

## Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

### Program Guideline for Non-Iranian International Students

#### Introduction

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) program is one of the important educational programs for training the workforce in different countries, the students of which, aside from teaching and conducting research, serve the society by identifying the needs of the society and solving its problems and offering suitable counsel to stakeholders. In line with internationalization of higher education, it is imperative that programs and guidelines be prepared based on international standards. Currently, there exist academic guidelines on course-based and research-based Ph.D. programs. These guidelines, with the aim of responding to the needs of international students, have been prepared based on current capacities and conditions, and will be applied to the students admitted based on approved projects and abilities of the faculty members.

#### Keywords

In this guideline, the following keywords have been used for concision.

- Academic unit: Academic department or research center admitting and educating the student;
- Student: Non-Iranian international student; and,
- University: Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

#### Article 1: Overview

1.1 The Ph.D. program is the highest level of higher education which results in the acquisition of a degree and aims to train individuals who will have the ability of innovation in different fields of science, serving the purpose of solving international needs and expanding the borders of knowledge. Education at this level will be full-time.

## 1.2 Purpose:

The purpose of the Ph.D. program will be to train international students who, while having dominance in a specific field and using relevant sciences, can take a step forward regarding the advancement and expansion of the borders of human knowledge by gaining different abilities and using advanced research methods and novel research fundamentals.

## **Article 2: Admission Criteria and Method**

2.1 Having acquired a Master's Degree or a Professional Doctorate Degree (M.D., D.D.S., Pharm.D.) or higher relevant to the requested field of study based on the decision of the advisor and the approval of the academic unit and the International Students Admission Committee;

2.2 Determining the overall details of the student's research projects approved by the advisor.

Remark: Based on the application, the advisor of the academic unit can request and determine an in-person or distant interview with the applicant.

## **Article 3: Advisor**

3.1 The advisor will be determined based on the request of the student, the written acceptance of the advisor and the approval of the relevant academic unit before the arrival of the student.

3.2 If need be, based on the recommendation of the advisor, the responsibility of advising the student's dissertation can be shared between two advisors. The overall and final responsibility of the dissertation, however, will be with the first advisor.

Remark: The second advisor or readers can be chosen from outside the university or the country.

3.3 The first advisor must be from the faculty members of the university, with the academic level of Associate Professor or higher with at least 4 published articles in authentic scientific-research journals indexed in ISI or PubMed as the first or corresponding author within the last 2 years with an h-index of at least 10 with the Scopus index.

3.4 The second advisor must at least be an Assistant Professor with an h-index of at least 5 with the Scopus index.

3.5 In special cases, as per the request of the first advisor and the approval of the academic unit/school/research center and the approval of the university's educational council, the student may have at most 3 advisors.

3.6 Each Ph.D. student can have at most 3 readers based on the decision of the first advisor.

3.7 If the first advisor is from the clinical faculty members, the second advisor should be a Ph.D. holder of a relevant field.

#### **Article 4: Length of the Course**

4.1 Based on student needs and research priorities, the student will be responsible to pass at least 6 and at most 10 course credits as determined by the advisor before conducting his or her project.

4.2 Minimum passing score for courses in paragraph 4.2 will be 14 out of 20 and the minimum acceptable average will be 15. In case of minimum average less than 15, the student will be required, based on the decision of the advisor, to pass some of the course in another semester to compensate the total average.

4.3 Having passed the courses as determined by the advisor, the student will be required to take an exam of the Stage Transition Committee at the end of the first academic year. Passing this exam will give students the permission to continue their studies.

4.4 Each student can take the above-mentioned exam at most twice. Failure to pass the exam will result in the acquisition of the M.Phil Degree, and the student will not be able to continue the Ph.D. program.

4.5 The Stage Transition Committee will be comprised of representatives from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Global Strategies and International Affairs, the Office of Vice-Chancellor for Education, and the Office of Vice-Chancellor for Research (each sending one representative), as well as a referee from outside the university in a relevant field of study as approved by the Office of Vice-Chancellor for Global Strategies and International Affairs.

### **Research and Dissertation Stage**

#### **Article 5: Dissertation**

- 5.1 The student will be required to defend his or her Ph.D. dissertation proposal based on the proposed framework of the advisor until the end of the first year of studies.
- 5.2 The referees for the proposal defense will be chosen as per the recommendation of the advisor and the approval of the academic unit. They include the advisor(s), readers, 2 internal referees (from the academic unit), head of the department/research center's vice-dean for research, 1 referee from outside the academic department, and 1 referee from outside the university. The referees will be selected as per the recommendation of the advisor, chosen by the academic unit, and approved by the Office of Vice-Chancellor for Global Strategies and International Affairs, all of whom are required to be at least Associate Professors.
- 5.3 After the proposal has been approved by the referees, the student will be required to submit the project in the Online Research Database titled Pajooresh Yaar and select the dissertation course credit. This course credit should be newly selected every semester until the date of dissertation defense.
- 5.4 The student will be required to submit a written report of the research progress to the advisor after going through each phase of the project for at least every 6 months. This will be given to the Graduate Education Council of the academic unit, after the approval of the advisor, and will be discussed in a symposium with the student, advisor, and Council members.
- 5.5 If the student should be in other countries including his/her home country for data gathering purposes, she/he can spend half of her/his study period outside Iran, in case approved by a committee of the university's Vice-Chancellors for Education, Research, and Global Strategies and International Affairs (or their acting representatives).

#### **Article 6: Dissertation Pre-Defense and Defense Sessions**

- 6.1 After writing the dissertation based on the university guidelines, the student will be required to give a copy to the advisor(s) and reader(s).
- 6.2 The referees for the dissertation defense will be selected as per paragraph 5.2.
- 6.3 A copy of the dissertation, together with the Referee Worksheet, will be sent to each of the referees by the academic unit to express their judgements.
- 6.4 The academic unit, upon receiving the judgements of the referees, will work on arranging a pre-defense session in the advisor's as well as relevant counselors' presence.

6.5 The student will be required to implement all decisions taken in the pre-defense session to complete his or her dissertation before the end of permitted academic years, and to hand in the dissertation to the advisor before the determined deadline.

6.6 After fulfilling the conditions in paragraph 6.5, the student will be permitted to defend his or her dissertation.

6.7 The approved dissertation defense worksheet needs to be sent to the Directorate of Graduate Education of the university a week before the defense session in order to determine the representative for the defense session.

6.8 To defend the dissertation, the student will be required to show the scientific achievements of the dissertation by presenting a certificate of acceptance/publication of at least 2 articles extracted from the dissertation in scientific-research journals with ISI or PubMed indexes. The student needs to be the first author in at least 2 articles.

6.9 The defense session will be held publically with a board of referees including:

- Advisor(s)
- Reader(s)
- Internal referees of the academic unit/research center
- External referees of the academic unit/research center
- Referees from outside the university
- Head of Department/Research Center (or his or her representative)
- Representative of the Directorate of Graduate Education

#### **Article 7: Evaluation of Dissertation**

7.1 The evaluation of the dissertation will be based on the scientific quality of the research, level of innovation, quality of defense regarding research findings, and its method of writing, based on the dissertation evaluation worksheet.

7.2 At the beginning of the session, the Representative of the Directorate of Graduate Education will hand the worksheets to the members of the board of referees, and he or she will collect the sheets at the end of the session, announcing the result to the student and the school's Office of Education after calculating the results.

7.3 Scores and levels of dissertations are as follows:

- A. 19 to 20, Excellent

- B. 18 to 18.99, Very Good
- C. 16 to 17.99, Good
- D. Less than 16, Unacceptable

7.4 In case a dissertation is deemed as Unacceptable, the student can implement the necessary modifications in the dissertation within 6 months and defend once more, provided that it does not exceed the accepted deadline.

7.5 The student will be required to implement the necessary modifications in his or her dissertation, and announce the results to the advisor after the approval of the faculty members in the board of referees. The student, observing the necessary modifications, will be also required to submit the final version of his or her dissertation to the advisor within at most 2 months after the defense session. The Minute of the defense session needs to be submitted to the Office of Education within at most 3 months after the defense session.

#### **Article 8: Length of the Program and its Extension**

8.1 The accepted period of time for the professor-based–project-based Ph.D. program will be 3 to 5 years, but it can be extended by at most one semester by the recommendation of the advisor as well as the approval of the academic unit and the university’s educational council.

Remark: In special circumstances with the recommendation of the advisor, elongating or shortening the course will be the responsibility of the university’s educational council.

8.2 In case the student is unable to finish his or her studies in the determined period due to unpredictable reasons, he or she should submit her request of elongating the course to the school’s Office of Education at least one month before the end of the permitted time.

#### **Article 9: Graduation**

9.1 After passing the courses and defending the dissertation (with Excellent, Very Good or Good score), the student will be awarded the Ph.D. Degree. Graduation date will be the date of defending the dissertation.

9.2 In the awarded degree, the title of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) and the subject of research based on its title will be written.

9.3 Upon the approval of the dissertation structure by the academic department/research center, the student can carry out the binding and duplication of the dissertation for submission to different parts of the university, receiving a receipt of submission for each part.

9.3.1 Issuing the academic certificate and degree depends upon the submission of approved copies of the dissertation along with other necessary documents to the school, as well as conducting all required administrative procedures.

#### **Article 10: Academic Leave, Relinquishment and Expulsion**

In special cases when the student has a justified cause of reason, he or she can take a leave of absence for a maximum of two semesters (counted in the overall academic period) by submitting all necessary documents and receiving the agreement of the academic unit and the approval of the university's educational council.

The student will be barred from continuing his or her education under the following conditions:

- A. Less than 15 average score for course studies;
- B. Being scientifically disqualified by the academic unit to continue research activities (based on the annual research progress report);
- C. The dissertation being evaluated as Unacceptable after the second defense based on Article 7.
- D. Exceeding the accepted length of the course (as mentioned in the Article 8).

In case of relinquishment or expulsion during the study course, the university, while observing all rules and regulations, can issue a certificate based on the student's academic records.

Regarding issues not included in these guidelines, the university's educational council will be regarded as the reference.

This guideline consists of an introduction and 10 articles has been approved by the Committee for Adaptation and Adjustment of Educational Programs for the International Students in its fourth meeting on Aug. 7, 2018 and is obligatory since the approval date.