

AIR UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD
POLICY ON AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)

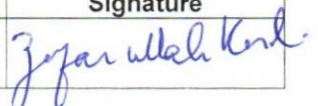
Introduction

1. This policy stipulates the requirements and conditions for 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.

Award of Degree

2. On the recommendations of the Faculty Board of Graduate Studies (FBGS) to Vice Chancellor through Dir Academics, 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. The standard requirements are further explained in subsequent paragraphs.

- a) **Coursework.** The minimum coursework required for award of PhD degree shall be 18 credit hours (CH) of graduate level courses beyond Master's Degree.
- b) **Absolute Grading Scheme.** Absolute Grading Scheme is placed at Annexure 'A'.
- 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 coursework, all Doctoral students must register for at least 30 CH 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.

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- h) **Successful Evaluation of PhD thesis.** Positive report by the Supervisor, internal/external examiner(s), 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 as first author based on his/her PhD thesis/dissertation in HEC recognized 'W' or 'X' category journals before his/her final defense exam is scheduled; 'W', 'X' or 'Y' category journals in case of Management Sciences and Social Sciences.
- j) **Final Defense.** It is essential to successfully defend one's thesis in an open defense (in the form of an oral 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 and Head of Department, Dean Faculty and Dean Graduate Studies) along with its softcopy on CD/DVD shall be submitted by the Candidate within 30 calendar days from the date of the Final Defense. Director Examinations (with the consultation of concerned Department Chair) may relax this period for another one month, if GEC has asked the Candidate to incorporate 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 the 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 General test with a minimum score of 300 (min. of 155 in Quantitative Reasoning and 145 in Verbal Reasoning, and with a min score of 3.5 in Analytical writing) or GAT (Subject) with a minimum score of 60% or Air University General Graduate Admission Test with a minimum score of 70%.
- b) **Research Proposal.** All applicants are required to submit a Research Proposal (min. 3000 words) along with the application form, writing clearly their intended research interest and background, and preference/choice of Supervisor where applicable,

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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,

d) **Deficiency Courses.** In case the concerned Department places an additional requirement that an applicant should clear one or more Deficiency Course(s), provisional admission may be granted subject to clearing the Deficiency Course(s). In such a case, a provisionally admitted student will be required to Pass the course(s) which will not be graded towards the CGPA and the duration for completing such course(s) may not be counted towards the PhD duration. The student will have a maximum of two chances to clear the Deficiency Course(s) and will be charged fees, in addition to other admissible fee, as determined by the level and CH of the course(s). Such Deficiency Course(s) will appear in the Transcript showing only Pass/Fail grades. A student not Passing the Deficiency Course(s) within the maximum allowed attempts will not be granted admission to the PhD Program.

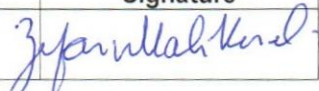
Registration Requirement of PhD Student

4. A PhD student is required to maintain his/her registration (both for coursework and for research work) throughout the duration of PhD studies and pay the required fee(s) 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 the start of the semester.

5. A PhD student is required to register for at least nine CH 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 CH 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/her Supervisor/GEC, he/she may register for that course in addition to research work.

Duration of PhD Studies

6. The minimum/normal duration (Annexure 'B') of the PhD studies shall be three academic years - an academic year consists of two regular semesters i.e., Fall and Spring, extendable by three more academic years (on semester-to semester basis) by Dean of the concerned Faculty on the recommendation of the concerned Chair Department. A fee penalty of 50% tuition fee will be imposed per semester beyond the fourth year. Scholar must submit his/her thesis at least 06 months prior to the maximum duration of 06 years. It must be sent to external local and foreign examiners/experts for evaluation after approval

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of FBGS as soon as possible. Scholars/Dept. 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 the sixth year with justification(s). Subsequently, the FBGS may recommend to VC an extension of one final regular semester provided the Candidate has submitted his/her finalized thesis to external local and foreign examiners/experts for evaluation, and the FBGS has reasons to believe that the scholar will be able to get his/her final defense scheduled and complete all other academic requirements within the extended time frame. 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, the FBGS will refer the case of dismissal from the program to the Vice Chancellor through Director Academics.

7. **Semester Leave.** A PhD Student/Candidate is eligible for leave up to a maximum of two semesters (on a semester-to-semester basis) under one of the following conditions:

- a) the student has completed his/her coursework,
- b) the student has not completed his/her coursework but has extraordinary personal or medical circumstances that do not allow him/her to study for one semester.

A maximum of one semester of leave granted will not be counted towards the duration of the 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, the FBGS will approve a PhD Supervisor for the PhD scholar, on the recommendation of the concerned Chair Department through the Dean. The Supervisor will be a Regular PhD-qualified faculty member of AU who is also HEC approved/registered PhD Supervisor with at least three years' post-PhD experience in which he/she has co-supervised at least two Master's theses and is member of a GEC of at least one PhD student. Being the Supervisor of the PhD Scholar, he/she will chair the Guidance and Evaluation Committee (GEC) of the scholar. After the appointment of Supervisor and registration of the PhD scholar, approval of the FBGS will be required within the first semester for a GEC consisting of a minimum of five members including:

- a. Supervisor (approved earlier)
- b. Co-supervisor (mandatory)
- c. Two Internal Faculty Members of Air University.
- d. One External Faculty Member/Examiner of another HEC-recognized University.

All members of the GEC must be PhD degree holders.

9. **Foreign and Local Thesis Examiners.** The VC will appoint two experts/examiners and one standby expert/examiner from technologically advanced countries on the recommendations of the FBGS through Dir Academics, for PhD thesis evaluation. Each Department will recommend five names, as foreign examiners, to FBGS

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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) are required to maintain an updated list of Candidate foreign examiners and Candidate local examiners all the time.

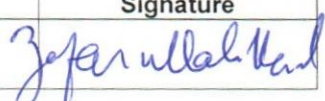
10. **Change of Supervisor.** The case of change in PhD Supervisor, if unavoidable, will be initiated by Chair Department and forwarded to FBGS for approval through the respective Dean within two weeks of the application of student or departure of the Supervisor. The approval will be sent to all concerned 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. Research credits will be counted towards the PhD degree when such credits are taken in candidature i.e. after passing the Comprehensive Examination. Student will have two chances to clear the CE within two years of admission. After passing the Comprehensive Examination, the status of the PhD student will be converted to PhD Candidate.

12. For 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. Before the end of the semester following the semester in which the CE is held, 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) within two semesters after clearing the comprehensive exam. 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.

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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 change(s) 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, 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 for posting of awarded 'S' (Satisfactory)/'U' (Unsatisfactory) interim grades within thirty days of the end of each semester.

Minutes of GEC Meeting are to be submitted to Office of Graduate Studies by the middle of each semester indicating the progress of the Candidate based on an oral/seminar presentation.

Candidate that fails to submit the report in time may be fined and will be allowed to register for the next semester only after payment of the fine and submission of the progress report. The P/G coordinator in each Department is required to maintain updated records of the student.

17. On completion of research requirements (as per research proposal), PhD Candidate will submit the first draft of the PhD thesis to his/her Supervisor (who may suggest changes/corrections etc and ask the Candidate to resubmit). If the Supervisor finds the thesis to be satisfactory, he/she shall ask the Candidate to finalize the thesis and its title for further evaluation 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, the Supervisor is required to conduct a 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 or equal to 19%, with less than 5% from any single source. 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

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19. In addition to the evaluation of thesis by GEC and plagiarism test, the thesis will also be sent for evaluation to two foreign experts from technologically advanced countries and one local external examiner. Candidate must submit his/her finalized thesis to GEC at least 06 months prior to the maximum allowed duration. It must be sent to local external and foreign 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 Candidate will incorporate these changes in the thesis and the Supervisor will certify that these changes have been incorporated. Subsequently, the Final thesis will not be resubmitted to the same Foreign Evaluator(s).

(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 Candidate to modify his/her research or thesis accordingly. The GEC will then certify that the requisite changes have been made and the final thesis will not be resubmitted to the Foreign Evaluator(s).

After receiving positive evaluation report by Foreign Evaluators, the local external examiner and the Supervisor, the Candidate shall apply for final defense of his/her thesis. The correspondence with the external examiners/experts shall be done through the office of the Dean Graduate Studies.

20. In case of unsatisfactory comments (rejection of the research work)

(A) by one of the Foreign Evaluators, the thesis will be sent to the standby foreign expert for evaluation,

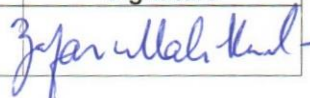
(B) by Foreign Evaluators (including standby), the matter will be referred to FBGS for further deliberation and recommendation to VC.

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 and PhD students of the Dept., and by the Department Chair and Dean. To ensure this, Dean Graduate Studies and Director Exams or his/her 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.

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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.

In case of non-compliance with AU Policy/Quality issues, the Dean Graduate Studies may recommend corrective actions to concerned Dean/Chair Department for necessary compliance and subsequent approval by Vice Chancellor.

Final Submission of PhD Thesis

23. After successful final defense, the Candidate will submit final hard bound copies duly signed by all concerned and 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/Candidate shall be dismissed from the PhD Degree program in case of one or more of the following conditions:

- His/her CGPA remains below 3.00 on completion of his/her course work even after availing all chances for improvement of grades.
- His/her CGPA is below 3.00 in two consecutive semesters (irrespective of courses taken in each semester).
- He/she fails twice in the comprehensive examination or defense of research proposal.
- The Candidate is awarded two consecutive 'U' grades.
- The Candidate is declared fail in the final defense.
- The Candidate fails to complete all the degree requirements within the maximum time allowed including all extensions.
- Plagiarism or falsification of the research data is established.
- The Candidate 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/Candidate cannot join any PhD program offered by Air University.

26. If Plagiarism is established in the thesis of PhD Candidate (at a later stage on a complaint received), then the Supervisor will also be held responsible for this act and will be blacklisted 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 blacklisted for five (05) years.

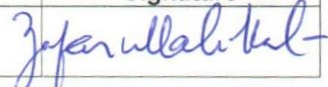
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27. This Policy shall be applicable to all PhD programs w.e.f. the intake of Fall 2021 except section 7 (Semester Leave) which shall be applicable to all currently enrolled students.



(Javaid Ahmed)
Air Marshal (R)
Vice Chancellor
Air University Islamabad

No. IBD/AU/600/21/09/DFGS dated 23 August, 2021

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Absolute Grading Scheme for PhD Program

S No	Marks in %age	Grades	GPA
1.	85 - 100	A	4.00
2.	80 - 84.99	A-	3.67
3.	75 - 79.99	B+	3.33
4.	70 - 74.99	B	3.00
5.	65 - 69.99	B-	2.67
6.	60 - 64.99	C+	2.33
7.	50 - 59.99	C	2.00
8.	Below 50	F	0.00

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Timelines (Minimum/Normal and Maximum) for PhD

STATUS	SEMESTER										XI	XII
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X		
Minimum/Normal Duration = 3 years , Maximum Duration = 6 years												
Minimum/ Normal* Duration	9 CH	9 CH	CE	PDE		Thesis Submission						
Maximum allowed duration	6 CH	6 CH	6 CH	CE max*	PDE	PDE max						FDE

*2 Years (4 academic semesters) is the max allowed limit for CE according to HEC Policy for PhD

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