

AIR UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

POLICY ON AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)

Introduction

1. This policy deals with the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Air University. The degree requirements, time duration, admission and registration requirements, thesis evaluation procedure, conditions for dismissal from PhD studies, and other related requirements are part of this policy. The policy is in line with the guidelines provided by Higher Education Commission, Pakistan. The policy finds its elaboration in current AU Academic Rules.

Award of Degree

2. On the recommendations of the Faculty Board of Graduate Studies (FBGS) to Vice Chancellor through Dir Academics, the Air University will award the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to the candidates who satisfy the requirements mentioned below. Faculties and Departments may specify additional requirements if considered appropriate/necessary on case to case basis, with the approval of FBGS. These **standard** requirements are further explained in subsequent paragraphs.

a) **Coursework.** The minimum coursework required for award of PhD degree shall be 18 credit hours of graduate level courses beyond Master's Degree.

b) Absolute Grading Scheme : Absolute Grading Scheme will be followed from Fall 2017 Semester (instead of Relative Grading System) - as placed at Annexure A (Table A1).⁽¹⁾

c) **Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).** The PhD student is required to maintain a CGPA of 3.00 or above on the scale of 4.00.

d) **PhD Comprehensive Examination.** On meeting coursework requirement mentioned in para 2(a) above, a student is required to pass a Departmental Comprehensive Examination in not more than two attempts.

e) **Defense of Research Proposal.** Each Doctoral student has to prepare, submit, and defend a thesis proposal, after carrying out a comprehensive literature review and taking necessary guidance from his/her Supervisor and GEC, and defend it successfully in not more than two attempts.

f) **Research Credits.** In addition to the course work, all Doctoral students must register for at least 30 Cr Hrs of Doctoral research and get satisfactory grades for these Credit Hours.

- g) **Plagiarism Test.** The thesis should pass a plagiarism test before sending it to foreign and local experts/examiners for evaluation, using specialist software.
- h) **Successful Evaluation of PhD thesis.** Positive report by the supervisor, external examiners, and two foreign experts from technologically advanced countries on the PhD thesis is an essential requirement before final defense by the PhD candidate.
- i) **Publications.** It is mandatory for a PhD candidate to publish at least one research paper based on his/her PhD thesis/dissertation in HEC recognized 'X' & 'W' category journals only before his/her final defense exam could be scheduled, (applicable to PhD Scholars enrolled in PhD program after 10 Jan, 2010), 'Y' in case of Social Sciences only.⁽²⁾
- j) **Final Defense.** It is essential to successfully defend one's thesis in an open defense (in the form of a presentation) and earn its approval by a majority vote of GEC. Before the final defense, the entire requirements mentioned above are to be completed by the PhD candidate.
- k) **Final Submission of PhD Thesis.** Four copies of the final hardbound (in approved color) PhD thesis (duly signed by all GEC members) along with its softcopy on CD/DVD shall be submitted by the student within 30 calendar days from the date of final defense. Director Examinations (with the consultation of concerned Department Chair) may relax this period for another one month, if GEC has asked the student to incorporate some changes/additions in the thesis.

Admission in PhD Program

3. Eligibility and other matters related to admission are as follows:-

- a) **Eligibility Criteria.** The applicant has to meet following minimum eligibility requirements.
- (i) MS/MPhil/equivalent degree in the relevant field meeting **30 CHs** with a CGPA of at least 3.00 (on the scale of 4.00) or first division in annual system.
- (ii) **GRE Subject (International) or GAT Subject, with at least 60% score in relevant discipline. In case of non-availability of GRE/GAT Subject due to any reason, concerned Department may arrange an equivalent test under the auspices of Air University. The applicant has to score 70% in this test for becoming eligible for admission.**⁽³⁾
- b) **Statement of Purpose.** All applicants are required to submit a statement of purpose (approx. **2000** words) along with the application form, writing clearly their intended research interest and background.

c) **Rejection and Transfer Cases.** In case of rejection of application, applicant may apply again after removing the observations of concerned Department or Admission Office. An applicant, who is already pursuing a PhD program elsewhere, can get transferred to Air University if he/she meets all the admission requirements of Air University. However, he/she will be required to follow the complete admission process.

Registration Requirement of PhD Student

4. A PhD student has to maintain his registration (both for coursework and for the research work) throughout the duration of PhD studies and pay the required fee as per the AU rules. If he/she fails to register in any semester, he/she shall cease to maintain his/her status as PhD student of the university. In case the student applies for reinstatement of his/her status to the Registrar he/she shall have to pay all dues, deposit re-admission fee and fine as applicable, within 45 days of start of the semester.

5. A PhD student is required to register at least for nine Cr Hrs of coursework in each semester, in the first two regular semesters. Dean of faculty, on the recommendations of Chair Department, may allow registration for minimum of six Cr Hrs instead of nine. After completion of required coursework, a PhD student is required to register for research work as per existing policy and procedure of registration and fee payment. If the student is required to repeat a course or take extra course advised by his Supervisor/GEC, he may register for that course in addition to research. However, any repeated course or additional coursework will not count towards the minimum research Cr Hrs requirement.

Duration of PhD Studies

6. The normal duration of the PhD studies shall be three academic years - an academic year consists of two regular semesters ie Fall and Spring, extendable by three more academic years **(on semester to semester basis)** by Dean of the concerned Faculty on the recommendation of concerned Chair Department. **Scholar must submit his/her thesis at least 06 months prior to the maximum duration of 06 years. It must be sent to local and foreign examiners/experts for evaluation after approval of FBGS as soon as possible. Scholars/Deptt who fail to get their final defense examination (FDE) scheduled within the allowed time shall have to apply in writing to the FBGS through GEC for the extension beyond sixth year with justification. The FBGS may recommend to VC extension of one final regular semester provided the student has submitted his finalized thesis to GEC for local and foreign examiners/experts and FBGS has reasons to believe that scholar will be able to get his final defense scheduled and finish other academic requirements within extended time frame.**⁽⁴⁾ Offices of the Director Examination, Registrar and Director Academics will be intimated of **all the** extensions granted for record purpose.

In case the **scholar** still fails to complete the degree requirements, then the FBGS will refer the case of dismissal from the program to the Vice Chancellor through Director Academics.

7. **Semester Leave.** A PhD student who has successfully completed his/her coursework may take leave up to one semester which includes the leave on medical grounds, with the approval of FBGS. The leave granted will not be counted towards the duration of PhD studies.

PhD Supervisor, Guidance and Evaluation Committee (GEC), Foreign and Local Examiners

8. Within one month of the confirmation of Doctoral student's admission to the PhD Program, FBGS will approve a PhD Supervisor for the PhD scholar, on the recommendation of concerned Chair Department. The Supervisor will be Regular/Adjunct PhD qualified faculty member of AU who is also HEC approved/registered PhD supervisor. Being the Supervisor of the PhD Scholar, he/she will chair the Guidance and Evaluation Committee (GEC) of his/her scholar. After the appointment of Supervisor and registration of the PhD scholar, FBGS will approve a GEC consisting of minimum of four members (including Supervisor), on the recommendation of the concerned Chair Department. GEC formed must have at least two faculty members of AU (holding PhD degrees) and one external member of GEC from outside AU. Appointment of a Co-Supervisor is optional.

9. **Foreign and Local Thesis Examiners.** The VC will appoint two (with one stand by) experts/examiners from a technologically advanced country on the recommendations of FBGS through Dir Academics, for PhD thesis evaluation. Each Department will recommend five names, as foreign examiners, to FBGS for each Doctoral candidate. The VC will also appoint one **additional** local external examiner (i.e. in country **in addition to one local external examiner in GEC**) on the recommendation of FBGS through Dir Academics. Each Department will recommend two names, as local examiners, to FBGS for each Doctoral candidate. Departments (having PhD programs) may maintain an updated list of candidate foreign examiners and candidate local examiner all the time.

10. **Change of Supervisor.** The case of change in PhD supervisor, if unavoidable, will be initiated by Chair Department and forwarded to FBGS for approval through the respective Dean within two weeks of the application of student or departure of the Supervisor. The approval will be sent to all concerned for record purpose. The same procedure will be followed in the case of any change in GEC. However, such changes shall not form a reason for extending the PhD studies beyond maximum duration.

Comprehensive Exam (CE) and Defense of Research Proposal

11. Within one semester of the completion of his/her coursework (securing a min CGPA of 3.00/4.00) the PhD student shall take the Comprehensive Examination (CE) of the Department. Student will have two chances to clear the CE. The student shall complete the requirement of passing the CE (availing all chances), maximum by the end of third academic year (sixth regular semester) into his PhD program.

12. For the engineering programs, the student is required to obtain at least 70% aggregate marks in the CE with at least 60% in each subject/area. For non-engineering programs, the student is required to obtain 60% aggregate marks and at least 50% in each subject/area. In case of failing to pass the CE in first attempt, the complete examination is to be retaken.

13. Within one semester after comprehensive examination, a Doctoral student will be required to prepare, present, and defend a research synopsis outlining his/her intended research to GEC for its approval (title of intended PhD Thesis is not part of the research synopsis, although student may propose a tentative title). In this Defense, the student must also cover how his/her research work would benefit the economy, industry, culture, society, community, etc of the country. Two chances (with a gap of up to six weeks between the two) will be given to student to clear his/her topic defense. The student shall complete the requirement of successful defense of research synopsis (availing all chances) maximum by the end of seventh regular semester into his PhD program. In case, there is a difference of opinion in the GEC on the scope of research, then the matter will be referred to Dean Faculty. Dean will make an inquiry and modify the scope of the intended research of the student and get it approved from FBGS, and further intimate to the office of Director Examination. After approval of research synopsis, the status of the PhD student will be converted to PhD Candidate.

14. The office of the Dir Examinations will announce the official result of the CE and topic defense on receiving the results and all requisite documents from GEC and the concerned Department as per AU examination policies.

15. **Change of Research Area of the Student.** Any changes in the area of research and research proposal of any student, once it has been finalized, is not a preferred situation and all possible efforts will be made by concerned Department Chair to discourage students to change their area of specialization and research as it will result in wastage of student's time and Department resources. However, if it is inevitable, then FBGS will forward its recommendations to VC through Director Academics. Change of research area will not be taken as a reason, by the student, for extending the duration of PhD studies.

Research Progress

16. After successful defense of Research Proposal, quarterly research progress reports by the PhD Candidate duly signed by the Supervisor are to be submitted to GEC,

Chair Department and the office of the Dir Examinations. **P/G coordinator in the Departments are to update the data in thesis tracking module of automation system.**

17. On Completion of research requirements (as per research proposal), PhD candidate will submit first draft of PhD thesis to his/her Supervisor (who may suggest changes/corrections etc and ask the student to resubmit). If the Supervisor finds the thesis to be satisfactory, he shall ask student to finalize the thesis and its title for further evaluations by all concerned, complete any remaining requirements for the award of degree, and apply for final defense.

Plagiarism Check

18. Before sending the PhD thesis for evaluation by external examiners, the Supervisor is required to conduct plagiarism check of the PhD thesis using software approved by AU with the help of the office of Dir Quality. The similarity index of the test should be less than 19% before sending it for foreign evaluation. A certificate to this effect duly signed by supervisor and countersigned by Department Chair and Dir Quality is to be forwarded to Registrar and Director Examination. This certificate shall also be attached with the final hardbound copies of the PhD thesis.

Evaluation of the PhD Thesis

19. In addition to the evaluation of thesis by GEC and plagiarism test, the thesis will also be sent for evaluation to two foreign examiner/experts from technologically advanced countries and one local examiner. **Scholar must submit his/her finalized thesis to GEC at least 06 months prior to the maximum duration of 06 years. It must be sent to local and foreign examiners/experts after approval of FBGS as soon as possible. (A) In case the Foreign Evaluator (s) gives his/her assessment of thesis as “Accept with Minor Changes”, the PhD Scholar will incorporate these changes in the thesis and the Supervisor will certify these changes have been incorporated. Final thesis will not be resubmitted to the same Foreign Evaluator (s) again. (B) If the report of the Foreign Evaluator(s) states “Accept with Major Changes”, The matter may be referred to GEC who will ask the scholar to modify his research or thesis accordingly. GEC will certify that the requisite changes have been done and the final thesis will not be resubmitted to the Foreign Evaluator(s).**⁽⁵⁾ After receiving positive evaluation report by foreign experts, the external examiner and the Supervisor, the scholar shall apply for final defense of his/her thesis. The correspondence with the external examiners/experts shall be done through the office of the Director Examination.

20. In case, one of the foreign expert offers unsatisfactory comments (rejection of the research work), the thesis will be sent to standby foreign expert for his evaluation. In case of unsatisfactory comments by both foreign experts or by stand by foreign expert, the matter will be referred to FBGS for further deliberation and recommendation to VC.

Final Defense

21. The PhD Candidate will be eligible for final defense, and will formally apply for it, provided he/she has met the conditions mentioned in para 2 and 6 above. The final defense must be an open defense (in the form of a presentation), attended by GEC (attendance of Supervisor, **local** external examiner, and external member of GEC is compulsory), all the available FMs, MS & PhD students, and by the Department Chair and Dean. **To ensure this, Director Exam or his representative will attend the final Defense.** After final defense, GEC will make one of the following recommendations:-

- a) Pass with no observation
- b) Pass with minor changes
- c) Major changes required (second final defense if needed)
- d) Failure

Note: In case GEC recommends “Pass with minor changes”, the candidate will incorporate these changes in the thesis within 30 days and the Supervisor will certify accordingly.⁽⁵⁾

22. In case the GEC is of the opinion that a second final defense by the PhD candidate is required, GEC will recommend the time of next defense also.

Final Submission of PhD Thesis

23. After successful final defense, the student will submit final hard bound copies (in required numbers) duly signed by all concerned & soft copy to the following offices:-

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|---|
| a) | Concerned Department | 01 Copy |
| b) | Registrar | 01 Copy (Registrar will send this copy to library) |
| c) | Director Exams | 02 Copies (01 for HEC & other for Exams) |

Dismissal from PhD Program

24. A student shall be dismissed from the PhD Degree program if:-

- a) CGPA remains below 3.00 on completion of his/her course work even after availing all chances for improvement of grades.
- b) CGPA is below 3.00 in two consecutive semesters (irrespective of courses taken in each semester).
- c) Fails twice in the comprehensive examination or defense of research proposal.
- d) Declared fail in the final defense.

- e) Fails to complete all the degree requirements within the maximum time allowed including all extensions.
- f) On account to plagiarism or falsification of the research data.
- g) Fails to pay fees for every extended semester, beyond normal duration of respective program, and the Thesis Evaluation fees.

25. After dismissal from a PhD program, a PhD student cannot join any PhD program offered by Air University.

26. If Plagiarism is established in the thesis of PhD scholar (at a later stage on a complaint received), then the supervisor will also be held responsible for this act and will be black listed for five (05) years. A disciplinary action against such supervisor may also be initiated by the university. However, if the complaint is proved to be false, then the complainant of false allegation of plagiarism may be black listed for five (05) years.⁽⁶⁾

27. This policy shall be applicable to all running PhD programs wef Fall-2017 unless stated otherwise in the preceding pages. Academic Regulations may also be consulted for details of any relevant points.

28. The policy shall be reviewed as and when required.



(FAAIZ AMIR)
Air Vice Marshal (R)
Vice Chancellor

No. IBD/AU/202/2/ACAD dated 02March, 2018

References

1. Absolute Grading Scheme (page 1)
Agenda Item No. 2 : Minutes of, 151 University Functional Committee, Meeting issued on 18 Aug, 2017
2. Amendments to MS/PhD Policy & Academic Regulations – 2015 (page 2)
Para 1(a) Letter no. IBD/AU/101/Admin dated 26 Feb 2016
3. Constitution of Committee to Prepare/Conduct the Test at Par with GRE (General) & GRE (Subject) for Admission in MS/MPhil & PhD or Equivalent Programs (page 2)
HEC Letter No. 1- 3 /AD-QA/HEC/(NQAC)(21)/2016)/52 dated 18 Mar, 2016
4. Amendments to MS & PhD Policy of Air University (page 3)
Para 1(a) Letter No. IBD/AU/207/ACAD dated 29 Dec, 2015
5. Amendments to MS & PhD Policy of Air University (page 6)
Para 1(c) of Letter No. IBD/AU/207/ACAD dated 29 Dec, 2015
6. Responsibility on Supervisor of Plagiarized PhD/MS/MPhil Thesis (page 8)
HEC letter no. 1-22(NQAC)/QAD/2017/HEC/07-364 and 08-365 dated 24 Mar, 2017

Note : Highlighted Bold font in the document indicates amendments

Table A1*Absolute Grading Scheme applicable from Fall – 2017 Semester for
MS/MPhil/MBA/PhD Programs**

S No	Marks in %age	Grades	GPA
1.	80 - 100	A	4.00
2.	75 - 79.99	A-	3.67
3.	70 - 74.99	B+	3.33
4.	65 - 69.99	B	3.00
5.	60 - 64.99	B-	2.67
6.	55 - 59.99	C+	2.33
7.	50 - 54.99	C	2.00
8.	Below 50	F	0.00