



HAMAD BIN KHALIFA UNIVERSITY

AC-G-07.V02: GRADUATE DEGREE REQUIREMENT POLICY

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1. PURPOSE

This policy defines a consistent, University-wide protocol, with college variations as dictated by best practice(s) and as they relate to specific disciplines. It specifies the standards necessary to fulfill academic and research requirements for graduate degrees at HBKU.

2. POLICY DESCRIPTION

This policy outlines the minimum University requirements to attain a graduate degree at HBKU.

2.1 DEFINITIONS

- **Supervisor/Advisor:** The faculty member who has the primary responsibility of guiding a student's graduate course of study, writing and research.
- **Co-Supervisor/Co-advisor:** The faculty member who share the supervision duties for a graduate student.
- **Graduate Program Committee (GPC):** A committee of faculty of a department or division overseeing the graduate program operations to assist division/department head/coordinator.
- **Qualifying Examination (QE):** An examination required by all PhD students. The qualifying examination assesses student's intellectual ability and adequacy of past education in scholarly research and research capacity. It must be taken no later than the end of a PhD student's 3rd semester in the program.
- **Qualifying Examination Committee (QEC):** A four-member committee consisting of three faculty members from the student's division/department and a non-voting member from outside the division/department who will serve as the Chair. The Chair is a non-voting member.
- **Candidacy Examination (CE):** The candidacy examination is required by all PhD students and assesses the student's ability to conduct a dissertation research. It is designed to provide early feedback and research direction from the dissertation committee. It must be taken no later than the end of a PhD student's 5th semester in the program.
- **Candidacy Examination Committee (CEC):** A five-faculty member committee, including the supervisor or co-supervisor and one faculty member from the same college (but different division/department), and a member from the University at large outside the college who will be the Chair of the committee. The rest of the members must be from the division/department.
- **Dissertation Examination (DE):** The dissertation examination is required by all PhD students and assesses the student's performance in conducting independent research, which materializes in a PhD dissertation.
- **Dissertation Examination Committee (DEC):** The CEC members and an External Examiner.
- **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD):** A research-oriented, terminal degree in a specific discipline, culminating in an original research dissertation.
- **Master's:** The first research-oriented graduate degree that demonstrates a mastery of a specific discipline, culminating in a research-oriented experience (typically in the form of a thesis). HBKU offers Master of Science (MS) and Master of Arts (MA) degrees.
- **Professional Master's:** A practical-oriented first graduate degree that demonstrates a mastery of a specific field of professional knowledge beyond the baccalaureate degree.

- **Juris Doctor (JD):** A graduate legal education degree that demonstrates mastery of a high order professional legal knowledge.
- **Accelerated Programs (dual-degree):** Qualified students may be admitted to complete two degrees: Bachelor's and Master's and Master's-PhD.

2.2 POLICY STATEMENTS

1. The successful completion of an approved program of study is a fundamental University requirement to earn a graduate degree. The student, in consultation with the supervisor/advisor, plans a program of study. The student and advisor share the responsibility in monitoring progress in an approved program of study. Students must maintain continuous progress towards the degree.
2. At the time of admission to graduate studies, the student is assigned a temporary graduate supervisor by the Dean or designee of the college responsible for the student's program of study. The temporary Advisor provides academic advising and mentoring until a student graduate research advisory committee is formed.
3. All committees in subsequent policies shall maintain continuity throughout the duration of the fulfillment of degree requirements. Changes in the committee memberships may occur for cause and shall be approved by the GPC and the College Dean. Specifically, requests for changes in all committees must be accompanied by a rationale and must be signed by the student, supervisor and the committee member affected by the request for change. If the request for change is affecting the supervisor, the request must be signed by the student, affected supervisor, new supervisor, division head/program coordinator, GPC and the College Dean. In the event where the student's request for change was denied by the affected committee member (including the supervisor), the Dean shall convene a committee of three independent faculty members to consider the situation and make recommendations to the Dean. A majority vote is required to change and/or remove a committee member, including the supervisor.

PhD Degree Requirements

1. PhD students must complete the minimum required credit hours for courses and dissertations as stipulated in their degree program.
2. Credits awarded for course work taken outside the degree program to satisfy the degree requirement will follow the conditions stipulated in the credit transfer policy.
3. The research work towards completing a dissertation must be supervised by an HBKU faculty member.
4. The entire ~~last~~ final semester of the student in the program must be completed at HBKU.
5. PhD students must fulfill the residence requirement by enrolling in the dissertation course for at least four semesters. The Provost, upon the recommendation of the Dean, may exempt a student from the residency requirement.
6. Students must maintain a minimum CGPA of 3.0 in course work presented in their applications for a degree. Students who have a CGPA lower than 3.0 at the time of applying for graduation shall not be allowed to graduate or receive a diploma. The CGPA calculation excludes all transfer courses.
7. PhD students must pass the Qualifying Examination.
 - The College Dean or designee will communicate pre-exam information in a timely manner, normally no later than the end of the second semester after matriculation in a PhD program at HBKU;
 - A Qualifying Examination Committee (QEC) shall be nominated by the supervisor and approved by the College Dean or designee (normally division head/coordinator) no later than the eighth week of the third semester after matriculation in a PhD program at HBKU;
 - The QEC shall consist of at least three voting faculty members from the discipline and a Chair who shall be a faculty member from outside the program. Deviation from the assembly of membership requires the approval of the GPC, department head/coordinator and the Dean;
 - The Chair shall be non-voting member of the QEC and shall maintain an impartial representation of the academic standards. Upon completion of the qualifying examination, the QEC Chair shall submit a signed qualifying examination report form to the division head/coordinator and the College Dean;

- The student's PhD supervisor or co-supervisor may attend the qualifying examination as a non-voting member;
 - The qualifying examination format is as per the College requirement and may consist of two parts: written and oral;
 - The PhD student must register for the qualifying examination no later than the end of the third semester after matriculation in a PhD program at HBKU;
 - Students are permitted up to a maximum of two attempts to successfully pass the qualifying examination. The final attempt must be no later than the end of the fourth semester after matriculation in a PhD program at HBKU;
 - A student may appeal the outcome of the first attempt. The appeal petition must specify the grounds for appeal and must be submitted in writing to the Dean or designee. The Dean or designee shall formulate the GPC to hear the appeal and form a decision. The committee's appeal decision shall be final. Appeals filed after 30 days of the issuance of the disputed decision will not be considered;
 - After a failed second attempt, the student will be academically dismissed from the PhD program. Appeal is not permitted to dispute the outcome of the second failed attempt;
 - A student who fails to show up to the qualifying examination without a valid medical reason will automatically be registered as a failed attempt;
 - The College Dean or designee shall notify the Registrar of the outcome of the qualifying examination. The results will be logged on the student's academic record;
 - Students who pass the qualifying examination are permitted to schedule candidacy examination as early as in the following semester, but normally no later than their 5th semester in the program;
 - After failing the second attempt, students may be allowed to complete the requirements of a master's degree if such option is available in the college/department/program.
8. PhD students must pass the Candidacy Examination. The Candidacy Examination is an oral examination connected with a written research proposal leading toward a dissertation:
- PhD students are required to submit a research proposal leading toward a dissertation. A research proposal identifies a significant and original research problem, describes the research approach and articulates a mitigation plan to address potential pitfalls. This may vary based on the specifics of the discipline.
 - The student's supervisor recommends to the Program Coordinator the members of the PhD Candidacy Examination Committee (CEC) by the end of the fourth semester after matriculation in the PhD program;
 - The CEC membership requires the endorsement of the Division Head/Program Coordinator. GPC shall make recommendations to resolve disputes related to CEC committee membership. The Dean's is the final authority on the CEC membership;
 - The CEC consists of five-faculty members, including the supervisor or co-supervisor and one faculty member from the same college (but different division/department), and a member from the University at large but from outside the college who shall be the Chair of the CEC. The rest of the members must be from the division/department.
 - The Chair of the CEC shall be a non-voting member on the academic competency of the student and shall be an impartial representative of the University's academic standards;
 - The Chair of the CEC shall report any violation in the examination procedure or academic standards by submitting an independent report to the Division Head/Coordinator no later than one week from the conclusion of the candidacy examination;
 - The PhD student shall submit the dissertation research proposal to all committee members at least ~~three~~ one week before the candidacy examination;
 - PhD student should schedule to take the candidacy examination no later than the end of the fifth semester after matriculation in the PhD program;
 - Students are permitted up to a maximum of two attempts to successfully pass the candidacy examination. The final attempt must be no later than at the end of the sixth semester after matriculation in a PhD program at HBKU;
 - A student may appeal the outcome of the first attempt. The appeal petition must specify the grounds for appeal and must be submitted in writing to the Dean or designee. GPC shall hear

the appeal and form a decision. The committee's appeal decision shall be final. Appeals filed after 30 days of the issuance of the disputed decision will not be considered;

- After a failed second attempt, the student will be academically dismissed from the PhD program. Appeal is not permitted to dispute the outcome of the second failed attempt;
- A student who fails to show up to the candidacy examination without a valid medical excuse will automatically be registered as a failed attempt;
- The College Dean or designee shall notify the Registrar of the outcome of the candidacy examination. The results will be logged on the student's academic record;
- After failing the second attempt, students may be allowed to complete the requirements of a master's degree if such option is available in the college/department/program;
- Students who successfully pass the candidacy examination will be designated as PhD candidates.

9. PhD candidates must pass a Dissertation Oral Examination:

- PhD candidates must complete a dissertation that embodies an original research outcome in the specified field of knowledge. Passing the dissertation examination is a requirement for the PhD degree;
- The Dissertation Examination Committee (DEC) consists of the candidacy examination committee, and an external examiner to the University;
- The supervisor must nominate up to three external examiners to the College Dean or designee. The nominees must be renowned figures in the field of study; preferably hold a professorship at an internationally recognized institution; have a record of PhD supervisions; and have no relationship with HBKU or conflict of interest with the student or faculty. The Dean or designee submits the nominations and his selections to the Office of the Provost for endorsement;
- The external examiner must document his evaluation in a written report for the dissertation and attend the oral defense;
- Preferably the Chair of the DEC is the same Chair of the CEC, however if feasibility prevents such preference, the Chair of the DEC shall be a faculty member from the University at large, but outside of the student's college, who shall be a non-voting member on the academic competency of the student, and who will perform as an impartial representative of the University's academic standards;
- The Chair of the DEC shall report any violation in the examination procedure or academic standards by submitting an independent report to the College Dean or designee no later than one week from the conclusion of the dissertation oral defense;
- The supervisor's approved text of the dissertation must be submitted to the committee for evaluation at least six weeks before the final exam date;
- Each of the dissertation evaluators shall submit a signed copy of the evaluator's form at least one week before the exam date;
- Students must submit a final and approved dissertation at least seven days before the end of the semester to be allowed to graduate in that semester. Exceptions may be granted by the Provost upon the recommendation of the Dean or designee;
- A student who fails the first attempt of the oral examination may be granted one re-examination upon the recommendation of the DEC and the approval of the Dean. The second examination, if permitted, must be taken within one year;
- The College Dean or designee shall notify the Registrar of the outcome of the dissertation examination; results will be logged on the student's record.

10. PhD students must complete all the PhD degree requirements within seven years of matriculation in the PhD program. Students who fail to complete the PhD degree requirements within seven years will be academically dismissed from the program. Exceptions to extend the length of study may be granted with a justifiable signed petition to the Provost or designee.

11. Students expecting to graduate must submit a graduation application form to the Registrar's Office by the date announced in the academic calendar. Students who are unable to graduate must submit a new graduation application form in the next term they anticipate graduating in.

12. PhD students must complete a minimum of three years (six academic semesters) at HBKU to qualify for graduation. Exceptions may be granted with a justifiable signed petition to the Provost or designee.

13. PhD students must fulfill the program's additional requirements.
14. Publication of a PhD student's work is a requirement for graduation. PhD students must publish or have a confirmation of final acceptance of two articles in reputable scholarly venues as determined by the College prior to filling for graduation.
15. PhD students who successfully completed dissertation hours may register for one credit hour dissertation in their terminal semester. Students who fail to complete the requirements for dissertation examinations must continue to register one credit hour to maintain residency.
16. All dissertations must be prepared according to the University's acceptable format. Acceptance of the final dissertation document by an officer designated by the University is a graduation requirement.
17. All degree requirements must be complete no later than three working days before the graduation ceremony. Exceptions may be granted by the Provost.
18. All financial obligations to the University must also be met before the student receives his/her diploma.

Master's Degree Requirements

1. Master's students must successfully pass the minimum credit hours for courses and theses as stipulated in their degree program. Professional master's students must culminate their program of study with a comprehensive project report instead of a thesis.
2. Students must maintain a minimum CGPA of 3.0 in course work presented in their applications for a degree. Students who a CGPA lower than 3.0 at the time of applying for graduation shall not be allowed to graduate or receive a diploma. The CGPA calculation excludes all transfer courses.
3. The process for awarding credit for course work taken outside the degree program to satisfy the degree requirement should follow the credit transfer policy.
4. The last semester of class instruction must be completed at HBKU. Professional master's students must normally complete the whole program requirements at HBKU.
5. Master's students must fulfill residency requirements by enrolling in the thesis course for at least two semesters.
6. The master's thesis examination committee shall consist of at least three faculty members including the supervisor and a member from the division/department. The Chair of the thesis examination committee shall be a faculty member from the college at large but should be external to the division/department. Each member of the examination committee shall submit a signed copy of the evaluator report form after the examination.
7. The master's project examination committee consists of at least three faculty members. The Chair of the committee shall be a member of the college but external to the division/department. The other two members shall be the faculty member supervising the project and a qualified person from the industry that is affiliated with the industry pertaining to the project. In the event that an industrial member is not available, a faculty member from the division/department shall be the third examining member.
8. The supervisor's approved text of the thesis/industrial project must be submitted to the committee for evaluation at least four weeks before the final exam date;
9. Students must submit a final and approved thesis/industrial project at least seven days before the end of the semester to be allowed to graduate in that semester. Exceptions may be granted by the Provost upon the recommendation of the Dean;
10. Master's students who fail the thesis/industrial project examination may be granted one re-examination upon the recommendation of the examination committee and the approval of the Dean or designee. The second examination, if permitted, must be taken in the following semester.
11. Master's students must complete all the Master's degree requirements within four years of matriculation into the Master's program. Students who fail to complete the Master's degree requirements within four years will be academically dismissed from the program. Exceptions to extend the length of study may be granted with a justifiable signed petition to the Provost or designee
12. Students expecting to graduate must submit a graduation application form to the Registrar's Office by the date announced in the academic calendar. Students who are unable to graduate must submit a new graduation application form in the next term they anticipate graduating in.
13. All theses must be prepared according to the University's acceptable format. Acceptance of the final thesis document by an officer designated by the University is a graduation requirement.

14. Master's students must complete a minimum of three semesters at HBKU to qualify for graduation.
15. Master's students must fulfill the program's additional requirements.
16. Thesis-track master's students are encouraged to publish at least one article in a reputable scholarly venue by the time they defend their thesis.
17. Students who successfully complete thesis hours may register for one credit hour thesis in their terminal semester. Students failing to complete the requirement for the thesis examination must register one credit hour to maintain residency.
18. All degree requirements must be complete no later than three working days before the graduation ceremony. Exceptions may be granted by the Provost.
19. All financial obligations to the University must also be met before the student receives his/her diploma.

Accelerated Programs Requirements

1. Students admitted in an accelerated dual degree program (Bachelor's and Master's) must complete the articulated requirements for both the bachelor's and master's degrees.
 - Up to six credit hours of course work taken at HBKU in a master's program can count dually towards satisfying the requirements of both degrees (Bachelor's and Master's degrees);
 - Students must maintain a minimum CGPA of 3.0 in course work presented in their applications for the Master's degree. Students having a CGPA lower than 3.0 by the time they apply for graduation will not be allowed to graduate or receive a diploma. The CGPA calculation excludes all transfer courses.
 - The process of awarding credit for coursework taken outside the degree program to satisfy the degree requirement should follow the credit transfer policy;
 - The Bachelor's and Master's degrees will be awarded discretely. The Master's degree award will not, under any circumstance, be awarded before the Bachelor's degree.
 - Students shall be classified as "undergraduate" until they complete the Bachelor's degree requirements. After completing the Bachelor's degree requirements, the students' classification shall be upgraded to "graduate";
 - The academic progress standards shall be in accordance with the academic standards and policies applicable to the course (s) being taken;
 - Dual Bachelor's-Master's degree students must complete the requirements of both degrees within seven years of initial matriculation at the University;
 - Students who opt to withdraw from a dual degree program after successfully completing the Bachelor's degree requirement but before completing the Master's degree requirement shall receive a Bachelor's degree diploma. If the student wishes to complete the Master's degree requirement, he/she must apply for admission. The student will automatically be admitted if he/she returns within one year since withdrawing and will be allowed to complete the remaining degree requirements needed for the Master's degree. Students who return after one year will be admitted on competitive basis, the Master's courses taken before shall be evaluated by the Program and may be considered or rejected.
2. Dual Master's/PhD degree students must fulfill all requirements for both degrees.
 - A maximum of 9 credit hours of course work taken at HBKU at the graduate level may be counted towards both Master's and PhD degrees;
 - Students must maintain a minimum CGPA of 3.0 in course work presented in their applications for the Master's degree;
 - The process of awarding credit for course work taken outside the degree program to satisfy the degree requirement should follow the credit transfer policy;
 - The Master's and PhD degrees will be awarded discretely. The PhD degree award shall not be preceding the Master's degree under any circumstance;
 - Student must fulfill all Master's degree requirements and be awarded the diploma for a Master's degree before enrolling in the PhD. Students who fail to complete the PhD requirements may be allowed to exit with a Master's;
 - Dual degree students are required to pass all PhD examinations as stipulated under the PhD degree requirement. The deadlines for passing the examinations shall be adjusted to the time a student is first matriculated into the PhD program;
 - All examination policies and procedures for Master's and PhD degree requirements apply;

- Dual Master's-PhD degrees students must complete the requirements of both degrees within seven years since first matriculation in the University;
- Students who opt to withdraw from a dual degree program and after completing the Master's degree requirement but before completing the PhD degree requirements will receive a Master's degree diploma. If students wanted to return to complete the requirements for the PhD degree at a later time, they must apply for new admission.

Juris Doctor Degree Requirements

1. The *Juris Doctor* (JD) program at HBKU is a three-year graduate education program composed of fundamental courses, professional-skill training, and targeted courses with an internship opportunity. JD students must complete the minimum credit hours for courses and research projects as stipulated in the JD degree program.
2. Students must maintain a minimum CGPA of 3.0 in course work presented in their applications for the JD degree. Students who have a CGPA lower than 3.0 by the time they are applying for graduation shall not be allowed to graduate or receive a diploma. The CGPA calculation excludes all transfer courses.
3. The process of awarding credit for coursework taken outside the degree program to satisfy the degree requirement should follow the credit transfer policy.

Discontinued Degree Programs

Students enrolling in a graduate degree program that the University decided to discontinue shall be allowed to progress toward completing the degree requirements within a time frame that will be announced when the decision to discontinue is made.

3. RESPONSIBILITY/SOURCE/AUTHORITY

This policy and accompanying procedures were developed by the Office of the Provost, reviewed and endorsed by the University Academic Programs and Studies Committee and endorsed by the Provost and the University President and approved by the BOT.

This policy assigns the implementation of this process to the HBKU Registrar in collaboration with appropriate college committees and deans.

3. 1 COMMUNITY SHOULD KNOW THIS POLICY

President, Provost, Vice Presidents, Deans, Program Coordinators, Directors, Faculty, Students

4. Updates

SUMMARY OF CHANGES		
Date	Section	Change
4 September 2016	Various	Miscellaneous changes to thesis implementation, course codes and numbers, minimum residency requirements, and credit allocation.
6 May 2018	Committees regulations	Committees function and composition

5. ACCOMPANYING PROCEDURE

Initiation of Research for MSc/MA Thesis

During the first year of their MS/MA study, students should be enrolled in courses in accordance with standard enrollment/registration policies and procedures. Students can propose a research topic at any point during the program, but the topic must be proposed and approved by the end of the first academic year in accordance with HBKU policies. Exceptions may be granted by the Dean upon the recommendation of the Student supervisor.

Registration for the MS/MA Thesis

Since program requirements vary in terms of the number of credits, course codes may vary, but the course syllabi should be consistent. The decision for credit allocation lies within the divisions. The three colleges awarding master's diplomas (CSE, CIS and CHSS) allocate credits as follows:

CSE	ICT 695	9 credits (ICT also provides a track for students not pursuing a PhD)
	SUS 695	9 credits

	LS 695	9 credits
CIS	MS in Islamic Finance	9 credits for the thesis
	MA in Islamic Studies	9 credits for the thesis
CHSS	MATS	6 credits for the thesis
	MAAT	6 credits for the thesis

Note: the number of credits for course XXX 695 is variable. Allocation of credits reflects the effort spent during the semester on the research component and is used to differentiate between full-time versus part-time students. Once a student successfully passes the research requirement during a given semester, he/she will be permitted to proceed (pp grade) until a total of x credits are fulfilled (x = 6,9,11 for SUS, ICT and LS, respectively) and all grades are converted to a pass grade.

MSc/MA Thesis Defense

Following the thesis defense, the outcome should be one of the following:

- Pass
- Pass with minor (changes to be approved by the Advisor only)
- Pass with major (changes to be approved by the entire committee)
- Fail

The Doctoral Thesis Research course is allocated an XXX799 course code and carries a minimum of 36 credits.

Study plans can outline the distribution of the loads through the semesters to set expectations and differentiation between full-time and part-time status.

PhD Research Thesis Defense

The thesis defense shall result in one of the following outcomes:

- Pass
- Pass with minor (changes to be approved by the Advisor only)
- Pass with major (changes to be approved by the entire committee)
- Fail

College Graduation Committee (CGC)

Colleges may form a CGC. The CGC consists of a minimum of four/five faculty members (full member and/or affiliated) from the University with the Registrar in an ex-officio capacity to adjust records as necessary. Their purpose is to:

- Oversee all aspects of student evaluation during each student's tenure in the programs. The Chair approves all progress reports and brings details of conflicts and non-progress to the attention of the committee for discussion.
- Investigate the admission process with regards to low/non-performing students in order to recommend suitable adjustments to admission standards and practices, as needed. Such investigation is conducted by the Registrar for subsequent analysis by the committee.
- Oversee PhD qualifying exams.
- Approve the outcomes of the PhD proposal examinations.
- Appoint examination committees and approve external examiners.
- Receive and process thesis examination forms and make final pass/fail decisions.
- Handle conflicts.