



PhD & MPhil Regulations Handbook

Applies to all APU programmes for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
and
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

Related documents:

- PhD & MPhil Student Handbook & Study Guide
- Thesis Handbook

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1.0 Application Procedures

1.1 Entry Qualifications

PhD

A candidate applying for a PhD programme must meet the following entry requirements:

- A Master's degree accepted by APU Senate Other qualifications equivalent to a Master's degree that are accepted by APU Senate

MPhil

A candidate applying for a MPhil programme must meet the following entry requirements:

- A Bachelor's degree accepted by APU Senate with minimum CGPA of 2.75 ; or
- Other qualifications equivalent to a Bachelor's degree that are accepted by APU Senate

The candidate must also meet the minimum English language requirements of IELTS 6.5. Where there is no evidence of an English language qualification or having studied the Masters and/or Bachelor's Degree in English, then an English Placement test may be administered and subsequently, the candidate will be required to meet the equivalent requirements through an intensive English language programme prior to starting the programme.

1.2 Application Process

To apply, the Application Form will need to be completed. The application is to be completed in full with the personal particulars and proposed project details that include an expression of research interest, research problem, aims and objectives of the research and the eventual intended outcome of the research.

It is highly recommended that the candidate look up the Directory of Expertise on the APU website to identify the areas of research at APU as well as identify potential supervisors. Candidates should approach and work with the potential supervisor in order to develop a good proposal for the application, to increase the probability of acceptance. In such a case, the student should indicate the names of the proposed supervisors in the application form.

The following documents are also required during the application process:

- A certified copy of the applicant's academic qualification transcripts.
- A certified copy of the applicant's degree certificates.

- A certified copy of the applicant's English language proficiency should also be attached.
- A resume detailing the applicant's working experience, projects undertaken and papers presented and/or published.
- Any other necessary documents which may strengthen the application.

Applications are normally open throughout the year and must be submitted online via the university website. Applications through the post will also be accepted.

The processing of the application will take 5 weeks and the applicant will be notified by e-mail if the application is successful.

1.3 Application Outcome

The application is reviewed by a panel to determine the suitability of the research for the level of the award and availability of supervisors. The outcome will be one of the decisions below:

- Approved
Application accepted as per the proposed project.
- Rejected
 - The proposed research has significant shortfalls, or
 - The proposed research is not in line with the award, or
 - The applicant has not met the required qualifications or prerequisites for entry into the programme, or
 - The University does not have the required expertise to supervise the field of study
- Rejected with suggestions for improvement
The application shall be re-submitted based on the comments given. A further review will be done and can be accepted upon full compliance.

Upon approval, a suitable supervisor and co supervisor will be appointed.

The commencement date of the programme will be notified to the student by the University.

1.4 Duration of Study

PhD

The duration of the PhD is dependent on the prior qualifications and study mode, as follows:

- Entry by Full Research Masters or Masters with minimum 30% research component with a formal taught research module.

Study	Normal Minimum	Normal Maximum
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mode	period	period
Full Time	2 years	5 years
Part Time	3 years	6 years

- Entry by Taught Masters

Study mode	Normal Minimum period	Normal Maximum period
Full-Time	3 years	6 years
Part-Time	4 years	7 years

Students with no prior Research Methods or Dissertation at Masters level are to enrol in a research methods module (Masters level) to fill the gaps in research skills.

MPhil

The duration of the MPhil is dependent on the study mode, as follows:

Study mode	Normal Minimum period	Normal Maximum period
Full-Time	1.5 years	3 years
Part-Time	2 years	4 years

1.5 Change of Candidature from MPhil to PhD

In special circumstances, an MPhil student may change his/her MPhil candidature into a PhD candidature. The criteria to be met are as follows:

- The conversion must happen not earlier than one (1) year of registering for the MPhil programme.
- The student must be able to show competency and ability to be able to conduct research at the PhD level.
- The student passes a rigorous internal assessment by the university.
- The conversion must be approved by the APU Senate.

In the event of such a conversion:

- The start date of the PhD candidature will be backdated to the start date of the MPhil candidature.
- The candidate will NOT be eligible for an MPhil award.

A summary flowchart of the conversion process can be found in Appendix G 2.0 Programme of Study

Upon acceptance into the PhD or MPhil programme, the programme of study will be as generally categorised into the stages below:

No	Stage	Elements	Semester / Year
1	Preparatory	Proposal writing, <i>Pre-requisite Modules (if applicable)</i>	1/1
2	Proposal Defence	Detailed proposal, Presentation	MPhil: 1/1 PhD: 2/1
3	Research Progress	Presentation at Research Seminar / Colloquium (organised by Faculty)	1/1, 2/1, ... until thesis submission
4	Mid candidature Defence	Mid candidature examination (only for PhD)	2/2
5	Work Completion Defence	Draft thesis, Presentation	MPhil: 1/2 PhD: 2/3
6	Thesis submission	Thesis submission for examination	MPhil: 2/2 PhD: 1/4
7	Viva and Graduation	Final hardbound thesis	MPhil: 1/3 PhD: 2/4

A summary flowchart of the main stages of the study can be found in *Appendix A*.

2.1 Preparatory Stage

During the Preparatory stage, the student will be required to engage with the Supervisor as part of the preparation for the programme. The students will need to attend all the supervisory meetings to develop the proposal. During this time, the student will need to write a detailed research proposal of between 3000 – 5000 words. The research proposal will be submitted in the first year by the end of semester one for MPhil and semester two for PhD.

Further details of the research proposal is available in the *Thesis Handbook*.

2.2 Proposal Defence (PD) Stage

Upon preparation of the detailed research proposal, the student will undergo a Proposal Defence where the detailed proposal and presentation will be evaluated by a panel.

The proposal is considered by the panel based on the feasibility of the research in respect of the required resources, its academic merits, and research contributions to enhance the economy, body of knowledge and welfare of the community. The primary aim is to

ensure that the research is feasible and of suitable merit for the potential award of the degree. This stage helps the candidate to have a solid ground before embarking on the rest of the research. The presentation allows further inputs and recommendations by other researchers and supervisors.

The panel reserves the right to reject the proposal if they perceive any deficiency in the research proposal or any other valid reason. The student will be given up to a maximum of three (3) attempts to pass the Proposal Defence stage, after which the student will be considered as to have failed the programme and the candidature ends.

Details of the expected contents and flow of the event is described in *Appendix B*.

2.3 Research Progress Stage

Upon passing the Proposal Defence, the student can proceed to hold regular meetings with the supervisor(s). Half-yearly Progress Monitoring will be conducted via research colloquia to evaluate the student's progress.

Poor performance in any two consecutive Progress Monitoring sessions will indicate a lack of interest by the student and will be grounds for ending the candidature.

Note that the progress monitoring outcome will feed into the following:

- Visa processing requirements (for international students).
- Confirming that the student has been progressing satisfactorily in his/her programme.
- Confirming that the student has met the minimum requirements in supervisory meetings, attendance at workshops/seminars and other requirements of the programme.
- Reporting to sponsors, if the student's studies are sponsored by any organisation.

Details of the expected contents and flow of the event is described in *Appendix C*.

2.4 Mid-Candidature Defence Stage (only for PhD candidates)

Mid-way through the research, a mid-candidature defence will be conducted. The student will submit a report and will present the work. This process enables a check on the quality and norms of the work undertaken and how it is represented, and provides the student with further recommendations for improvement in all aspects including suitability of thesis title, clarity of writing and explanations, presentation of data, results, and etc.

A panel will consider the student's progress, taking into consideration the quality expected by the University. If approved, the student will be allowed to progress.

Note that the mid-candidature Defence is to be conducted between the proposal defence and work completion defence stage, as per the specification of the degree, and all pre-requisites (such as Proposal Defence and Progress Monitoring) must have been passed.

Details of the expected contents and flow of the event is described in *Appendix F*.

2.5 Work Completion Defence (WCD) Stage

When the student has completed the research and is getting ready to submit the thesis, a Work Completion Defence will be conducted. The student will submit a draft thesis (which should be as complete as possible and in the correct format) and will present the work.

This process enables a check on the quality and norms of the work undertaken and how it is represented, and provides the student with further recommendations for improvement in all aspects including suitability of thesis title, structure and formatting, clarity of writing and explanations, presentation of data, results and conclusions, etc.

A panel will consider the student's readiness for submission of the thesis, taking into consideration the quality expected by the University. If approved, the student will be allowed to submit the thesis for examination.

Note that the Work Completion Defence is to be conducted between the minimum and maximum allowed candidature, as per the specification of the degree, and all pre-requisites (such as Proposal Defence and Progress Monitoring) must have been passed.

Details of the expected contents and flow of the event is described in *Appendix D*.

2.6 Thesis Submission Stage

Upon passing the Work Completion Defence, the student will be allowed to submit the thesis. The thesis at this stage will be soft-bound (i.e. comb / spiral bound). The required number of copies to be submitted will be advised. The thesis must be submitted latest by the end of the maximum candidature period.

Ideally, the examiners should be identified before thesis submission in order to minimise the delay between thesis submission and examination of the thesis.

Important: The student must have at least one internationally refereed publication before submission of the thesis for examination.

2.7 Viva Voce Stage

The submitted thesis will be examined. Once all the examiners' reports have been received, a Viva Voce will be convened. The student will present the work to the Examination Board and answer all questions raised by the examiners.

The Examination Board will then decide whether the thesis can be accepted:

- (i) without revisions
- (ii) with minor revisions
- (iii) with major revisions

or be:

- (iv) rejected

For (i) above, no changes are required.

For (ii) and (iii) above, all thesis corrections and additional work specified by the Examination Board will have to be undertaken by the student before the thesis is approved. In the case of (ii), the supervisor can confirm the changes whereas for (iii), the Examination Board will need to specify the approver (internal or external examiner).

For (iv), the student fails the programme. In special cases, depending on the remaining length of candidature, the student may appeal to resubmit the thesis for examination after significant changes. The decision will be at the discretion of the University.

Details of the expected contents and flow of the event is described in *Appendix E*.

2.8 Graduation Stage

Once the thesis is approved at the Viva Voce or after thesis correction, the student will be required to submit the hardbound copies of the thesis. The student will then be awarded the Degree and may attend the graduation ceremony.

3.0 Attendance to Preparatory Modules

Attendance is required at all teaching sessions for the preparatory modules. Sessions include all tutor-led activities such as lectures, seminars, tutorials and presentations.

If the student is absent from a module(s) or programme of study on four consecutive occasions in a semester, including lectures, tutorials, seminars, laboratory based classes, for reasons not accepted by the University, the student may be deemed to have withdrawn from the module(s) or programme of study and registration on that module(s) or programme of studies cancelled.

The student may also be excluded from further teaching, denied access to examinations and refused the opportunity to submit any assessment for the module or award. The student will therefore need to seek permission to start again on the same module or research (or a replacement where applicable).

For PhD students, based on the shortcomings of the previous Masters qualifications, students may be required to attend some pre-requisite modules, such as those on Research Methodology. The students will be informed accordingly.

4.0 Supervision and Supervisory Meetings

4.1 Allocation of Supervisors

Each student will be assigned a principal supervisor and a second supervisor. The student shall further be supported by the Postgraduate Administrative team to further facilitate the supervisory sessions and to monitor the progress of the students.

The principal supervisor will be the main point of contact for the student in establishing the research focus, discussions and as the student progresses through the research.

4.2 Supervisory Meetings

Supervisory meetings should be held at least once a month (full-time students) or once every two months (part-time students). During the supervisory meetings, the student is required to submit a progress report and any other evidence of the research work being carried out as deemed fit by the principal supervisor.

Students are advised to keep a Log Book as a record of all meetings, thought processes, ideas, experiments, results and other activities related to the research. It is recommended that the supervisor look through and initial the Log Book as evidence of work undertaken.

4.3 Attendance to Research Related Activities

The student must be present at all supervisory meetings and attend other research related activities (eg. Colloquium, proposal defence, work completion defence, viva, etc.) as and when deemed necessary by the University.

In case of being unable to attend a research related activity, valid reasons supported by evidence may be required. Failure to attend important activities, such as the Proposal Defence, Work Completion Defence and Viva Voce, can lead to failing the vital assessment components and end the candidature.

5.0 Requirements of Thesis

Please refer to the *Thesis Handbook* on the requirements of the Thesis.

6.0 Submission of the Thesis

Please refer to the *Thesis Handbook* on the Submission of the Thesis

7.0 Examination of the Thesis

On completion of research write-up and after the approval of Thesis supervisors, 5 (five) ring-bound copies of the thesis is submitted to the Graduate School's Administrative office for formal assessment.

The examination of the Thesis will take 6 months where copies of the Thesis will be sent to the principal supervisor, associate supervisor and appointed examiners for feedback and review.

Depending on the response of the examiners a viva voce date will be fixed for the candidate to defend his/her proposal. The viva will most likely be scheduled 6 months after the submission of the thesis.

8.0 Accessibility of the Thesis

A copy of the thesis will be placed in APU's library for a period of two years.

Where there are ethical considerations and restrictions imposed on the accessibility of the thesis, the Supervisory Committee may allow for restricted access to the thesis.

9.0 Notification of Results

Upon satisfaction of the examiners and amendments made to the recommendations, the student will be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) / Master of Philosophy (MPhil) by research degree after the approval of the Senate.

10.0 Appointment of Supervisors

All research supervisors: Principal Supervisor, Second Supervisor either internal or external, must be approved by the School of Postgraduate Studies or Senate of APU.

The Principal Supervisor should meet the following requirements:

- i) have a PhD or equivalent qualification,
- ii) have at least two years of teaching and research experience, and
- iii) be Full-time staff of the university.

A faculty member with two years or less contract or casual appointment is not eligible to be listed as the Principal Supervisor, but he/she may be appointed as a Second Supervisor.

Where there is an issue concerning the quality of the supervision provided by a given supervisor or a team of supervisors, the student should promptly seek advice from the School of Postgraduate Studies.

11.0 Appointment of Examiners

All examiners and examination panels will have to be approved by the School of Postgraduate Studies or the APU Senate. The supervisors, co-authors of publications with the student or supervisors, and those with any close relationship with the student or supervisors may not be appointed as examiners.

Former APU staff who have left the university for less than five years may not be appointed as external examiners.

Supervisor(s) will be expected to attend the evaluations and may make recommendations to the panels. However, supervisors(s) are not members of the decision making panels or Examination Board.

11.1 Proposal Defence / Progress Monitoring / Mid-Candidature Defence / Work Completion Defence

The evaluation committees for the Proposal Defence, half-yearly Progress Monitoring and Work Completion Defence will consist of:

- Chair – an APU Dean or nominee
- Examiner 1 – an APU or external staff from the same discipline who is familiar with the area
- Examiner 2 – an APU staff from another School

In the event a suitable expert in the field (Examiner 1) is unavailable within APU, an external examiner may be appointed.

11.2 Thesis Examination

The thesis will be examined by at least three examiners for PhD and two examiners for MPhil. All examiners must be experts in the area. The composition is as follows:

- Examiner 1 – an external examiner (international)
- Examiner 2 – an internal APU staff (or external examiner*)
**subject to conditions in the programme standards)*
- Examiner 3 – an external examiner (not from APU) – for PhD only

The examiners should meet the following criteria:

- Possess a PhD qualification or equivalent
- Is an expert in the field (evidenced through reputable indexed journal publications and/or patents)
- External examiners shall be senior academics (Associate Professor or Professor) or senior experts from the industry or

- research institute (especially when the project is heavily industry based or utilising very specialised equipment and processes)
- Experienced in evaluating PhD / MPhil theses (preferable)

In the event that the student is a staff member of APU or APIIT, all the examiners (including Examiner 2) should be external in order to ensure an unbiased, high quality evaluation. However, this is subject to the conditions stipulated in the MQA programme standards for the particular discipline.

Examiners are usually given a month to mark the thesis and return their reports. Reminders will be sent upon expiry of the first deadline. If a period of two months lapses and the examiner still fails to submit the report, in the interest of not further delaying the examination process, the examiner may be changed at the discretion of the University.

11.3 Viva Voce

The Examination Board for the Viva Voce will consist of:

- Chair – an APU Dean or nominee
- Thesis Examiner 1
- Thesis Examiner 2
- Thesis Examiner 3 (for PhD)
- Secretary – Postgraduate Admin staff

The thesis examiners should normally attend the Viva Voce and form part of the examination board. In their absence, their reports will be presented in lieu.

12.0 Award of PhD / MPhil

It must be noted that to be awarded the PhD / MPhil by research degree, the candidate must have:

- met APU's requirement for the submission of the Thesis,
- successfully attended the Viva Voce for the defence of Thesis,
- have at least one (1) internationally refereed publication

and the award must be approved by the Senate.

Appendix A: Research Degree Process Flow

Timeline	Event	Remarks
Application process	<i>Application Process</i>	Ideally, student works with potential supervisors to develop proposal.
Start of candidature	Registration	Officially registered after meeting entry requirements.
Every month	Progress Monitoring	Supervisory meetings. Progress reporting.
At first opportunity in Year 1	Complete all required modules (if any)	
By end of 1st year	Proposal Defence (PD)	Submit detailed proposal document. Presentation to examination panel.
Twice yearly until thesis submission (except mid-candidature defence)	Progress Monitoring / Research Colloquium Mid-Candidature Defence	Presentation on progress, evaluated by a panel.
After Minimum candidature period	Work Completion Defence (WCD)	Submit draft thesis. Presentation of completed work.
Before Maximum candidature period (End of Candidature)	Submit Thesis	Comb-bound thesis copies for examination.
	Thesis examination	By internal & external examiners.
Upon receipt of all examiners' reports	Viva Voce	Presentation of completed work to Examination board.
Within stipulated time	Thesis corrections (if any)	Depends on Viva Voce decision. Thesis approval when thesis meets required standard.
Within 2 weeks after thesis approval	Submit Hardbound Thesis	
	Award of degree	

Appendix B: Proposal Defence Information

Timeline:

The Proposal Defence will be conducted within the first year of candidature.

The detailed proposal has to be submitted at least four weeks before the expected date of the defence presentation by the student.

Detailed Proposal Document:

The proposal document and presentation should address the following:

- Introduction / Overview of the project
- Clear problem statement
- Clear project objectives
- Research question(s)
- Sufficient literature review and background
- The proposed method
- Appropriate expected results
- Project schedule (Gantt Chart)

The evaluation panel will assess that the:

- Scope of project is appropriate for the degree level (PhD / MPhil)
- Objectives are in line with problem statement
- Technical accuracy is confirmed
- Method is well described (data requirements, measurement metrics, schedule, etc.)

The following components will be assessed during the presentation:

- Oral delivery
- Slides, handouts used
- Responses to questions posed

Proposal Defence Event:

1. Opening remarks by the Chair
2. Candidate presents proposal (normally 30 minutes)
3. Questions from the committee
4. Questions from the audience
5. Candidate and audience leave the room
6. Committee deliberates
7. The candidate is informed of the decision
8. Signed documents from the Committee are submitted to the Postgraduate Administration

Duration:

The entire Proposal Defence should take approximately 1 hour to complete.

Appendix C: Research Seminar/Colloquium Information

Timeline:

The Research Seminar/Colloquium will be conducted as a means of monitoring the progress of the student every six months until the submission of the thesis.

Progress Report Document:

The progress report document and presentation should address the following:

- Introduction / Overview of the project
- Clear problem statement, project objectives and research question(s)
- Summary of the literature review and background
- The proposed method
- Progress made thus far – highlight the progress made since the last progress monitoring exercise
- Project schedule (Gantt Chart) – indicate original and new timelines, along with status of completion of each activity
- Expected progress / activities for the next six months

The evaluation panel will assess that the:

- Appropriate progress has been made
- Any changes made / to be made are suitable and will allow for the scope, objectives and expected results to remain appropriate for the degree level (PhD / MPhil)
- Technical accuracy is confirmed

The following components will be assessed during the presentation:

- Oral delivery
- Slides, handouts used
- Responses to questions posed

Presentation / Research Colloquium Event:

1. Opening remarks by the Chair
2. Candidate presents progress (normally 20 minutes)
3. Questions from the committee
4. Questions from the audience
5. Committee deliberates
6. The candidate is informed of the decision
7. Signed documents from the Committee are submitted to the Postgraduate Administration

Duration:

The entire presentation should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Appendix D: Work Completion Defence Information

Timeline:

The Work Completion Defence (WCD) will be conducted once the student is about to submit the thesis for examination. It may be conducted just before the minimum duration of the candidature provided that the thesis submission is done only after the minimum duration but before the maximum duration of the candidature.

Work Completion Defence Presentation and Draft Thesis:

The presentation and draft thesis should address the following:

- Introduction / Overview of the project
- Clear problem statement, project objectives and research question(s)
- Literature review and background
- The proposed method
- Results and analysis of results
- Discussion and evidence that all objectives have been met
- Publications and any other outcomes of the work
- Demonstration of the product developed (if any).

The evaluation committee will assess that:

- Sufficient work has been completed for the award of the degree (PhD / MPhil) and if not, recommend further work that needs to be undertaken by the candidate
- Check that the draft thesis conforms to the formatting guidelines and meets the standards expected by APU

The following components will be assessed during the Work Completion Defence:

- Oral delivery
- Slides, handouts used
- Draft thesis (must conform to the *Thesis Handbook*)
- Responses to questions posed

Work Completion Defence Event:

1. Opening remarks by the Chair
2. Candidate presents progress (normally 40 minutes)
3. Questions from the committee
4. Questions from the audience
5. Committee deliberates
6. The candidate is informed of the decision
7. Signed documents from the Committee are submitted to the Postgraduate Administration

Duration:

The entire Work Completion Defence should take approximately 2 hours to complete.

Appendix E: Viva Voce Information

Timeline:

The Viva Voce will be conducted after the thesis examination reports have been received from all the examiners.

Viva Voce Presentation:

The presentation should address the following:

- Introduction / Overview of the project
- Clear problem statement, project objectives and research question(s)
- Literature review and background
- The proposed method
- Results and analysis of results
- Discussion and evidence that all objectives have been met
- Publications and any other outcomes of the work

The Examination Board will assess that:

- Sufficient work has been completed for the award of the degree (PhD / MPhil)
- All questions and concerns raised by the examiners and panel member have been addressed satisfactorily
- The amount and level of corrections or further work that needs to be undertaken by the candidate (if any)

The following components will be assessed during the Viva Voce:

- Oral delivery
- Slides, handouts used
- Responses to questions posed

Viva Voce Event:

1. Opening remarks by the Chair
2. Examination Board deliberates on the examiners' reports
3. Candidate is invited to present the thesis work (normally 40 minutes)
4. Questions from the panel and from the examiners' reports
5. Candidate leaves the room
6. Committee deliberates
7. The candidate is informed of the decision
8. Signed documents from the Examination Board are submitted to the Postgraduate Administration

Duration:

The entire Viva Voce should take approximately 2 hours to complete.

Appendix F: Mid-Candidature Defence Information

Timeline:

The mid-candidature defence will be conducted mid-way between proposal defence and the work completion defence.

Mid-Candidature Presentation & Draft Report:

The presentation should address the following:

- Introduction / Overview of the project
- Clear problem statement, project objectives and research question(s)
- Literature review and background
- The proposed method
- Results and analysis of results

The evaluation panel will assess that:

- Sufficient work has been completed for mid-candidature defence
- All questions and concerns raised by the panel members have been addressed satisfactorily
- The amount and level of corrections or further work that needs to be undertaken by the candidate (if any)

The following components will be assessed during the presentation:

- Oral delivery
- Slides, hand-outs used
- Responses to questions posed

Presentation Event:

1. Opening remarks by the Chair
2. Candidate presents mid-candidature report (normally 20 minutes)
3. Questions from the committee
4. Questions from the audience
5. Candidate and audience leave the room
6. Evaluation panel deliberates
7. The candidate is informed of the decision
8. Signed documents from the evaluation panel are submitted to the Postgraduate Administration

Duration:

The entire presentation should take approximately 1.5 hours to complete.

Appendix G: Flowchart to Change from MPhil TO PhD

