon him by sections 74 (5) and 75 (6) of the Education Act (Cap. 327), the Chancellor of the University of Malta has promulgated the following regulations made by the Senate of the University of Malta by virtue of the powers conferred upon it by sections 75 and 79 of the said Act:

Citation and Interpretation

1. (1) These regulations may be cited as the Doctor of Philosophy - Ph.D. - Degree Regulations, 2008.

(2) In these regulations, unless the context otherwise requires, the terms used shall be taken to mean as indicated in the Glossary of Terms listed hereunder:

Glossary of Terms	
Term	**Explanation**
Board	the board of the University faculty or institute or centre where the research will be carried out
Faculty	the University faculty or institute or centre offering the degree
Faculty Doctoral Committee	the committee entrusted to oversee each student's research activities and doctoral studies
M.Phil. Degree	the degree of Master of Philosophy – M.Phil.
Ph.D. Degree	the degree of Doctor of Philosophy – Ph.D.
Principal Supervisor	the main supervisor assigned to students with responsibilities as outlined in regulation 29
Sub-Committee	the Ph.D. Sub-Committee appointed by Senate

Applicability

2. These regulations shall be applicable as from October 2008 and brought into force as bye-laws of these regulations.

Ph.D. Sub-Committee

3. (1) Applications for registration for the Ph.D. Degree shall be accepted by Senate, on the recommendations of the Board and of the Sub-Committee, under such conditions as Senate deems fit to impose.

(2) The Sub-Committee shall be appointed by Senate for three years and shall be composed as follows:

The Rector (or his delegate) as Chairman
Three members elected from and by the Senate
The Registrar, who shall also act as Secretary
The Dean of the Faculty or the Director of the Institute or Centre where the research will be carried out.

Eligibility to offer the Ph.D. Degree

4. Applicants shall be accepted to register for the Ph.D. Degree after it is ascertained by Senate that the Faculty where the research will be carried out can provide suitable facilities for the proposed research as well as supervisors who can provide regular supervision taking account of their academic record and expertise and other commitments.

Eligibility for the Award of the Ph.D. Degree

5. (1) The Ph.D. Degree shall be awarded upon the successful defence of a thesis containing original and significant contributions to knowledge in one of the areas of study studied at the University. The thesis, presented after an appropriate period of supervised research, shall consist of the students' account of their investigations and research and shall offer evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts, the development of new theory and/or by the exercise of independent critical power and constitutes an addition to knowledge. The thesis or parts thereof should be of peer-reviewed publishable quality.

(2) Students shall comply with the provisions of these regulations and of the Faculty Ph.D. Degree bye-laws and shall also satisfy any other requirements prescribed in any other relevant statutes, regulations and bye-laws of the University, including applicable ethical, and health and safety procedures.

(3) In accordance with the provisions of Statute 3, where the University, with the approval of Senate, enters into an agreement with other universities for the granting of a joint or double degree, then the Ph.D. Degree may be awarded:

(a) in the case of a joint degree, jointly on one certificate by all the partner universities and shall be conferred at one of the partner universities as agreed among them; or

(b) in the case of a double degree, separately by each partner university.

Requirements for Admission to the Ph.D. Degree

6. (1) The Sub-Committee shall consider applications for the Ph.D. Degree from applicants who possess a Master degree of this or another University, normally in the same area of studies applied for. In certain cases, the Sub-Committee may also consider other qualifications if deemed to be appropriate.

(2) Bye-laws may provide that applicants in possession of a First Class Honours degree or an Honours degree obtained with an average of 75% in the area of study related to the Ph.D. proposal may apply. The degree must include a substantial (not less than 15 ECTS credits) dissertation / research component in the area.

(3) Applicants are required to be in possession of appropriate qualifications to demonstrate that their standard of English is satisfactory. The offer of a place to read for the Ph.D. Degree may be made subject to the applicants obtaining such proficiency qualifications prior to the commencement of their studies.

(4) In addition to the qualifications specified in paragraphs (1), (2) and (3) of this regulation, applicants shall also possess such qualifications and satisfy such other conditions as the Board may from time to time establish for the purpose and which shall be approved by Senate in the form of bye-laws.

Applications for the Ph.D. Degree

7. (1) Applications may be submitted at any time of the year but students shall be registered with effect from one of the following dates: 1 October, 1 December, 1 February, 1 April, and 1 June.

(2) Applications for the Ph.D. Degree shall include the following:

(a) the provisional title for the thesis;

(b) a detailed research proposal, normally of approximately 1000 words;

(c) a statement on whether the studies will be undertaken on a full-time or a part-time basis, and, in the latter case, the number of hours that shall be dedicated to this research work;

(d) a statement by a member of staff of the University who has agreed to act as Principal Supervisor;

(e) a recommendation from the head of department or the division co-ordinator that the research topic is acceptable;

(f) where appropriate, a request to present the thesis in a language other than English; and

(g) where appropriate, a request to undertake the research outside the University.

8. In the case of applicants from outside Malta, funding and visa requirements shall be taken into consideration when the application and research programme are being considered.

9. Accepted applicants shall register for the M.Phil. Degree in the first instance. Senate may allow the transfer of registration from the M.Phil. Degree to the Ph.D. Degree with the same research proposal if the conditions laid down in regulation 35 have been satisfied.

10. (1) Applicants shall be interviewed by the Faculty Doctoral Committee with the participation of the applicants' designated Principal Supervisor in order to assess the applicants' ability and potential to reach doctoral level. Where it is not practical to hold an interview, appropriate alternative means of judging suitability must be found to the satisfaction of the Sub-Committee. The result of the interview shall be made available to the Sub-Committee, together with the Board's recommendation, for its consideration.

(2) The Faculty Doctoral Committee shall submit its report for the consideration of the Board.

11. The Sub-Committee shall recommend to Senate the acceptance of all applications which satisfy the requirements outlined in regulations 6 and 7.

12. Accepted applicants shall be expected to enrol by the date indicated to them in accordance with paragraph (1) of regulation 7. The offer to applicants who do not so enrol shall lapse.

13. Students shall seek the approval of Senate, following a recommendation by the Board, on the advice of the Faculty Doctoral Committee, for any substantial modification in the title or content of their thesis.

Language of Thesis

14. (1) Theses shall be written in English, except that theses in areas of study involving a language may be written in that language.

(2) However, a Board may allow students to write their thesis in any other language, provided that the Board has ascertained, to the satisfaction of the Sub-Committee and Senate, that the University has the necessary expertise to supervise and examine the work. In such cases, students shall be required to include a translation of the abstract in English.

Collaboration with Research Institutions

15. (1) Senate may allow students to undertake research in collaboration with research institutions other than universities if such collaboration would:

(a) extend the student's own experience;

(b) provide a wider range of expertise to assist in the development of the research work; and

(c) enable the student to become a member of a wider research community.

(2) Such collaboration shall normally involve essential access by the student to one or more of the following resources of the collaborating research institution: taught study-units, equipment, facilities, premises, supervision by staff, data.

Joint Research Projects

16. The University may allow students on doctoral programmes to participate in research projects where data generated jointly by a group of researchers is used for the writing of theses, provided that each student writes a separate thesis.

Ethical Approval of Research Programmes

17. Any research undertaken by students which involves direct contact with patients or healthy participants, whether clinical, biomedical or social research, or the secondary use of existing human materials or specimens, or involving animals must be subject to ethical review. Such review must be undertaken by the Research Ethics Committee appointed by Senate for the purpose. These research proposals shall first be considered by the Board who shall submit the proposal to the Research Ethics

Committee. The Sub-Committee and Senate shall only consider such applications if the Research Ethics Committee has given its approval.

Place of Study

18. Applicants may be accepted to register for the Ph.D. Degree and to work for a large proportion of their time away from the University, provided that:

(a) they shall work in a field of major relevance to the University department in which their research is to be carried out;

(b) the facilities at the place in which they will be carrying out their research shall be equivalent to or better than those of the department or complementary to those of the department and are essentially required for the work and the department concerned shall provide written evidence of this to the Board;

(c) they shall normally spend a total of at least three weeks per semester on the Malta campus during which period they shall hold meetings with the Principal Supervisor; and

(d) an adviser is appointed to follow the student regularly at the off-campus place of study/research.

19. All students who undertake their research work at the University shall be encouraged to undertake a period of study at an overseas higher education and/or research institution in order to gain wider research experience.

Duration of Studies

20. (1) Studies for the Ph.D. Degree shall extend over three years of full-time study or six years of part-time study. In the case of students accepted in terms of paragraph (2) of regulation 6, the period of study shall normally extend for not less than four years.

(2) On the recommendation of the Board and the Sub-Committee, Senate may grant students an extension of studies of up to two years in order to enable them to complete their studies, irrespective of whether they are registered on a full-time or a part-time basis.

(3) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) of this regulation, in exceptional circumstances, the Senate, on the recommendation of the Board and the Sub-Committee, may give permission for the submission of a thesis after the

equivalent of two years of full-time study or four years of part-time study have expired from the date of first registration.

21. Full-time students may not engage in employment which is likely to interfere with the progress of their research and must inform the University about the extent of their employment commitments.

22. (1) Doctoral students engaged as full-time research assistants by the University may be allowed to register on a full-time basis, provided that their research falls within the area of research for their thesis.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of regulation 20, the minimum period of study for doctoral students holding full-time appointments as research assistants at the University shall be three years.

23. Early submission shall not affect any laboratory bench fee liability.

Suspension of Studies

24. On the recommendation of the Board and of the Sub-Committee, the Senate may allow students, for a good and sufficient reason, to suspend their studies for a maximum period of 12 months, irrespective of whether they are registered on a full-time or a part-time basis. In such cases, the period of suspension of studies shall not be taken into consideration for calculating the period of registration for the Ph.D. Degree in terms of the duration requirement.

Change of Mode of Study

25. Senate may allow students to change their mode of study from full-time to part-time or from part-time to full-time. The period of registration shall be recalculated on the basis of the proportion of time during which the students were studying in each mode.

Annual Enrolment

26. (1) Students are required to enrol with their home Faculty at the beginning of each academic year throughout their period of study.

(2) Such enrolment shall be allowed only on the submission of a satisfactory progress report from the students' Principal Supervisor.

Research, Teaching and Demonstration Work

27. (1) Full-time doctoral students may be required to support the Faculty's teaching activities and/or provide laboratory demonstration service for up to a maximum of 100 hours a year, provided that these duties do not conflict with their research work and that students may be exempted from this requirement for a good and valid reason.

(2) The criteria used in assigning such duties to students shall be equitable and transparent.

(3) Doctoral students involved in teaching shall be assigned a mentor to whom they may turn for advice. They shall also be provided with advice and facilities to ensure that they may teach effectively. Students involved in demonstration work shall be provided with instruction and guidance, including relevant safety training.

(4) For such work, students shall be remunerated at standard rates as approved by the University.

Supervision of Theses

28. (1) When accepting an application for the Ph.D. Degree, the Senate, on the recommendation of the Board and the Sub-Committee, shall appoint a Principal Supervisor from among the members of the academic staff of the University in accordance with the provisions of regulation 4. Such a member of staff shall have appropriate qualifications, including extensive knowledge and research experience in the broad subject area of the student and current involvement in research groups.

(2) Senate may also appoint a co-supervisor or adviser to provide the link if the research is of an interdisciplinary nature or if the research is being undertaken in collaboration with another organisation.

Roles of Principal Supervisors, Co-Supervisors and Advisers

29. (1) A Principal Supervisor shall be responsible for providing guidance to students under his/her care in the following areas:

(a) offering ideas and providing guidance and encouragement on the planning and progress of research, submission of the thesis and publication of the results;

(b) providing or arranging for instruction in research methodology, including use of information technology; and

(c) guiding students in acquiring and improving appropriate generic skills, including written and oral communication, numeracy, decision-taking, and organisational and management skills.

(2) A Principal Supervisor shall meet students regularly to review their progress. These meetings shall occur at least six times a year for full-time students. Meetings may be substituted by other means of communication.

(3) The total number of doctoral students accepted for supervision at any time by any single full-time academic shall be limited to three, provided that if the academic can demonstrate to the Sub-Committee that:

(a) he/she disposes of a research management structure which facilitates communication and interaction between supervisor and individual researchers; or

(b) he/she has less teaching commitments than normal,

then the Sub-Committee may authorise the supervision of a larger number of doctoral students.

30. A co-supervisor may be appointed when the nature of the research work makes it necessary or expedient to do so; the role of co-supervisor is to act on a regular basis as consultant to the research project.

31. One or more advisers may be appointed when it is anticipated that particular aspects of the research work will necessitate occasional significant consultation with one or more experts.

32. When co-supervisors and/or advisers are appointed, the Principal Supervisor shall retain the ultimate responsibility of leadership in supervision.

Faculty Doctoral Committee

33. (1) The Senate, acting on the advice of the Board, shall also appoint a Faculty Doctoral Committee composed of between three and five members, chaired by the Dean or his/her delegate, the other members being normally heads of department.

(2) The Faculty Doctoral Committee shall follow, as it deems fit, the progress of students in their research work, provided that it shall meet at least once a year to review the progress of each student.

(3) Principal Supervisors shall be required to submit regular written progress reports on their students to the Faculty Doctoral Committee. Students shall have a right to view the reports and to make their own comments.

(4) If a Principal Supervisor leaves the University or is otherwise unable to supervise, the Faculty Doctoral Committee shall arrange for appropriate alternative advice and take steps to ensure that the student's research is not hindered or impeded. If the absence is of a permanent nature, the Faculty Doctoral Committee shall propose a new Principal Supervisor to the Sub-Committee and Senate, through the Board.

(5) Students are also invited to submit annual reports to the Faculty Doctoral Committee on the progress of their studies, which shall include any problems that they may be encountering.

(6) Students who wish to change their Principal Supervisor should discuss this matter with the Chairman of the Faculty Doctoral Committee who shall recommend to the Board to make adequate provisions to rectify the situation if reasonable grounds are shown to exist and, where applicable, funding arrangements permit.

34. The Faculty Doctoral Committee shall periodically inform the Board, in writing, on the general performance of students. Such advice may include a recommendation either to:

(a) grant an extension of the study period in order to enable the student to complete the thesis, provided that the period of extension of studies shall be according to regulation 20; or

(b) terminate the studies prematurely if this is deemed to be proper in the circumstances, provided that the student can appeal his/her case before Senate within 15 days from the notice of termination of studies.

Transfer of Registration from M.Phil. Degree to Ph.D. Degree

35. (1) Senate may allow a transfer of registration from the M.Phil. Degree to the Ph.D. Degree with the same research proposal if the following conditions have been satisfied:

(a) after 12 months of full-time study or 24 months of part-time study have elapsed, an *ad hoc* board appointed by the Board for the purpose, composed of a chairman, the Principal Supervisor and another member, shall assess the student's work;

(b) the *ad hoc* board shall either (i) declare the work presented to have the potential to reach the standard appropriate to that required of a doctoral degree and recommends transfer; or (ii) determine that the student's work has not reached a sufficient standard to warrant recommendation of the transfer; or (iii) advise that the student be given up to 12 months in order to complete his/her studies for the award of an M.Phil. Degree; and in all cases shall inform the Sub-Committee, through the Board; and

(c) a satisfactory progress report from the student's Faculty Doctoral Committee has been received.

(2) If the transfer is allowed by Senate, the work already done for the M.Phil. Degree shall count towards the requirements for the Ph.D. Degree.

Submission of Theses for Ph.D. Degree

36. Not less than three months before the intended date of submission, students shall signify their intention to the Faculty Doctoral Committee to present their thesis stating its exact title. The Faculty Doctoral Committee, after ascertaining that the period of study conforms to that stipulated in these regulations, and that the Principal Supervisor has given his opinion to the student regarding the submission of his/her thesis for examination, shall advise the Board to recommend to Senate the appointment of a Board of Examiners.

37. (1) When presenting a thesis for examination, students shall submit:

(a) a signed declaration that the thesis is their own personal work, and that the greater portion of the work has been done after their registration for the Ph.D. Degree;

(b) where appropriate, a statement declaring that a part of the thesis has already been submitted for another degree or qualification or that the thesis has been published; and

(c) a written statement by their Principal Supervisor that the thesis is adequate for submission if such a statement has been made, provided that a student may opt to submit his/her thesis notwithstanding any negative advice from the Principal Supervisor.

(2) Students shall not discuss their work with the examiners during the period between their appointment as examiners and the oral examination.

38. The thesis shall be written in the prescribed format and shall not exceed 100,000 words excluding bibliography, appendices and abstract. The work presented shall conform to the established scholarly standards of the appropriate discipline.

Boards of Examiners

39. (1) Theses shall be examined by a Board of Examiners appointed for the purpose by Senate, on the recommendation of the Board, and shall include a Chairman, an external examiner, and at least another member, provided that the oral examination of the thesis shall be conducted by at least three examiners including the external examiner.

(2) The members of the Board of Examiners shall be academics experienced in research in the general area of the student's thesis and where practicable, shall have experience as specialists in the topic to be examined, provided that two of the examiners, including the external examiner, shall be academics who command authority within the area of research concerned. Where the student is an assistant lecturer at the University, a second external examiner (normally non-visiting) must be appointed.

(3) Principal Supervisors, co-supervisors and advisers shall be precluded from being examiners but the Principal Supervisor shall be invited to attend as an observer during the oral examination. He/she may contribute if invited to do so by the members of the Board of Examiners but must withdraw prior to the final deliberations of the Board of Examiners.

Examination of Ph.D. Theses

40. If a statement has been made as per paragraph (1)(b) of regulation 37, the Board of Examiners set up under paragraph (1) of regulation 39 shall recommend to Senate whether the thesis should be accepted for examination or not.

41. (1) The examination of doctoral theses shall take place in two stages:

(a) submission by the student and preliminary assessment by the Board of Examiners; and

(b) oral defence of the thesis.

(2) In assessing a thesis, the Board of Examiners shall require:

(a) evidence that it represents a significant contribution to knowledge in a particular field of study;

(b) evidence of originality;

(c) evidence of the ability of the student to relate the subject matter of the thesis to the existing body of knowledge;

(d) evidence of the ability of the student to apply research methods appropriate to the subject; and

(e) a satisfactory level of literary presentation.

(3) Each examiner shall submit an independent preliminary report to the Chairman of the Board of Examiners. In the report, each examiner shall consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements for the award of the Ph.D. Degree and where possible, make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the oral examination.

(4) The Board of Examiners shall admit the student to an oral examination after either approving the Ph.D. thesis unconditionally or subject to the correction of minor errors to the satisfaction of the Principal Supervisor.

(5) If the Board of Examiners is not satisfied with the quality of the thesis, it shall not admit the student to the oral examination and shall either:

(a) refer the thesis back to the student for major revision and resubmission within six months in revised form to the satisfaction of the Board of Examiners; or

(b) not permit the student to resubmit in a revised form but admit the student to an oral examination for the award of the M.Phil. Degree instead; or

(c) refer the thesis back to the student for major revision and resubmission within six months in a revised form to the satisfaction of the Board of Examiners for the award of the M.Phil. Degree instead; or

(d) not grant permission to resubmit and state that no degree be awarded,

provided that permission as in sub-paragraphs (b) or (c) of this paragraph is granted once only.

42. (1) Students shall be required to defend their thesis orally before the Board of Examiners. The oral examination shall cover the subject of the thesis and matters relevant thereto.

(2) The oral examination shall take place at the University of Malta for all students.

(3) The Board of Examiners shall submit a final report (together with the examiners' individual reports) to Senate, which shall include a reasoned statement regarding their judgement of the student's performance.

43. Students shall be informed of the date of the oral examination at least three weeks before the scheduled date.

44. (1) Following the oral examination, the Board of Examiners shall either:

(a) submit to the Sub-Committee and Senate a joint final report including their recommendation relating to the award of the Ph.D. Degree; or

(b) refer the thesis back to the student for major revision and re-submission within six months in revised form to the satisfaction of the Board of Examiners, and to admit the student to a second oral examination, if the Board of Examiners so decides.

(2) The joint final report shall provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work as apparent from the written thesis and the oral defence. In addition to general remarks about the strengths and any weaknesses of the thesis, the report should include, as an annex, an itemised list of remarks about any specific improvements or minor mistakes requiring correction. This list shall be relayed to student for guidance in improving the document. It shall be the responsibility of the Chairman to ensure that any required corrections and amendments to the thesis have been properly executed.

(3) In the joint final report, with the examiners' preliminary reports attached as annexes, the Board of Examiners may recommend to Senate that:

(a) the Ph.D. Degree be awarded if the thesis satisfies the criteria set out in paragraphs (1) and (2) of regulation 5; or

(b) the Ph.D. Degree be awarded subject to minor amendments being carried out to the satisfaction of the Chairman of the Board of Examiners within three months of the official notification to the student by the Board of Examiners; or

(c) the Ph.D. degree be not awarded and that the student be either awarded the M.Phil. Degree or be declared to have definitively failed.

(4) Where examiners are not in agreement, they shall follow the relevant procedures as described in the University assessment regulations. In any event, the separate reports of each examiner shall be submitted to the Sub-Committee and Senate.

(5) When the disagreement cannot be resolved, and the decision is taken by a majority vote, the Chairman shall so record in the joint final report, provided that any disagreeing member may submit a minority report giving reasons for the disagreement. In such circumstances, Senate shall either agree to accept the majority report or take any other measures it seems appropriate.

Publication

45. Students shall acknowledge the contribution of their supervisor/s and adviser/s, and of any other members of staff or students in any published material or presentation in accordance with internationally recognised guidelines on authorship.

46. Supervisors shall acknowledge the contribution of the student in any published material or presentation which involves the work performed by the student.

Copyright and Intellectual Property

47. Copyright of the thesis remains with the student. All other intellectual property rights embodied in theses are owned by the University. The physical copies of the theses submitted for examination become the property of the University

48. Students must abide by the University's Policy on Intellectual Property insofar as it pertains to the allocation of income from intellectual property rights.

Confidentiality Agreements

49. (1) Confidentiality agreements with sponsoring or funding bodies should be identified by students and agreed by the Principal Supervisor and notified to the Board through the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

(2) Where a student or the University wishes the thesis to remain confidential after completion of the programme of research, application for approval must be made to the Sub-Committee at the time the application is being approved. The period approved shall not normally exceed two years from the publication of the result. However, in cases where publication of the thesis would prove detrimental to the student or the University or the sponsor or the funding body, a further period may be approved.

Final Version of Thesis

50. (1) Following successful defence of the thesis and prior to the conferment of the Ph.D. Degree, students are required to present at least three hard bound copies of their thesis and one copy in digital form as an electronic file.

(2) Doctoral theses shall each be assigned by the Registrar a thesis identifier, consisting of a set of digits and letters, in order to act as unique identifiers for the works.

M.Phil. Degree

51. These regulations shall apply *mutatis mutandis* in the case of students being considered for the M.Phil. Degree.

Bye-Laws

52. The Senate may, on the recommendation of each Board, approve bye-laws governing the Ph.D. Degree to regulate matters not covered by these regulations.

Repeal

53. The Doctor of Philosophy - Ph.D. - and Master of Philosophy - M.Phil. - Degrees Course Regulations, 1998, published as Legal Notice 31 of 1998, shall be deemed to cease to be in force as from the 30 September 2008,
provided that students registered for the Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Philosophy degrees before the 1 October 2008 shall continue to be governed by the regulations that were in force at the time of their registering for the Degree.

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