

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

General Regulations Governing Postgraduate Studies

(Applicable to ALL students with effect from the 2023-24 academic year)

(These *General Regulations Governing Postgraduate Studies* shall not be applicable to postgraduate students pursuing programmes offered by The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen. All requirements stipulated in these Regulations are subject to change as determined by the Senate from time to time.)

1.0 Rules and Regulations

1.1 Students shall observe all rules and regulations prescribed by the University authorities.

2.0 Admission

2.1 Minimum Requirements for Admission

The minimum requirements for admission shall be as follows:

- (a) For the Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Business Administration, Doctor of Education, Doctor of Music, Doctor of Nursing, Doctor of Psychology, or Doctor of Social Science Programme, the applicant shall have:
 - (i) a master's degree from a recognized university; or
 - (ii) a bachelor's degree, normally with Second Class Honours in the upper division or above, and have been registered in a course of study for a master's degree at this University for at least one year and have demonstrated research ability; or
 - (iii) been registered in a course of study for a doctoral degree at a recognized university for at least one year, and have been approved for admission by the Graduate Council; or
 - (iv) obtained the degrees of M.B., Ch.B., or equivalent, or under special circumstances, the degree of Bachelor, for admission to programmes of the Faculty of Medicine.
- (b) For the Doctor of Philosophy stream under the "M.Phil.-Ph.D. Programmes", the applicant shall have:
 - (i) a master's degree from a recognized university, or
 - (ii) graduated from a recognized university and obtained a bachelor's degree, normally with honours not lower than Second Class; or
 - (iii) graduated from an honours programme of a recognized university with a bachelor's degree, normally achieving an average grade of not lower than "B"; or
 - (iv) completed a course of study in a tertiary educational institution and obtained professional or similar qualifications equivalent to an honours degree.
- (c) For the Master of Philosophy, Master of Fine Arts, or Master of Music Programme, the applicant shall have:
 - (i) graduated from a recognized university and obtained a bachelor's degree, normally with honours not lower than Second Class; or
 - (ii) graduated from an honours programme of a recognized university with a bachelor's degree, normally achieving an average grade of not lower than "B"; or
 - (iii) completed a course of study in a tertiary educational institution and obtained professional or similar qualifications equivalent to an honours degree.

- (d) For Taught Master's Programmes other than the Executive Master of Business Administration (Executive M.B.A.) Programme, the applicant shall have:
 - (i) graduated from a recognized university and obtained a bachelor's degree, normally with honours not lower than Second Class or achieving an average grade of not lower than "B"; or
 - (ii) completed a course of study in a tertiary educational institution and obtained professional or similar qualifications equivalent to a bachelor's degree.
- (e) For the Executive M.B.A. Programme, the applicant shall have obtained a bachelor's degree or professional qualifications equivalent to a bachelor's degree.
- (f) For a Postgraduate Diploma Programme, the applicant shall have graduated from a recognized university and obtained a bachelor's degree.
- (g) In addition, the applicant shall have to meet the English language requirement prescribed by the Graduate Council.
- (h) The Graduate Council may on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned grant special permission to a student who does not meet the minimum requirements as stipulated above for admission to a programme.

2.2 *Additional Requirements*

Each Graduate Division may set further requirements, including a subject test or language test, and may also waive such additional requirements in particular cases.

3.0 **Registration**

- 3.1 An applicant who has been offered admission to a course of study shall pay the fees and register by the respective deadlines. Anyone who fails to pay fees and register by the specified deadline shall be considered to have declined the offer.
- 3.2 An applicant who has been offered admission but wishes to defer registration should submit an application on a prescribed form before the start of the academic year to the Head of Graduate Division for approval.
- 3.3 An applicant who has been offered admission but is not able to commence the studies due to illness or other unavoidable cause shall submit an application for deferred admission for a period not exceeding one year for approval by the Head of Graduate Division. Such an application shall be made before the specified dates for registration. Application for deferred admission on medical grounds must be accompanied by a certificate signed by a registered medical practitioner.
- 3.4 A student shall not be registered simultaneously for another programme of studies leading to the award of a degree, diploma or certificate at this University or at any other tertiary institution unless an application has been submitted in advance to the Graduate Division concerned, endorsed by the Faculty concerned and approved by the Graduate Council. A student in breach of this regulation shall be required to discontinue studies at the University.
- 3.5 A student registered for a full-time programme of studies shall not take up any full-time employment, paid or unpaid, during term time except with prior permission of the Graduate Council. Recipient of a Postgraduate Studentship shall not take up full-time or part-time employment, except with prior permission of the Graduate Council.
- 3.6 A student shall register in the name which appears in his/her Hong Kong Identity Card or passport. Only under very special circumstances may a student who has been recommended by the Graduate Council for graduation or has withdrawn from the University apply for change of his/her registered particulars. Such an application shall be made in writing with justification for approval by the Registrar.

4.0 **Fees**

- 4.1 The fees prescribed by the University Council shall be payable on dates specified unless prior permission for deferment is obtained.

- 4.2 A student in arrears shall be subject to fines. Unless written approval is given by the University to defer payment, a student in arrears, whether in part or in full, or who has outstanding fees/fines unpaid for more than two weeks shall be considered to have withdrawn from studies. A student in arrears shall not be allowed to use University services such as course registration and adding/dropping of courses, applications for transcripts and certifying letters, graduation assessments.
- 4.3 Caution money shall be payable as a deposit to make good any outstanding debts to the University incurred in, for example, damages to University property. This sum less any deductions made for outstanding debts shall be refunded on discontinuation or withdrawal of studies at the University. For graduating students, caution money shall be converted into graduation fee, which shall be payable by all students on completion of their studies.
- 4.4 Apart from caution money, fees once paid shall not be refunded, unless exceptionally approved by the Bursar and Director of Finance.

5.0 Period of Study

- 5.1 Students are expected to graduate at the end of the normative study period as detailed in the Annex, except for those who have applied and obtained approval for alteration of their periods of study.
- 5.2 A student who wishes to graduate before the end of the normative study period of his/her respective programme may, according to the prescribed procedures, apply to the Graduate Division concerned for shortening of his/her period of study for approval by the Graduate Council, subject to the statutory minimum of 12 months for master's programmes and 24 months for doctoral programmes.
- 5.3 A student who cannot complete all requirements within the normative period of study shall apply to the Graduate School for continuation of studies beyond the normative study period, and will be requested to pay fees as required.
- 5.4 A student shall complete all requirements for graduation within the maximum period of study, which shall include any periods of leave of absence and suspension of studies. A student who has not completed all requirements for graduation within the maximum period of study shall be discontinued from studies at the University. However, in special cases, the Graduate Council may on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned grant a student extension beyond the maximum period of study.

6.0 Candidature for Research Doctoral Degree

- 6.1 Advancement to research doctoral candidature is conditional upon the successful completion of the following:
- (a) study of a language other than Chinese and English where deemed necessary by the Graduate Division concerned;
 - (b) course work of varying scope deemed necessary by the Graduate Division concerned for the partial fulfilment of degree requirements; and
 - (c) a qualifying examination.

These candidacy requirements must be satisfied within a maximum length of time after the admission date as specified by the programme of studies or as decided by the Graduate Division concerned, depending on the length of postgraduate training previously received by the student and the nature of the discipline. The latest date for a student to pass the qualifying examination is to be decided by the Graduate Division concerned, and should be not less than one year from the admission date and at least six months before the normative study end date. A student will be discontinued from studies if s/he fails to pass the qualifying examination within the maximum period mentioned above. However, in special cases, the Graduate Council may on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned grant a student extension beyond the above maximum period.

- 6.2 For students admitted under the "M.Phil.-Ph.D. programmes", a Ph.D. student (pre-candidacy) is required to fulfil the following requirements in order to advance to the Ph.D. (post-candidacy) stage:
- (a) course requirements;
 - (b) candidacy examination; and
 - (c) thesis proposal and defence of proposal.

These requirements shall be spelt out by Graduate Divisions and must be fulfilled within the following periods:

Degree	Full-time	Part-time
Ph.D. (with a research master's degree)	24 months	32 months
Ph.D. (without a research master's degree)	36 months	48 months

However, in special cases, the Graduate Council may on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned grant a student extension beyond the above periods.

6.3 Transfer of Candidature

- (a) A student who has registered in a research doctoral programme may, on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned and with the approval of the Graduate Council, be transferred to a research master's programme provided that such a transfer takes place before the thesis or portfolio is submitted.
- (b) A student who has registered in a research master's programme and has completed the first year of studies may be permitted, on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned and with the approval of the Graduate Council, to transfer to a research doctoral programme provided that the student meets the admission requirements of the doctoral programme concerned.
- (c) A student admitted under the "M.Phil.-Ph.D. programmes" may be permitted to transfer between M.Phil. and Ph.D. (pre-candidacy) on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned. Transfer from the Ph.D. (post-candidacy) to M.Phil. stream may be permitted exceptionally, on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned and with the approval of the Graduate Council.
- (d) The period of study of a student changing from research master's to research doctoral in the same field of study shall count from the commencement date of his/her research master's studies.

7.0 Course Requirements and Exemptions

- 7.1 A student shall take the required courses and/or units as specified in the programme of studies concerned before graduation.
- 7.2 A student shall take at least one course in each term, unless otherwise stated in the study scheme or approved by the Head of the Graduate Division concerned.
- 7.3 A student who has completed comparable courses may submit an application on a prescribed form to apply for exemption from some courses and/or units for approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, but in no case will a student's normative period of study be shortened, except as provided in 5.2 and 14.2.

8.0 Course Selection

- 8.1 A student shall register for courses according to the programme of studies by following the prescribed procedure for course registration, and shall be responsible for ensuring the timely completion of all programme requirements.
- 8.2 A student shall not repeat any course which s/he has taken and passed or from which s/he has been exempted except as required and approved by the programme concerned which prescribes otherwise.
- 8.3 A student receiving a failure grade in a required course must repeat the course or take an approved substitute course.

9.0 Course Withdrawals and Additions

- 9.1 A student who wishes to apply for withdrawal or addition of course(s) after the beginning of the teaching term shall complete the prescribed procedure within the specified period.
- 9.2 Only under special circumstances may a student apply for permission to withdraw from a course or enrol in a new course after the specified period of the teaching term. Such an application shall be made according to prescribed procedures and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School for approval.
- 9.3 A student who withdraws from a course without going through the prescribed procedure shall be given a failure grade for the course.

10.0 Residence Requirements

10.1 Definition of Residence

- (a) A student is classified as being in residence if s/he is attending courses as prescribed by his/her programme, and in the case of research postgraduate students, also receiving supervision on a regular basis.
- (b) A student who is in Hong Kong except for absences not exceeding three weeks continuously and not exceeding one month aggregate in any one academic year shall be deemed to be receiving regular supervision, and provided s/he is also attending courses, if required, shall be regarded as in residence.
- (c) A student who is not in Hong Kong shall normally be deemed to be not receiving supervision, and shall be regarded as not being in residence. In cases where the student would nevertheless receive adequate supervision on a regular basis while away from Hong Kong, or where the absence from Hong Kong is related to an academic purpose, an application should be made beforehand to the Head of the Graduate Division concerned for approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, with the endorsement of the Supervisor, to regard the student as being in residence during that period of absence.
- (d) A student may also be regarded as being in residence while away from Hong Kong if the programme of studies approved by the Graduate Council and the Senate so provides.

10.2 Residence Requirements

- (a) Except for periods of approved leave, and except as provided in 10.2 (b) and (c), all students are required to be in residence during their period of study.
- (b) Students registered in taught programmes are not required to be in residence between teaching terms.
- (c) Residence requirements may be waived for part-time students for up to six months in any academic year, upon the written approval of the Supervisor and the Head of the Graduate Division concerned.

11.0 Leave of Absence

- 11.1 A student who has been absent from classes/required activities for any period shall be responsible for applying to the teaching staff concerned for permission to make up for any required work missed.
- 11.2 In case of illness necessitating absence exceeding three weeks, a student shall submit an application together with a medical certificate signed by the Director of the University Health Service or a registered medical practitioner to obtain endorsement from the Graduate Division concerned and permission from the Dean of the Graduate School.
- 11.3 A student who wishes to apply for a leave of absence for more than three weeks for non-medical reasons shall obtain prior permission from the Dean of the Graduate School. Such an application shall state the reasons for which leave of absence is sought and shall require the endorsement of the Head of the Graduate Division concerned.
- 11.4 Notwithstanding 11.2 and 11.3 above, full-time research postgraduate students who hold Postgraduate Studentships should apply to the Department Chairman concerned and Dean of the Graduate School for any period of leave.
- 11.5 Leave of absence is limited to a maximum of one year in the first instance, and any extension is limited to a maximum of one more year, beyond which no further extension will be granted. However, in special cases, the Graduate Council may on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned grant a student extension of leave beyond the period stated above.
- 11.6 A student who has been absent without approved leave of absence or who is in breach of the residence requirements for a continuous period exceeding one month shall be considered as having withdrawn from studies at the University.
- 11.7 A student shall be required to take leave of absence if the condition of his/her health is considered by the Director of the University Health Service as constituting a definite hazard to the University community. At the end of the prescribed period of absence, the student shall obtain a certificate of good health signed by the Director of the University Health Service before s/he can apply to resume studies.

12.0 Assessment and Examinations

12.1 A student shall be assessed in every course for which s/he has registered on the basis of his/her performance in the course under the criteria prescribed by the programme concerned.

12.2 Course grades, their standards and converted points used in reporting shall be as follows:

Grade and Standard		Sub-divisions (if needed)	Converted Points
A	Excellent	A	4.0
A-	Very Good	A-	3.7
B	Good	B+	3.3
		B	3.0
		B-	2.7
C	Fair	C+	2.3
		C	2.0
		C-	1.7
D	Pass	D+	1.3
		D	1.0
F	Failure	F	0.0
DI	Distinction	Not counted in the calculation of the grade point average	
PA	Pass		
FA	Failure		
P	Ungraded pass	Not counted in the calculation of the grade point average	
U	Failure		

“DI”/“PA”/“FA” or “P”/“U” grades are for specified courses adopting distinction/pass/failure and pass/failure gradings where other grades are not applicable.

12.3 The grade point average of a student’s course work shall be computed by dividing the total weighted converted points for courses taken by the total number of units attempted inclusive of courses failed, where the weighted converted points are converted points multiplied by the number of units of the course concerned. Courses graded by “DI”/“PA”/“FA” or “P”/“U” will not count in the calculation of the grade point average.

12.4 A student who has gained a grade of “D” or above or “DI”/“PA” or “P” in a course shall earn the unit/s of that course. The units of courses repeated/retaken shall count only once towards the fulfilment of course units for graduation.

12.5 A student shall take examinations in the form of written, practical or oral assessment, or continuous assessment, or any combination thereof, as determined by the teaching staff concerned.

12.6 A student who for medical or other compelling reasons is unable to sit for any examination or any part thereof shall apply in writing with documentary evidence to the Graduate School at the earliest possible instance but not later than five working days after the examination concerned for permission for absence from the examination or any part thereof. The Graduate School will determine in consultation with the Graduate Division concerned what follow up action is required. Application for such absence for medical reasons shall be accompanied by a medical certificate signed by the Director of the University Health Service or by a registered medical practitioner. A student who is absent from any examination without permission shall be given a failure grade in that examination.

12.7 No supplementary examination is allowed for students failing an examination. However, under special circumstances, the Graduate Council may on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned approve exceptional assessment arrangement.

13.0 Unsatisfactory Performance and Discontinuation of Studies

13.1 A student shall be put on academic probation if s/he has obtained a cumulative grade point average (GPA) below 2.0 in the preceding term, unless 13.3 or 13.4 applies. A student on academic probation shall be reviewed by the Graduate Division concerned at the end of the term in which s/he is put on probation, at which time if s/he has obtained a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above, probation shall be lifted, otherwise probation shall continue to apply in his/her next term of attendance unless s/he is required to discontinue studies as prescribed by 13.3 or 13.4.

- 13.2 A research postgraduate student shall be put on academic probation upon receiving a failure grade in a thesis monitoring course unless 13.3 or 13.4 applies. S/he may be barred from performing teaching or other duties carrying studentships as recommended by the Graduate Division concerned. The Graduate Division may also recommend suspending the student's studentship. A student on academic probation shall be reviewed by the Graduate Division concerned at the end of the term in which s/he is put on probation, at which time if s/he has attained satisfactory progress, probation shall be lifted, otherwise probation shall continue to apply in his/her next term of attendance unless s/he is required to discontinue studies as prescribed by 13.3 or 13.4.
- 13.3 Unless the Graduate Council decides otherwise, a student shall be required to discontinue studies at the University if:
- (a) the cumulative grade point average is 1.0 or below; or
 - (b) the student fails to have probation lifted after being put on academic probation for two consecutive terms of attendance; or
 - (c) additional requirements laid down for the programme by the Graduate Division concerned are not satisfied.
- 13.4 If at any time the Supervisor is of the opinion that a research postgraduate student is not making satisfactory progress or is unlikely to attain the standard required for the degree, and the assessment is endorsed by the Head of the Graduate Division concerned and by the Graduate Council, the student shall be required to discontinue studies at the University or may be advised to transfer to a research master's programme in the case of research doctoral students.
- 13.5 A student whose thesis/portfolio is not passed but re-submission is allowed and re-examination is required must re-write and re-submit the thesis/portfolio to the satisfaction of the Thesis Assessment Committee before being recommended for the award of degree.
- 13.6 A student who is required to re-submit thesis/portfolio must do so within twelve months from the date of the official notification of the result of the first examination and within his/her prescribed maximum period of study. Only one re-submission of thesis/portfolio is allowed. However, under special circumstances, the Graduate Council may on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned allow extension of re-submission deadline and/or further re-submission.
- 13.7 A research postgraduate student or a taught doctoral student who fails to submit the final version of a thesis within one year from the date as specified by the Thesis Assessment Committee shall be required to discontinue his/her studies at the University, unless special approval is granted by the Graduate Council.
- 13.8 A student who receives a failure grade with no allowance for re-submission of thesis shall be required to discontinue studies at the University.

14.0 Re-instatement and Re-admission

- 14.1 A student who has withdrawn from the University for reasons other than academic ones may, under very special circumstances, apply in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School for reinstatement as a student. Such applications shall be considered by the Graduate Division concerned and the Graduate Council. No student who has been required to discontinue studies at the University because of unsatisfactory academic performance or has withdrawn to avoid such discontinuation shall be re-instated.
- 14.2 A student who has withdrawn from a programme of studies on grounds of academic failure shall not be considered for re-admission to the same programme in the following academic year, unless permission is granted by the Graduate Council on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned. S/he may also apply to the Dean of the Graduate School for exemption from courses previously completed and/or shortening the period of study.

15.0 Graduation

- 15.1 All students are required to fulfil the graduation requirements as prescribed by the programme of studies in order to graduate. Some of the requirements are common to all postgraduate students while some are specific to individual programmes or individual students. Students should refer to the *Postgraduate Student Handbook* for details.
- 15.2 A student who has satisfied the graduation requirements as prescribed by the programme of studies concerned can graduate, unless, in accordance with Regulation 16.0, s/he is required to discontinue his/her studies or be suspended from studies at the University.

15.3 The Graduate Certificate shall be issued to a student after s/he has been conferred a degree by the University. Graduate Certificates for graduates with outstanding debts to the University will be withheld until the accounts are settled.

15.4 Graduate Certificates for graduates of Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate programmes with outstanding debts to the University will be withheld until the accounts are settled.

16.0 Disciplinary Action

16.1 The University may take disciplinary action against a student who violates any rule or regulation prescribed by the University authorities, and/or commits any misconduct including but not limited to the following:

- (a) defamation of or assault on or battery against the person of any member of the University;
- (b) wilful damage to or defacement of any property of the University;
- (c) theft, fraudulent use, misapplication of University funds or property of any kind;
- (d) academic dishonesty;
- (e) an offence in connection with tests or examinations or violation of any of the regulations governing conduct at tests or examinations as approved by the Senate from time to time;
- (f) falsification or serious misuse of University documents or records;
- (g) refusal to comply with any regulations or orders by authorized persons and bodies prohibiting any conduct which disrupts teaching, study, research, administration or normal activities of the University;
- (h) any conduct which is detrimental to the reputation and well-being of the University;
- (i) an offence of an immoral, scandalous or disgraceful nature of which the student has been convicted in any court of law; or
- (j) misrepresentations or false statements made in any application or document submitted to the University.

16.2 Disciplinary action may result in a penalty in any one or more of the following forms in accordance with the nature and gravity of the offence:

- (a) reprimand issued by the disciplinary body concerned;
- (b) suspension from part or all of the rights, privileges and/or the use of part or all of the facilities of the University for a specified period of time;
- (c) demerit(s), of which a total of three may result in termination of studies at the University;
- (d) suspension from the University for a specified period of time;
- (e) termination of studies at the University; or
- (f) Any other form as the Senate Committee on Student Discipline or the Graduate School Disciplinary Committee or other disciplinary committees may deem fit.

Penalty (d) or (e) may be imposed only with the approval of the Senate Committee on Student Discipline, with authority delegated by the Senate. Any penalty imposed as a result of disciplinary action may be entered into the transcript of the student's academic record.

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Period of Study

The period of study for each programme shall be as follows:

Degree/Diploma	Study mode	Normative period	Maximum period
Ph.D., D.Mus. ⁽¹⁾			
(i) For students with a research master's degree	Full-time	36 months	84 months
	Part-time	48 months	96 months
(ii) For students without a research master's degree	Full-time	48 months	84 months
	Part-time	64 months	96 months
Ph.D. (under "M.Phil.-Ph.D. programmes") ⁽¹⁾			
(i) For students with a research master's degree	Full-time	36 months	72 months
	Part-time	48 months	84 months
(ii) For students without a research master's degree	Full-time	48 months	84 months
	Part-time	64 months	100 months
Ed.D., D.S.Sc (Applied Social Science)	Full-time	36 months	84 months
	Part-time	48 months	96 months
J.D.	Full-time	24 months	48 months
	Part-time	42 months	84 months
JD/MBA	Full-time	36 months	60 months
	Part-time	60 months	90 months
BBA-JD	Full-time	5 years	7 years
DBA (Chinese), D.Nurs.	Part-time	4 years	6 years
Psy.D.	Part-time	3 years	7 years
LL.M., PCLL	Full-time	1 year	2 years
	Part-time	2 years	3 years
M.Phil., M.S.Sc. (Social Work)	Full-time	2 years	4 years
	Part-time	3 years	5 years
M.A., M.Acc., M.Ed., M.Mus., M.P.H., M.Sc., M.S.Sc., M.S.W., PGDE	Full-time	1 year	3 years
	Part-time	2 years	4 years
M.A. (Professional Educational Psychology), M.Arch., M.F.A., M.S.Sc. (Clinical Psychology), M.Sc. (Speech-Language Pathology)	Full-time	2 years	4 years
M.B.A.	Full-time	24 months	4 years
	Part-time	25 months	4 years
Executive M.B.A., Executive M.B.A. (Chinese), M.B.A. (Finance), M.Clin.Pharm., M.Nurs., Executive M.P.Acc.,	Part-time	2 years	4 years
M.Chi.Med.	Full-time	4 years	6 years
M.Div.	Full-time	2 years	4 years ⁽²⁾
M.N.Sc.	Full-time	3 years	5 years
M.Sc. (Actuarial Science and Insurance Analytics), M.Sc. (Information Science and Technology Management)	Full-time	1 year	3 years
M.Sc. (Applied Economics)	Full-time	17 months	3 years
M.Sc. (Biomedical Engineering)	Full-time	1 year	3 years
	Part-time	3 years	4 years
M.Sc. (Financial Technology)	Full-time	1 year	2 years
	Part-time	2 years	4 years
M.Sc. (Information & Technology Management)	Full-time	1 year	3 years
	Part-time	5 trimesters	4 years
PG.Dip. Financial Technology	Full-time	1 year	2 years
	Part-time		
PG.Dip. Prehospital & Emergency Care	Full-time	1 year	3 years
	Part-time	1 year	4 years
PG. Dip. Epid. & Bios., PG. Dip. Public Health	Part-time	1 year	3 years

⁽¹⁾ The University has the absolute authority to decide whether the degree possessed by the student is a research master's degree or not, such decision to be communicated through the letters of admission.

⁽²⁾ In special circumstances, the maximum period may be 5 years if so recommended by the Head of the Graduate Division concerned.