L.N. 85 of 2023

EDUCATION ACT
(CAP. 327)

Doctor of Philosophy - Ph.D. - Degree Regulations, 2023

IN EXERCISE of the powers conferred upon him by articles 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 articles 75 (3) and 79 (b) of the said Act:

Citation and Interpretation

1. (1) These regulations may be cited as the Doctor of Philosophy - Ph.D. - Degree Regulations, 2023.

(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 or school where the doctoral research will be carried out
Bye-laws	Bye-laws made by the Board of a faculty, institute, centre or school and approved by Senate
Doctoral Academic Committee	the Doctoral Academic Committee appointed by Senate
Doctoral School	the School in terms of the Statute for the Doctoral School that provides a central coordinating and support framework for researchers at doctoral level, their supervisors and examiners
Doctoral School Board	the Board of the Doctoral School appointed by Senate
Faculty/Faculties	the University faculty or institute or centre or school where the particular degree is offered
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/ Degrees	the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy – Ph.D.
Principal Supervisor	the main supervisor assigned to students with responsibilities as outlined in regulation 36
Professional Development Committee	the Professional Development Committee appointed by Senate
University	the University of Malta.

Applicability

2. (1) These regulations shall be applicable from 1 February 2023 onwards.

(2) Regulations 51 to 57 relating to the examination of the thesis shall not apply to students who request to present their thesis for examination prior to 1 February 2023. In such cases, the Doctor of Philosophy – Ph.D. – Degree Regulations, 2008 shall apply.

Doctoral Academic Committee and Professional Development Committee

3. There shall be a Doctoral Academic Committee and a Professional Development Committee as specified in the Statute for the Doctoral School.

4. Both committees shall act within the parameters of the vision and the strategic plan of the Doctoral School Board, as approved by Senate.

Eligibility to offer Ph.D. Degrees

5. (1) Faculties may accept applicants to register for Ph.D. Degrees after it is ascertained by Senate that the Faculty can provide suitable facilities for the proposed research as well as supervisors who can provide regular and proper supervision taking into account their academic record, expertise and other commitments.

(2) Faculties may offer the following Doctor of Philosophy Degrees as specified in Faculty Bye-laws:

(a) Doctor of Philosophy degree; and
(b) Doctor of Philosophy degree by Practice as Research.

Eligibility for the Award of Ph.D. Degrees

6. (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 disciplines available for study at the University. The thesis, presented after an appropriate period of supervised research, shall consist of the students' account of the investigations and research done and shall offer evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts, the development of new theories and/or methods, and/or by the exercise of independent critical judgement and shall constitute an addition to knowledge. The thesis should be conveyed in a lucid and scholarly manner and be of peer-reviewed publishable quality.

(2) The Ph.D. Degree by Practice as Research shall be awarded upon the successful presentation of practice and research, accompanied by relevant documentation of the process as well as the defence of a thesis. In the thesis students

shall contextualise and expound upon their practice in relation to their chosen research issue, question, or problem and shall include a retrospective analysis of the practice and result, critically reflecting on the key research issue, question, or problem, chosen methodologies, the definition of processes, evaluation, and contextualisation of the work, and which shall contain original and significant contribution to knowledge.

(3) All doctoral students are expected to take responsibility for their personal and professional development in consultation with their Principal Supervisor. Students are required to provide evidence that they have pursued professional development activities (which may involve taught study-units, attendance at Faculty seminars, workshops, conferences, training sessions and study visits, and the writing and publishing of academic papers both at the time of applying for transfer from the M.Phil. to the Ph.D. Degree and prior to their applying to submit their work for examination). Students commencing their studies as from 1 February 2023 are required to undertake a total of around 100 hours of such activities.

(4) Students shall comply with the provisions of these regulations and of the Faculty Bye-laws and shall also satisfy any other requirements prescribed in any other relevant statutes, regulations, bye-laws and procedures of the University, including applicable ethical and research integrity codes of practice, and health and safety procedures.

Joint and Double Ph.D. Degrees

7. (1) In accordance with the provisions of Statute 3, where the University, with the approval of Senate, enters into a collaborative 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 award 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.

(2) A Ph.D. Degree collaborative agreement shall be negotiated and agreed with partner universities, normally before the registration of students for the Degree, in accordance with the relevant guidelines approved by Senate.

Requirements for Admission to the Ph.D. Degree Programme

8. (1) The Doctoral Academic Committee shall consider applications for Ph.D. Degrees from applicants who possess a Master's degree of this or another university, normally in the same discipline as that applied for. If the degree is not in the same discipline, the Committee may also consider other qualifications and professional experience if deemed to be appropriate.

(2) Bye-laws may provide that applicants in possession of a Bachelor's degree obtained at First Class Honours or at Second Class Honours (Upper Division) may also apply, provided that the Faculty Doctoral Committee:

(a) ascertains that the applicant has a very strong background in the area of study related to the proposed area of research; and

(b) submits a clearly motivated recommendation for acceptance in the form of an academic report to the Board for eventual consideration by the Doctoral Academic Committee and Senate.

(3) Applicants are required to be in possession of the qualifications deemed appropriate by the University to demonstrate that their standard of English is satisfactory. The offer of a place to read for a 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 Ph.D. Degrees

9. (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 Ph.D. Degrees shall include the following:

(a) the provisional title for the thesis and practice, as applicable;

(b) a detailed research proposal of between 2,000 and 3,000 words, which shall include a timeline for the progression of the research programme;

(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 regarding the applicant's employment commitments, as applicable;

(e) the name of an academic member of staff of the University who has agreed to act as Principal Supervisor;

(f) where appropriate, a request to undertake the research outside the University; and

(g) any other document as may be required by the Faculty and indicated in the Faculty Bye-laws.

10. 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.

11. Accepted applicants shall be registered 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 if the conditions laid down in regulation 43 have been satisfied.

12. (1) The Faculty Doctoral Committee shall request a recommendation from the proposed Principal Supervisor and the Head of Department in the form of an academic report, following consultation, with the Department, that the research topic and proposal are acceptable and the research is feasible.

(2) Applicants shall be interviewed by the Faculty Doctoral Committee with the participation of the applicants' proposed Principal Supervisor in order to assess the applicants' ability and potential to reach doctoral level.

(3) The recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee shall be referred by the Board to the Doctoral Academic Committee for its consideration.

13. The Doctoral Academic Committee shall recommend to Senate the acceptance of applicants who satisfy the requirements outlined in regulations 8 and 9, and the Faculty Bye-laws, and who were successful during the interview conducted by the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

14. Accepted applicants shall be expected to enrol by the date indicated to them in accordance with paragraph (1) of regulation 9. If they do not enrol without providing a valid reason, the offer of a place on the doctoral programme may be withdrawn.

15. The time required for a complete Ph.D. Degree application to be evaluated by the Department, the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board, the Doctoral Academic Committee and Senate shall normally be between three and six months.

16. Students shall seek the approval of Senate, through the Doctoral Academic Committee, and following a recommendation by the Board on the advice of the Faculty Doctoral Committee and the Department, for any substantial modification to the approved title or content of their thesis and practice, as applicable.

Language of Theses and Other Relevant Documentation

17. Theses and any other relevant documentation, shall be written in English, except that when the area of research of the thesis is a modern language, the Board may require or permit the students to write the thesis and any other relevant documentation in that language. In such cases, students shall be required to include an extended summary of the thesis (approximately 5000 words) written in English. In all cases, an abstract of approximately 300 words in the language in which the thesis is written is also required.

Collaboration with Research Institutions

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

(a) extend the students' own experience;

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

(c) enable the students to become members of a wider research community.

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

Joint Research Projects

19. 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

20. Any research undertaken by students are subject to the University Research Code of Practice and review in terms of the Research Ethics Review Procedures.

Place of Study

21. All students accepted for studies for Ph.D. Degrees shall undertake a substantial part of their research work at the University as approved by the Doctoral Academic Committee, on the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee and the Board. Students may also be required to undertake a period of supervised research at an overseas higher education and/or research institution due to the nature of their research.

22. Applicants may also be accepted to register for Ph.D. Degrees and to work mostly away from the University, provided that:

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

(b) the facilities at the place in which they will be carrying out their research and which are essential for their research shall be equivalent to, or better than, or complementary to, the facilities at the University department. The Principal Supervisors concerned shall provide written evidence of this to the Faculty Doctoral Committee; and

(c) they shall normally spend a total of at least three weeks per academic year on the campus of the University, during which period they shall hold meetings with the Principal Supervisors and attend any professional development activities organised by the Faculty or the Doctoral School which shall count towards the professional development activities required as indicated in paragraph (3) of regulation 6.

Duration of Studies

23. (1) Studies for Ph.D. Degrees shall extend over three years of full-time study or six years of part-time study. If the nature of the work or the research so demands, the Doctoral Academic Committee, on the advice of the Faculty Doctoral Committee and the Board, may recommend to Senate a longer period.

(2) In the case of students accepted in terms of paragraph (2) of regulation 8, the period of full-time study shall normally extend for not less than four years.

(3) On the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board and the Doctoral Academic 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.

(4) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) of this regulation, in exceptional circumstances, the Senate, on the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board and the Doctoral Academic 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.

24. (1) Full-time students may not engage in employment which is likely to interfere with the progress of their research and must seek the permission of Senate, on the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board and the Doctoral Academic Committee before engaging in any employment; the Faculty Doctoral Committee must be kept informed about the nature and extent of their employment commitments throughout their period of study.

(2) The Senate, acting on the advice of the Principal Supervisor and the Faculty Doctoral Committee, and on the recommendation of the Board and the Doctoral Academic Committee, may terminate the students' studies or change the students' status from full-time to part-time should the students' employment be seen to interfere with the expected progress of the research or can prejudice the students' studies.

25. Doctoral students engaged as full-time Research Support Officers by the University may be allowed to register on a full-time basis, provided that the research which they are employed to support falls within the area of research for their thesis, and provided that, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (4) of regulation 23, the minimum period of study shall be three years.

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

Suspension of Studies

27. On the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board and the Doctoral Academic Committee, Senate may allow students, for a good and sufficient reason, to suspend their studies for a maximum period of 18 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

28. Senate may allow students to change their mode of study from full-time to part-time or from part-time to full-time, whenever feasible. In the case of a change in the mode of study from part-time to full-time, students shall provide sufficient evidence about their working commitments. The period of registration shall be recalculated on the basis of the proportion of time during which the students were studying in each mode.

Progress Report

29. (1) In May of every year, students shall be required to submit an annual progress report to the Faculty Doctoral Committee, through their Principal Supervisor and co-supervisor (where applicable), and the Head of Department.

(2) Principal Supervisors and co-supervisors, where applicable, shall submit a detailed individual progress report on their students to the Faculty Doctoral Committee, through their Head of Department, in June of every year. These reports should address the students' performance and any issues raised by the students. Students shall be sent a copy of the reports by the Faculty Doctoral Committee and have the right to submit their comments.

Annual Enrolment

30. (1) Following the initial enrolment, students are required to enrol at the beginning of each academic year throughout their period of study.

(2) Students' enrolment shall be subject to the Faculty Doctoral Committee having received a satisfactory progress report/s.

Professional Development Activities

31. Professional development activities may include taught study-units, the writing and publishing of academic papers, presentation at conferences, training sessions approved by the Professional Development Committee and organised by the Doctoral School, other training sessions that complement the students' doctoral studies and their professional career as doctoral graduates, as well as attendance at Faculty seminars, workshops and conferences, study visits, and similar, according to a study plan drawn up by the students in consultation with the Principal Supervisor. Students commencing their studies as from 1 February 2023 are expected to complete professional development activities for a total of around 100 hours, including a compulsory training workshop covering research ethics and integrity.

Taught Study-Units

32. (1) Bye-laws may specify that the Ph.D. Degree programme shall also include study-units intended to develop skills and competencies as required for the proper execution of the research or to introduce the students to specialist areas related to their doctoral research. On the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board shall indicate the study-units for Senate's approval, through the Doctoral Academic Committee, at the time the application is being considered.

(2) Students shall successfully complete such study-units with an overall average mark of at least 60% before they apply to transfer their studies from the M.Phil. to the Ph.D. Degree. The average mark shall be calculated at the end of the semester or academic year, as applicable.

Assessment and Re-Assessment of Taught Study-Units

33. The assessment and re-assessment of taught study-units shall be governed by the University Assessment Regulations, 2009, and by the General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards, 2021.

Research, Teaching and Demonstration Work

34. (1) 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 for advice and support. They shall also be provided with advice and facilities to ensure that they may teach effectively. Students involved in laboratory demonstration work shall be provided with instruction and guidance, including relevant health and safety training.

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

Supervision of Theses and Practice

35. (1) When accepting an application for a Ph.D. Degree, the Senate, on the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board and the Doctoral Academic Committee, shall appoint a Principal Supervisor from among the resident members of the academic staff of the University in accordance with the provisions of regulation 5. Such a member of staff shall have appropriate qualifications, including a research or practice-based doctoral degree obtained not less than three years previously. The Principal Supervisor shall have extensive knowledge and research experience in the broad subject area of the students and current involvement in research groups.

(2) On the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board and the Doctoral Academic Committee, Senate may also appoint a supervisory team that includes the Principal Supervisor, a co-supervisor and/or an adviser, at least one of whom has supervised a Ph.D. Degree to completion.

Roles of Principal Supervisors, Co-Supervisors and Advisers

36. (1) Principal Supervisors shall be responsible for providing guidance to students under their care in the following areas:

(a) offering ideas and providing guidance on the planning and progress of research, and the writing and publication of results in scholarly journals;

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

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

management skills; and

(d) providing the necessary advice to students so that they abide by the highest principles of research integrity, ascertaining that students are aware of the manner in which research results are reported and that they understand the implications of plagiarism and other unbecoming academic practices, as well as supporting students in complying with the University Research Ethics Review Procedures.

(2) Principal Supervisors shall meet students regularly to review their progress and keep a record thereof.

(3) Principal Supervisors shall convene a meeting of the supervisory team, if applicable, at least once a year. Such meetings may also include remote communications.

(4) The supervisory role of Principal Supervisors, co-supervisors and advisers shall cease when the student's work is submitted for examination. The role will normally be re-assumed, on the advice of the Board of Examiners, in order to provide guidance to students whose work is referred back for minor or major changes or for resubmission. The resumption of the supervisory role is to be agreed by both the student and the supervisory team.

(5) Principal Supervisors, co-supervisors and advisers are not responsible for proof-reading theses and any other relevant documentation or to ensure that they do not contain plagiarised parts or other academic misdemeanours.

(6) If plagiarism is detected in drafts or in the final version of the thesis or other student's work prior to the formal submission for examination, the Principal Supervisor shall use discretion as to whether to reprimand the student and demand corrective action or report the matter to the University Assessment Disciplinary Board, depending on the gravity of the offence.

(7) The total number of doctoral students for whom any single full-time resident academic shall act as Principal Supervisor at any time shall be limited to three, provided that if academics can demonstrate to the Doctoral Academic Committee that:

(a) they dispose of a research management structure which facilitates communication and interaction between supervisor and individual researchers; or

(b) they have less teaching commitments than normal,

then the Doctoral Academic Committee may authorise the supervision of a larger number of doctoral students.

37. A co-supervisor may be appointed when the nature of the research work makes it necessary or expedient to do so and to complement the expertise of the Principal Supervisor.

38. 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.

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

Faculty Doctoral Committee

40. (1) The Senate, acting on the advice of the Board, shall appoint a Faculty Doctoral Committee composed of between three and five members, chaired by the Dean or delegate, the other members being resident academics. The Faculty Doctoral Committee may co-opt up to two additional resident academic members of the same or another Faculty, provided that any member of the Faculty Doctoral Committee shall withdraw from the meeting during deliberations about students they are supervising. The Academic Registrar or delegate shall act as Secretary.

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

(3) In proposing supervisory teams, transfer assessment boards and boards of examiners, the Faculty Doctoral Committee shall ensure that the provisions of the University Consanguinity/Affinity/Dual Relationship Policy in relation to Examiners/Supervisors and Students are adhered to.

(4) If a Principal Supervisor leaves the University or is otherwise unable to supervise, the Faculty Doctoral Committee shall arrange for alternative advice by an appropriate academic 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 through the Board, shall propose a new Principal Supervisor to the Doctoral Academic Committee and Senate.

(5) Students who wish to change their Principal Supervisor should discuss this matter with the Chair of the Faculty Doctoral Committee who shall recommend to the Board, through the Faculty Doctoral Committee, to make adequate provisions to rectify the situation if reasonable grounds are shown to exist and, where applicable, funding arrangements permit. If the Chair of the Faculty Doctoral Committee is the Principal Supervisor, the matter shall be referred to the Director of the Doctoral School.

41. 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 students to complete the thesis, provided that the period of extension of studies shall be according to regulation 23; or

(b) terminate the studies prematurely if this is deemed to be proper in the circumstances, provided that students may appeal to Senate within 15 working days from the notice of termination of studies.

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

42. (1) After 12 months and not later than 24 months of full-time study or the equivalent in part-time study have elapsed, students shall request the Faculty Doctoral Committee in writing to transfer their studies from M.Phil. to Ph.D. level. Without prejudice to the student's request to transfer, the supervisory team shall endorse or otherwise the request.

(2) Students are expected to submit work that shall consist of either a substantial body of work based on the research and/or practice undertaken together with relevant documentation or at least two chapters of the entire thesis. When submitting the work for assessment, students shall include a signed declaration that the work has been submitted through a plagiarism detection software that is approved by the University, together with the resultant report. Students shall also present evidence that they have pursued professional development activities as required in paragraph (3) of regulation 6.

Transfer Assessment Board

43. (1) On the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board and the Doctoral Academic Committee, Senate shall appoint a Transfer Assessment Board, composed of an examining Chair, an internal examiner, who shall normally be a resident academic, and the Principal Supervisor. Where the students are involved in teaching and research at the University or at the Junior College, whenever practicable, academics with appropriate expertise from Faculties or departments different from where the students teach shall be appointed as an examining Chair and internal examiner.

(2) The Transfer Assessment Board shall:

(a) ascertain that the students have completed successfully any required study-unit/s and has pursued professional development activities as required in paragraph (3) of regulation 6;

(b) ascertain that the quality and scope of the research work presented by

the students has the potential to reach the standard appropriate to that required of a doctoral degree;

(c) verify that the work submitted is the students' own and assess the extent of any collaboration; and

(d) submit the students to an oral examination held at the University.

(3) If the Transfer Assessment Board discovers what, in its opinion, appears to be *prima facie* a case of plagiarism or other academic misdemeanours in the submitted work, it shall:

(a) stop the process of assessment forthwith and report the alleged breach of the regulations to the University Assessment Disciplinary Board; in the case of plagiarism, a copy of the plagiarism detection software report together with supporting documentation which purports to prove the alleged plagiarism or other academic misdemeanours shall be provided to the University Assessment Disciplinary Board; and

(b) resume assessment of the work if the decision of the University Assessment Disciplinary Board allows it and subject to any disciplinary penalties as may be imposed.

(4) Following the oral examination, the Transfer Assessment Board shall submit the individual report of all the members and a signed joint report to Senate through the Doctoral Academic Committee. The Transfer Assessment Board shall either:

(a) recommend to Senate the transfer of registration of the students from the M.Phil. to the Ph.D. Degree; or

(b) determine that the students' research work has not reached a sufficient standard to warrant recommendation for transfer and gives students advice in writing requiring re-submission within six months if the students are registered on a full-time basis or 12 months if the students are registered on a part-time basis; students shall be allowed to re-submit their work for transfer once only; or

(c) determine that the students' work does not have the potential to reach the standard required of a doctoral degree and recommends to Senate that the students be given up to 12 months in order to be examined for the award of an M.Phil. Degree.

(5) The reports of the Transfer Assessment Board shall be submitted to the Doctoral Academic Committee within two months from submission of the work by the students.

44. (1) If the Doctoral Academic Committee, on the recommendation of

the Transfer Assessment Board, having also ascertained that the work reflects the approved research proposal and satisfies the conditions stipulated in paragraph (2) of regulation 43, submits a positive recommendation, Senate may allow the transfer of registration from the M.Phil. Degree to the Ph.D. Degree.

(2) If the transfer is allowed by Senate, the work already done shall count towards the requirements for the Ph.D. Degree. However, the transfer shall not imply any entitlement to the award of the M.Phil. Degree and, consequently, the post-nominal letters M.Phil. cannot be used at this stage.

(3) If students are not in a position to request transfer of studies to the Ph.D. Degree within the period stipulated in paragraph (1) of regulation 42, the students shall be required to provide the Faculty Doctoral Committee with the reason for the non-submission. Senate, after consideration of the recommendations by the Faculty Doctoral Committee, the Board and the Doctoral Academic Committee, shall either:

(a) grant the students a specified period within which to present the work for transfer of studies to the Ph.D. Degree; or

(b) allow the students to submit the work within a specified period for examination towards the M.Phil. Degree; or

(c) terminate the students' registration.

(4) The conclusions of the Transfer Assessment Board shall be communicated to the students after Senate's approval.

Submission of Theses for Ph.D. Degrees

45. (1) Not less than three months before the intended date of submission, students shall signify their intention to present their thesis to the Faculty Doctoral Committee stating its exact title, on the appropriate form. The Faculty Doctoral Committee, after ascertaining that the period of study conforms to that stipulated in these regulations, shall advise the Board to recommend to Senate, through the Doctoral Academic Committee, the appointment of a Board of Examiners.

(2) In the case of Ph.D. by Practice as Research, the Board of Examiners may be appointed at an earlier stage, normally at least six months after the transfer to the Ph.D. Degree is approved.

46. (1) When presenting the thesis or the practice and thesis for examination, students shall submit:

(a) a signed declaration that the thesis and/or the practice 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) a signed declaration that they have abided by the University Research Ethics Code of Practice and followed the Research Ethics Review Procedures as well as that the thesis and any other documentation has been submitted through a plagiarism detection software approved by the University, together with the resultant report/s;

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

(d) a signed declaration by the Principal Supervisor indicating that they are aware that the students are submitting the thesis for examination.

(2) Other than during the oral examination, students shall not discuss their work with the examiners during the period between their appointment as examiners and the publication of the result as approved by Senate.

47. (1) The thesis by research shall be written in the prescribed format and shall not exceed 100,000 words excluding the list of references, footnotes, endnotes, appendices, abstract, and extended summary, if applicable. Bye-laws may specify the minimum number of words. The work presented shall conform to the established scholarly standards of the appropriate discipline.

(2) For the Ph.D. Degree by Practice as Research, students shall be required to submit a presentation of practice supported by an analytical account of the process and a thesis. The thesis shall consist of between 30,000 to 50,000 words which shall normally constitute around 50% of the project. The submission as a whole shall demonstrate original and significant contribution to knowledge in the field, showing doctoral level ability of analysis and mastery of existing knowledge in a way that is accessible and auditable by knowledgeable peers.

(3) The presentation of formally examinable practice shall not normally be more than one calendar year in advance of the final written submission, as specified in the Faculty Bye-laws.

Boards of Examiners for Taught Study-Units

48. Boards of Examiners for taught study-units shall be appointed and shall act as stipulated in the University Assessment Regulations, 2009 and in the General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards, 2021.

Boards of Examiners for M.Phil. and Ph.D. Degrees

49. (1) Theses and practice (as applicable) shall be examined by a Board of Examiners appointed for the purpose by Senate, through the Doctoral Academic Committee, on the recommendation of the Faculty Doctoral Committee and the Board.

(2) The Board of Examiners for Ph.D. Degrees shall include a Chair, who shall be a resident academic, a visiting external examiner, and two internal examiners who shall normally be resident academics. The Chair shall only act as a convenor.

(3) The Board of Examiners for M.Phil. Degrees shall include a Chair, who shall be a resident academic, a visiting external examiner, and two internal examiners who shall normally be resident academics. The Chair shall only act as a convenor.

(4) In all cases, if sufficient examiners cannot be sourced locally, two visiting external examiners and one internal examiner, who shall be a resident academic, shall be appointed.

(5) Examiners shall be academics experienced in research in the general area of the students' theses and where practicable, shall have experience as specialists in the topic to be examined. The external examiner/s shall also be academic/s who command authority within the area of research concerned. Where the students are currently involved in teaching and/or research at the University or at the Junior College whenever practicable, the internal examiners, who shall normally be resident academics, shall be appointed from different faculties or departments than those where the student teaches.

(6) Principal Supervisors, co-supervisors and advisers shall be precluded from being examiners but Principal Supervisors shall be invited to attend as observers during the oral examination. Principal Supervisors may contribute to the discussion if and when they are invited to do so by the members of the Board of Examiners, but must withdraw prior to any deliberations of the Board of Examiners.

(7) The deliberations of the Board of Examiners are strictly confidential and those present at the oral examination are not at liberty to divulge to the student or to any unauthorised person their own or any other Board member's opinions on the merits of the thesis and practice (as applicable) submitted for examination. The Board of Examiners may inform the student of its recommendations to Senate but should ensure that the student understands that any recommendation shall need to be ratified by Senate. The decisions of Senate shall be communicated to the students by the Academic Registrar.

Examination of Ph.D. Theses

50. In matters related to the examination of a thesis not provided for by

regulations 51-57 of these regulations, the Board of Examiners shall be guided by the provisions of the University Assessment Regulations, 2009.

51. (1) The examination of a student for the award of a Ph.D. Degree consists of the submission of the thesis by the student and the oral defence of the thesis, including any subsequent changes as may be required by the Board of Examiners.

(2) The examination of a student for the award of a Ph.D. Degree by Practice as Research consists of the presentation of the practice and research, accompanied by relevant documentation of the process as well as submission and oral defence of a thesis, including any subsequent changes as may be required by the Board of Examiners.

52. (1) Each member of the Board of Examiners, except for the Chair, shall assess the thesis and practice (as applicable) and submit a detailed preliminary individual report before the student is admitted to the oral examination. The Examiners shall require:

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

(b) evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts, and/or the development of new theories and/or methods, and/or by the exercise of independent critical judgement;

(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;

(e) a satisfactory level of literary presentation;

(f) evidence that the work is of peer-reviewed publishable quality; and

(g) compliance with the provisions of these regulations.

(2) The Chair, acting as a convenor, shall read the thesis but is not expected to examine it or to submit an individual report.

(3) If the Board of Examiners discovers what, in its opinion, appears to be *prima facie* a case of plagiarism or other academic misdemeanours in the submitted work, it shall:

(a) stop the process of examination forthwith and report the alleged breach of the regulations to the University Assessment Disciplinary Board; in the case of plagiarism, the plagiarism detection software report together with supporting

documentation which purports to prove the alleged plagiarism shall be provided to the University Assessment Disciplinary Board; and

(b) resume assessment of the thesis and practice (as applicable) if the decision of the University Assessment Disciplinary Board allows it and subject to any disciplinary penalties as may be imposed.

53. (1) Following the submission of the preliminary individual reports, students shall be required to defend their thesis and practice (as applicable) orally and in person before all the members of the Board of Examiners. The oral defence, which shall be held in English, except for a thesis written in another modern language, which may be held in that particular language, shall cover the subject of the thesis and practice (as applicable) and matters relevant thereto, and shall enable the examiners to:

(a) question the student on the substance and method of the work submitted, as well as the significant contribution to knowledge in the particular field of study;

(b) assess the ability of the student to present and defend intellectual arguments;

(c) assess the student's knowledge and understanding of the discipline and of the relevant literature; and

(d) verify that the work submitted is the student's own and assess the extent of any collaboration.

(2) In the case of Ph.D. by Practice as Research, the submission of both practical and written components shall be the subject of the oral examination.

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

(4) The oral examination shall take place at the University, except when a particular Ph.D. Degree programme is governed by a collaborative agreement, in which case the location shall be specified in the agreement. In exceptional circumstances, the Doctoral Academic Committee may approve that an oral examination is held with one of the examiners participating remotely.

(5) If the Board of Examiners discerns serious dissonance between the quality of the work and the performance of the student during the oral examination, it shall endeavour to establish whether the work is truly the student's own. If the Board of Examiners is of the opinion that a breach of the University Assessment Regulations may have occurred, it shall submit a report in writing to the University Assessment Disciplinary Board. When the University Assessment Disciplinary Board informs the Board of Examiners of its decision, it shall proceed with the examination

process subject to any disciplinary penalties as may be imposed, unless the University Assessment Disciplinary Board finds that the student is in breach of the regulations and recommends that the degree be not awarded.

54. (1) Following the oral examination, the Chair of the Board of Examiners shall prepare a final joint report signed by all the members, which shall include: (i) an appraisal of the scope and quality of the work as apparent from the written thesis and practice (as applicable) and the oral defence; (ii) the list of changes, where applicable, as an appendix; and (iii) a recommendation to Senate.

(2) The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall forward to the Doctoral Academic Committee all the reports prepared by the Board of Examiners, including the preliminary individual reports and the final joint report with the list of changes, where applicable, as an appendix, in order to ascertain that all the regulations and procedures related to the examination of the work for the award of the Ph.D. or M.Phil. Degrees have been adhered to.

(3) Following consideration by the Doctoral Academic Committee, the Chair of the Board of Examiners shall be requested to forward the list of changes, where applicable, to the student for guidance and action. If all the documents are in order and after any required changes are submitted to the satisfaction of the Chair or the Board of Examiners, as applicable, the recommendation of the Board of Examiners shall be forwarded to Senate for consideration at the next scheduled meeting. Simultaneously, the Board shall be informed that a recommendation has been made to Senate.

55. (1) The decision of the Board of Examiners in the final joint report shall be to either:

(a) approve the thesis and practice (as applicable), if no changes are required and recommend to Senate that the student be awarded the Ph.D. Degree; or

(b) require the student to affect minor changes in order to be awarded the Ph.D. Degree. The list of changes shall be forwarded to the student by the Chair for guidance and action as specified in paragraph (3) of regulation 54. The student shall be required to submit the revised thesis within three months following the written official notification sent by the Chair, and include a report explaining how all the requested changes have been addressed. Minor changes shall only be allowed once. A recommendation to Senate, through the Doctoral Academic Committee, that the student be awarded the Ph.D. Degree shall be made after the Chair confirms that the minor changes have been carried out satisfactorily; or

(c) require the student to affect major changes in order to be awarded the Ph.D. Degree. The list of changes shall be forwarded to the student by the Chair for guidance and action as specified in paragraph (3) of regulation 54. The student

shall be required to submit the revised thesis within a minimum of six months and a maximum of 12 months following the written official notification sent by the Chair, and include a report explaining how all the requested changes have been addressed. Major changes to the thesis shall only be allowed once. A recommendation to Senate, through the Doctoral Academic Committee, that the student be awarded the Ph.D. Degree shall be made after all the members of the Board of Examiners confirm that the major changes have been carried out satisfactorily; or

(d) refer the thesis back to the student to resubmit it in a revised and complete form and for the student to be re-examined and considered for the award of the Ph.D. Degree. The list of changes shall be forwarded to the student by the Chair for guidance and action as specified in paragraph (3) of regulation 54. A minimum period of 12 months and a maximum period of 18 months following the written official notification sent by the Chair shall be allowed. A second oral examination shall be held following the resubmission of the thesis during which the external examiner may participate remotely. A resubmission of the thesis shall only be allowed once. A recommendation to Senate, through the Doctoral Academic Committee, that the student be awarded the Ph.D. Degree shall be made after all the members of the Board of Examiners confirm that the resubmitted thesis merits the award of the Ph.D. Degree; or

(e) agree that the Ph.D. Degree be not awarded and recommend to Senate that the student be awarded the M.Phil. Degree; or

(f) agree that the Ph.D. Degree be not awarded and require the student to carry out minor changes in order to be awarded the M.Phil. Degree. The list of changes shall be forwarded to the student by the Chair for guidance and action as specified in paragraph (3) of regulation 54. The student shall be required to submit the revised thesis within three months following the written official notification sent by the Chair, and include a report explaining how all the requested changes have been addressed. Such minor changes shall only be allowed once. A recommendation to Senate, through the Doctoral Academic Committee, that the student be awarded the M.Phil. Degree shall be made after the Chair confirms that the minor amendments have been carried out satisfactorily; or

(g) agree that neither the Ph.D. Degree nor the M.Phil. Degree be awarded and the student be declared to have definitively failed.

(2) Should a student not submit the changes indicated within the maximum period granted by the Board of Examiners, the Board of Examiners shall declare that no degree be awarded, unless in extraordinary circumstances Senate agrees to extend the period in which the student is required to submit the changes.

(3) Should a student not attend for the oral examination without prior justification, the Board of Examiners shall declare that no degree be awarded, unless in extraordinary circumstances, Senate may request that a second oral examination

be arranged if extenuating circumstances are subsequently revealed that could not reasonably have been presented at the time of the oral examination.

(4) In the case of Ph.D. by Practice as Research, the Board of Examiners shall proceed as indicated in paragraphs (1) to (3) of this regulation with regard to the written thesis and *mutatis mutandis* with regard to the practical component.

(5) When a student is considered for the award of the M.Phil. Degree in terms of sub-paragraphs (e) and (f) of paragraph (1) of this regulation, the thesis shall be assessed against the following criteria, that it:

(a) constitutes research of an advanced or an original nature;

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

(c) contains evidence of the ability of the student to apply research methods appropriate to the subject;

(d) has a satisfactory level of literary presentation; and

(e) is in compliance with the provisions of these regulations.

56. (1) Where examiners are not in agreement, they shall follow the relevant procedures as described in the University Assessment Regulations, 2009.

(2) When the disagreement cannot be resolved, and the decision is taken by a majority vote, the Chair shall record this in the examiners' final joint report, provided that any disagreeing member may submit a minority report giving reasons for the disagreement. In such circumstances, Senate shall either accept the majority report, or appoint an additional examiner or examiners, or a new Board of Examiners to resolve the matter.

57. (1) Following approval of the recommendation of the Board of Examiners by Senate, students shall be provided with the final joint report on their thesis prepared by the Chair of the Board of Examiners.

(2) Students shall be allowed to use the post-nominal letters Ph.D. or M.Phil., as applicable, after the conferment of the Degree.

Academic Appeals

58. Academic appeals may be lodged by students against decisions taken by the Transfer Assessment Board or the Board of Examiners within 15 working days of

being notified of Senate's decision.

59. The academic judgement of the Transfer Assessment Board or the Board of Examiners is not reviewable by the Doctoral Appeal Review Board considering the students' appeal and a recommendation to alter the decision can only be made if the change can be justified by evidence provided by the student that there was an administrative, procedural or clerical error in the examination of the thesis and/or the practice.

60. Appeals regarding poor or inadequate supervision of doctoral research being raised at this stage for the first time shall not be entertained.

61. Appeals concerning decisions of the University Assessment Disciplinary Board regarding plagiarism and other academic misdemeanours by students shall be considered by the University Assessment Appellate Board as provided for in the University Assessment Regulations, 2009.

Doctoral Appeal Review Board

62. (1) Senate shall appoint a Doctoral Appeal Review Board which shall be composed of:

(a) a pro-rector, who shall be designated as Chair for each appeal;

(b) an academic not below the rank of associate professor; and

(c) a postgraduate student appointed by Senate from among the students' representatives on Senate,

provided that all members of the Doctoral Appeal Review Board would not have been involved in the original recommendation of the Transfer Assessment Board or the Board of Examiners or the Doctoral Academic Committee, as applicable.

(2) The procedures to be followed by students and by the Doctoral Appeal Review Board shall follow *mutatis mutandis* the relevant provisions in the University Assessment Regulations, 2009.

63. The Doctoral Appeal Review Board may recommend to Senate any of the following decisions when considering appeals against a decision of the Transfer Assessment Board:

(a) to reject the appeal, in which case the student shall be informed in general terms of the reason; or

(b) that the transfer of registration of the student from the M.Phil. Degree to

the Ph.D. Degree should proceed.

64. (1) The Doctoral Appeal Review Board may recommend to Senate any of the following decisions when considering appeals against a decision of the Board of Examiners:

(a) to reject the appeal, in which case the student shall be informed in general terms of the reason; or

(b) to require the student to revise the thesis and re-submit it for re-examination by the original examiners within a specified time limit; or

(c) to declare the examination null and void and direct the Faculty to conduct a fresh examination using the original Board of Examiners or a new Board of Examiners appointed by Senate; or

(d) to recommend to the Board of Examiners that, for reasons stated, they should reconsider their decision.

(2) Where a new Board of Examiners is appointed, the examiners shall be no fewer in number than those who originally assessed the thesis and/or practice, as applicable. The new members shall not be given any information about the previous examination except the fact that they are conducting an examination on appeal.

(3) When a new examination is taking place, the examiners should submit an preliminary individual report on the appellant's work, conduct an oral examination and submit a final joint report.

Copyright and Intellectual Property

65. Students must abide by the University Intellectual Property Policy, 2014.

Open Access

66. In line with the University of Malta Open Access Policy, the University Library shall provide in open access the electronic copies of the theses and practice (as applicable) and shall make them publicly available on the University Institutional Repository.

Confidential Information

67. (1) Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, training know-how, information, methodologies and manuals; workbooks; statements

of operating practice; specifications; drawings; designs; formulae; discoveries; inventions; technical information; know-how generally; lab notebooks; manuscript papers; software; information about the methods, concepts and techniques on which software is based; samples; finances; financial models; pricing and other commercial information; business plans; marketing plans; and any information considered to be sensitive by the University Research Ethics Committee.

(2) Personal data that may come into students' possession and/or that students may be exposed to and/or that students may have access to in carrying out work placements and/or clinical practice in furtherance of their studies at the University shall also be considered as confidential information.

(3) Students are bound not to disclose any confidential information which may come into their possession and/or which they are exposed to and/or which they have access to. Furthermore, students may be asked by the University to sign specific confidentiality agreements should it be deemed necessary.

(4) Subject to the provisions of paragraph (1) of this regulation, information shall not be considered as confidential information pertaining to the University if:

(a) it was already known to the student and it was not subject to any obligation of confidence by the student to the University;

(b) it is or becomes publicly known without an act or omission of the student;

(c) it is obtained by the student from a third party with a valid right to disclose such confidential information, provided that said third party is not under a confidentiality obligation to the University;

(d) it is approved for release in writing by an authorised representative of the University; or

(e) the student is specifically required to disclose such information pursuant to a law or order of any Court of competent jurisdiction.

Embargo of Thesis and Practice

68. (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of regulation 66, where the student considers that the thesis and practice documentation (where applicable) should remain

confidential during or after completion of the programme of study or research, a request for it to be embargoed must be made to the Board. The Board shall submit its recommendation to Senate through the Doctoral Academic Committee. The period of confidentiality approved shall not normally exceed two years from the publication of the result and shall be communicated to the Library by the Faculty. However, in cases where publication of the student's work would prove detrimental to the student, the University, the sponsor, the funding body, or the persons referred to in the student's work, a longer period may be approved.

(2) In any case and without prejudice to paragraph (1) of this regulation, the University retains the right to request the embargo of a thesis. In the event that it is embargoed, the student shall be bound to treat the contents of such work as confidential. Prior to any publication, the provisions about publication and exploitation, as detailed in the University Intellectual Property Policy, 2014, shall apply in every case.

Data Protection

69. (1) Students shall abide by all applicable data protection policies and/or regulations of the University that may be in force from time to time.

(2) Students shall only process personal data that may come into their possession and/or that they may be exposed to and/or that they may have access to in carrying out their research in furtherance of their studies.

(3) The terms 'personal data' and 'processing (of personal data)' shall have the meanings assigned to them in the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679).

Final Version of Thesis

70. (1) Following successful defence of the thesis and prior to the conferment of the Ph.D. or M.Phil. Degree, the student is required to present one electronic version of the thesis for the University Library, and copies as required by the respective Faculty together with a signed declaration of authenticity to the Faculty. The electronic version must conform to the formatting standards set by the University Library. In case of failure to submit the copies of the thesis as required by this regulation, the Ph.D. Degree or M.Phil. Degree shall not be conferred.

(2) In the case of Ph.D. by Practice as Research, the student is also required to provide a permanent record of the research practice in an appropriate format (digital means, scores, artefacts, drawings, photographs) and must be included in the document deposited with the University of Malta Library.

(3) Theses and records of research practice shall each be assigned an identifier by the University Library, consisting of a set of digits and letters, in order to act as unique identifiers for the works.

M.Phil. Degree

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

Bye-Laws

72. 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.

Authority of the Senate

73. If issues arise that are not explicitly addressed by these regulations, the matter shall be referred to Senate that shall have the authority to decide on any action it deems fit and equitable to resolve the issue.

Special Provisions for Part-Time Study

74. The provisions of the foregoing regulations shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to students registered on a part-time basis and subject to such changes as may reasonably be deemed necessary by the Board, the Doctoral Academic Committee and Senate due to the part-time registration of the student.

General Provision

75. Wherever in any Bye-laws made under the Education Act (Cap. 327) there is a reference to "Doctor of Philosophy - Ph.D. - Degree Regulations, 2008", that reference shall be substituted by the words "Doctor of Philosophy - Ph.D. - Degree Regulations, 2023."

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