

Procedures for the Conferral of a Doctoral Degree in the Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies (Revised March 2022)

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1. The Doctoral Degree

The doctoral degree is an academic degree certifying the completion of an academic program incorporating original research on a topic of the candidate's choice. This degree is conferred on those who satisfy the requirements for the completion of the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies (hereinafter referred to as GSA).

The key conditions for the doctoral degree are as follows:

- a) A distinct contribution to a body of knowledge through an original investigation or testing of ideas that is worthy of publication.
- b) Competence in research processes (techniques and reporting).
- c) Mastery of a body of knowledge, including previous works, and keen understanding of their relationship to wider fields.

2. The Dissertation Committee

A Dissertation Committee is established within GSA to administer the procedures for the conferral of a doctoral degree.

2-1. Selection and Term of Appointment

The Dissertation Committee consists of a chairperson and two members who are recommended by the Dean of GSA and then appointed by the GSA Faculty Council. The term of appointment is one (1) year and members can be reappointed. The Dean cannot be a member.

2-2. Duties of the Dissertation Committee

The duties of the Dissertation Committee are as follows:

- a) Ensure the impartiality and rigor of the examination process.
- b) Review applications for doctoral candidacy and decide whether to accept/approve the applications.
- c) Review submitted dissertations and decide whether to endorse them for examination.
- d) Form an Examination Committee upon endorsement of an application for conferral of a doctoral degree.
- e) Review the recommended outcomes and the evaluation reports from the Examination Committee and decide the examination result.
- f) Review the recommended outcomes and the evaluation reports from the Examination Committee and the examination standards, and decide the re-examination result.
- g) In the case of minor revisions, examine to confirm if the recommended changes have been made.
- h) Review the recommended outcomes and the evaluation reports from the Examination Committee after the oral defense and decide the final examination result.
- i) Determine if there are any grounds for plagiarism or other forms of research misconduct and report the conclusion to the Dean.

3. Supervision

Each student enrolled in the doctoral program must have a supervisor who is a GSA member approved for PhD supervision, to support the student in the development of a research topic, formulating ideas and structuring them, and guiding the progress of the dissertation while the student is enrolled in the program. Students and supervisors should work together to sustain a supportive and collegial environment.

3-1. Selection of a Supervisor

Students shall choose a GSA faculty member approved for PhD supervision who will accept them for supervision of their research activities through the completion of the doctoral program.

3-2. Responsibilities of the Student

Students are expected to have the capacity and enthusiasm to organize their own research and to work on their own initiative. Students are responsible for their own work.

Students should meet with their supervisors regularly to discuss research and academic progress and to receive feedback, comments, and critical reviews concerning their research project. They are expected to submit written work at regular intervals for discussion with their supervisor. Students should meet all deadlines as agreed with their supervisor. Students should confirm with their supervisor that their research is conducted in line with research ethics and rules for conducting research. They must receive approval from their supervisor regarding the content and structure of their dissertation before submitting it for examination.

3-3. Responsibilities of the Supervisor

The supervisor provides support, guidance, and timely feedback to facilitate successful

completion of the dissertation. The supervisor encourages the student to seek advice from other experts on- and off-campus and ensures that the student observes the requisite ethics and rules for conducting research. The supervisor confirms that the dissertation is written in line with the established standards. The supervisor should verify the student's progress annually and inform them of the extent of their progress and the prospects for them completing the program.

The supervisor helps the student prepare for their dissertation examination, oral defense, and recommends appropriate examiners for the student's dissertation. The supervisor shall be a member of the Examination Committee and chair the oral defense.

4. Registration for the Award of a Doctoral Degree (Doctoral Candidacy)

4-1. To be registered for the award of a Doctoral degree, the student shall submit an application (including the submission of two research papers, one of which is a revised plan of the doctoral research with appropriate methodology), to the Dissertation Committee 3 months before the intended acquisition of the doctoral candidacy (a total of 9 months before scheduled program completion).

5. Application for Conferral of the Doctoral Degree

5-1. All candidates must apply for the conferral of the Ph.D. degree using the appropriate application form, accompanied by the appropriate screening fee. Three copies of the doctoral dissertation must be submitted within three months after application. In addition to that, electronic copies may be required to facilitate the screening and assessment of the doctoral dissertation.

5-2. In principle, the dissertation shall be submitted 6 months before the scheduled program completion date. The degree may be formally conferred during either of the two graduation ceremonies (Spring or Fall) every year.

5-3. The Dissertation Committee will screen the format, etc. of the dissertation and decide whether to endorse it for screening. Candidates will be informed of the decision of the Dissertation Committee.

6. Doctoral Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation is the final written original outcome of the research conducted by the student while studying in the GSA doctoral program and is required for completion of the program and the acquisition of a doctoral degree.

6-1. Structure of the Dissertation

In principle, a dissertation should contain the following:

1. Title Page (dissertation title, name of the candidate, date of completion), 2. Certification Page (a pledge that the dissertation is the student's work, with only original or properly referenced material), 3. Acknowledgements (of support and advice received), 4. List of Abbreviations used, 5. List of Figures/Tables, 6. Table of Contents (listing the chapters, the main titles, and subtitles within), 7. Abstract (summary of the work in 500–700 words), 8. Introduction (including background information, research area and focus, research

questions and objectives, value/significance/original contribution of research), 9. Literature Review, 10. Research Methods (including ethical considerations, framework of analysis, limitations and potential problems), 11. Findings/Results and Discussion, 12. Conclusions, 13. References, 14. Appendices (supporting material in addition to the main text)

6-2. Language

As a rule, the doctoral dissertations should be presented in English and should include a summary in English.

6-3. Length

The dissertation is a major piece of original work, and its length will normally be between 60,000 and 80,000 words. However, the length may vary with the research topic and the form of presentation.

7. Application for Conferral of a Doctoral Degree (Submission of the Doctoral Dissertation)

7-1. Application Period

All candidates must apply for conferral of a doctoral degree at least six (6) months before their desired program completion date. Screening of applications submitted during summer/winter breaks may take up to three (3) months.

7-2. Application Requirements

Candidates who want to apply for conferral of a doctoral degree must satisfy all the following:

- a) Must be enrolled in the doctoral program (students taking a leave of absence are not eligible to apply for candidacy).
- b) Must submit a soft copy of their completed dissertation, including an abstract of the dissertation, and the appropriate application form.

7-3. Application Screening

The Dissertation Committee screens the application and decides whether to endorse it for examination. Candidates will be informed of the decision of the Dissertation Committee within two (2) weeks of the date the application was submitted. However, screening of applications submitted during summer/winter breaks may take up to three (3) months.

7-4. Endorsement Standards

The Dissertation Committee screens the format of the dissertation to ensure it follows the structure outlined in 6-1.

7-5. Proceedings After the Application Screening

Endorsed dissertations are forwarded to the Doctoral Dissertation Examination Committee for examination.

8. Examination Period

8-1. Examination Period

It takes from four (4) to twelve (12) months from the date the dissertation was endorsed for examination to complete the examination of the dissertation. Examination of dissertations given minor revisions is usually completed within four (4) months, while

examination of dissertations given major revisions is completed in the range of four (4) to twelve (12) months. Candidates must be enrolled in the doctoral program throughout the duration of the examination.

However, under certain circumstances, the examination may be extended upon approval of the Dissertation Committee and GSA Faculty Council.

8-2. Examination Schedule

A specific examination schedule is arranged for each dissertation after it is endorsed for examination.

9. Doctoral Dissertation Examination Committee

9-1. Structure of the Examination Committee

An Examination Committee shall be formed by the Dissertation Committee upon endorsement of the application for conferral of a doctoral degree. The Examination Committee shall consist of the principal supervisor, one internal examiner, and one external examiner.

If it is deemed necessary by the Dissertation Committee, the number of examiners may be increased.

9-2. Eligibility Criteria for Appointing Examiners

9-2-1. Internal Examiners

Internal examiners should be affiliated to one of the APU graduate schools and should normally hold doctoral-level supervising qualification status (D+). However, if deemed necessary based on the content of the dissertation, faculty who do not fit this profile may be appointed. In this case, the Dissertation Committee shall review the proposed faculty's CV and research accomplishments, and decide on the appropriateness of the selection accordingly.

9-2-2. External Examiners

External examiners should have competence in the field of the dissertation research. They must be from outside the university, hold a doctoral or equivalent degree, and have significant experience in examining doctoral dissertations or significant publishing or practical experience in the relevant field. The Dissertation Committee shall review the proposed examiner's CV and supporting statement as to why they are considered appropriate, and decide on the appropriateness of the selection accordingly.

Former faculty members are not eligible to act as external examiners until a period of at least four (4) years has passed. Professors emeriti of the university are also ineligible to act as external examiners.

9-3. Appointment of the Examination Committee

The supervisor of the candidate shall recommend suitable examiners with appropriate expertise and experience. The Dissertation Committee will review the recommendations and appoint the examiners of the dissertation.

The examiner appointments will last for the duration of the examination process, including re-examination and oral defense, unless exceptional circumstances arise.

9-4. Role of the Examination Committee

The Examination Committee should ensure that the information, arguments, and results of the candidate's research work as presented in the dissertation and as defended at the oral defense (if appropriate) meet the academic standards relevant to the degree.

The examiners shall be experts in the field of the dissertation but not necessarily in all parts of the precise topic. The aim should be to appoint a team of examiners who together can cover all aspects of the work to be presented by the candidate and who demonstrate experience with GSA's examination procedures.

The supervisor should coordinate the examination process, provide the necessary orientation regarding the research work, and chair the oral defense.

The internal examiner should reach a viewpoint on whether the candidate's research work and knowledge meet the standards normally expected of a GSA student and the university's criteria for awarding the degree.

The external examiner should reach a viewpoint on whether the candidate's research work and knowledge are of a standard comparable to that of students being examined in the same field at other institutions for the same degree.

9-5. Duties of the Examination Committee

The duties of the Examination Committee are as follows:

- a) Examine the dissertation submitted.
- b) Ensure that the dissertation is of acceptable quality and meets the examination standards and criteria.
- c) Provide individual recommendations for the examination result and independent evaluation reports for the examination.
- d) Examine the revised dissertation (if needed).
- e) Provide individual recommendations for the re-examination result for the revised dissertation and independent evaluation reports for the re-examination.
- f) Attend the oral defense and provide feedback to the candidate on their presentation of the dissertation and make an individual recommendation for the final examination result.
- g) Confirm during the examination process that there are no problems with regard to confidential information, personal information, copyrights, patents, etc. and submit individual reports to the Dissertation Committee.

9-6. Changes to the Examination Committee

As a rule, the appointment of the members of the Examination Committee will last for the duration of the examination process, including re-examination and oral defense. However, if exceptional circumstances arise (e.g., an examiner retires, an examiner no longer wishes to participate in the examination, an examiner chooses not to re-examine, etc.), a new examiner shall be appointed by the Dissertation Committee. In that case, the decision of the remaining examiners will hold.

If all examiners choose not to re-examine the revised dissertation, the Dissertation Committee will appoint a new set of examiners to conduct the re-examination.

10. Evaluation of the Dissertation

(Examination Structure)

10-1. Doctoral dissertation screening and examination must be completed within 1 year of the date the application for the Conferral of Doctoral Degree was accepted. However, under certain circumstances, screening may be extended upon approval of the Dissertation Committee and GSA Faculty Council.

10-2. Upon endorsement of the application, a Screening Committee shall be formed. In principle, the Screening Committee shall consist of the principal supervisor, one internal and one external examiner.

10-2-1. As a rule, faculty appointed as an internal examiner (other than the main supervisor) should hold doctoral-level supervising qualification status (D+). However, if deemed necessary based on the content of the dissertation, faculty who do not fit this profile (those with only assistant-supervisor (D) status, Associate Professors, etc.) may be appointed. In this case, the Dissertation Committee shall review the proposed faculty's CV and research accomplishments and decide on the appropriateness of the selection accordingly.

10-2-2. If it is deemed necessary by the Dissertation Committee the number of examiners may be increased.

10-2-3. The examiners will be appointed by the Dissertation Committee.

(Examination Criteria)

10-3. Doctoral dissertation should achieve or exceed the quality of PhD research of peers working in the same field at the PhD level. The research project is assessed based on the following criteria, among others

10-3-1. Originality:

The dissertation provides original and important knowledge for academics, practitioners, or society.

10-3-2. Research Question/Topic:

The research question/topic is appropriate and is defined within the current paradigm and context of disciplinary academic literature.

10-3-3. Literature Review:

The literature referenced in the dissertation is both extensive and deep encompassing a broad range of sources and context to fully cover the necessary academic and other material to define and defend the research project's originality and significance.

10-3-4. Methodology:

The dissertation is grounded in appropriate theory and uses appropriate methodologies to determine results.

10-3-5. Structure:

The structure of the dissertation allows for clear and logical communication of information to the audience.

10-3-6. Analysis:

The dissertation provides sufficient data and reasons that lead to the findings and conclusions.

10-3-7. Implication:

The thesis has implications for academics, practitioners or society.

10-3-8. Writing:

The text is clear and concise without unnecessary repetition and is written in the format of an argument with substantial evidence and claims. The writing adheres to standard research practices of citations and works cited without instance of plagiarism.

10-3-9. Publication:

At least one part of the thesis has the potential to be published in a reputable academic journal in the relevant field.

(Examination Process)

10-4. Each examiner shall make a separate report to the Dissertation Committee with one of the following recommendations:

- a) **Pass** (The dissertation is accepted as satisfactory);
- b) **Minor Rewrite** (Subject to specified minor revisions and corrections, the dissertation is accepted as satisfactory);
- c) **Major Rewrite** (One or more sections of the dissertation is to be rewritten prior to the re-submission of the dissertation for re-examination);
- d) **Fail** (The dissertation is rejected).

10-5. The candidate shall receive copies of examiners' reports.

10-6. In the event that the screening result is “Pass” or “Minor Rewrite”, an oral examination on the student’s knowledge of the contents of the dissertation and the connected field shall be held.

10-7. In case of conflicting examiners’ evaluation, that is, if contradictory revisions are recommended, the Dissertation Committee will resolve the conflict. The Dissertation Committee's comments will be forwarded to the examiners.

10-8. When a candidate is required by the Dissertation Committee to revise his/her dissertation, the supervisor will coordinate the process, unless the Dean and/or the Chair of the Dissertation Committee requires another person(s) to assist in the coordination of the revision.

10-9. If a candidate is required to undertake a Major rewrite, the examiners will be invited to re-examine the dissertation upon re-submission by the candidate. In case of a Minor rewrite, the Dissertation Committee will examine if the recommended changes have been made.

10-10. If an examiner chooses not to re-examine, the decision of the remaining examiners will hold. If all the examiners refuse to re-examine the re-submission, a new set of examiners shall be appointed by the Dissertation Committee.

10-11. The Dissertation Committee shall make a final decision on the revised dissertation

on the basis of the examiners' recommendations from the re-examination of the dissertation after minor or major revisions.

10-12. The administration of fail results shall be the responsibility of the Dissertation Committee and the Dean.

11. Revision Process

11-1. Coordination of the Process

When a candidate is required by the Dissertation Committee to rewrite their dissertation, the supervisor shall coordinate the process unless the Dean and/or the Chair of the Dissertation Committee require another person(s) to assist in coordinating the corrections.

11-2. Minor Revisions

In the case of minor revisions, the candidate is required to obtain their supervisor's approval before submission and to submit a detailed summary of the changes they made to the dissertation in order to assist the examiners in the checking process. The Dissertation Committee will examine the dissertation to certify that the recommended changes have been made. The results will be shared with the Examination Committee before the oral defense.

11-3. Major Revisions

In the case of major revisions, the revised dissertation will be subject to re-examination and the original examiners will re-examine the dissertation upon re-submission by the candidate. The candidate is required to obtain their supervisor's approval before submission and to submit a detailed summary of the revisions they made to assist the examiners in the re-examination process. There is no guarantee the revised dissertation will meet the standards required for a degree to be awarded.

11-4. Submission of the Revised Dissertation

The revised dissertation shall be submitted as instructed by the Dissertation Committee.

12. PhD Research Presentations

Doctoral candidates completing their program should present the results of their research conducted at APU at a PhD Research Presentation. These presentations are open to all students, faculty, friends, and family to attend.

13. Research Misconduct

At APU's graduate schools, doctoral students are required to observe the highest standards of integrity in their research. Copying, translating, or close paraphrasing of another person's work constitutes plagiarism and is deemed a serious offense, equated with cheating in examinations. The fabrication or falsification of data and use of another person's ideas without proper acknowledgement are examples of other forms of unethical research conduct.

A dissertation involving plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification of data may be failed outright and the candidate may be dismissed from the program.

In cases of suspected or alleged plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification, or any other form of research misconduct, the Dissertation Committee determines whether the

suspicious/allegations have any grounds. Cases will be presented to the Dean and the GSA Faculty Council, and if it is confirmed that there are such grounds, cases will be handled in accordance with the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Regulations for Prevention of Misconduct in Research Activities.

14. Appeal Procedures

A candidate who fails the dissertation examination may appeal the result if at least one of the members of the Examination Committee judged the dissertation “Pass” or “Minor Rewrite.”

14-1. Submission of an Appeal Statement

A candidate who wishes to appeal must submit an appeal statement addressed to the Dean to the Academic Office within fourteen (14) days of the date of the written notification of the result. The statement must present clear and accurate arguments supporting the candidate’s appeal.

14-2. Decision to Conduct an Appeal Investigation

The Dean will decide whether or not to conduct an investigation into the appeal and should provide a detailed report justifying their decision. An investigation will be conducted if the appeal statement provides reasonable evidence to defend the grounds of the appeal.

14-3. Appeals Committee

14-3-1. Members of the Appeals Committee

An Appeals Committee shall be formed in the case it has been decided to conduct an investigation into the appeal.

The Appeals Committee will consist of three (3) members appointed by the Dean as follows:

- a) The Chair of the Dissertation Committee.
- b) The Dean.
- c) Another person who has recognized expertise in the area of the candidate’s dissertation, but who ideally has neither previously examined nor supervised the dissertation. This third member can choose whether to disclose any identifying information to the student and other faculty members.

In the case the Chair of the Dissertation Committee is the candidate’s supervisor, another member of the Dissertation Committee shall be appointed, and if the Dean is the candidate’s supervisor, a third person shall be appointed as a member of this Committee instead.

14-3-2. Duties of the Appeals Committee

The Appeals Committee will decide how to conduct the investigation of the appeal and if deemed necessary, may require the candidate to present further evidence in written or oral form to substantiate the grounds of their appeal. The Appeals Committee will carefully investigate all documents related to the appeal during the investigation.

14-3-3. Result of the Investigation

The Appeals Committee will decide the final result of the appeal as follows and will provide an evaluation report to explain the rationale behind their decision, which may

be:

- a) Reject the appeal, in which case the result originally announced to the candidate remains unchanged.
- b) Accept the appeal, in which case the dissertation is returned to the Dissertation Committee for a new examination by the Examination Committee whose members will be decided by the Dissertation Committee.

14-4. Finalizing the Result of the Appeal and Notifying the Candidate

The decision of the Appeals Committee shall be reported to the Dissertation Committee.

The decision of the Appeals Committee accompanied by appropriate feedback will be announced to the candidate by the Dean of GSA with details about what follows.

15. Conferral of a Doctoral Degree

Conferral of a doctoral degree shall be determined by the president following deliberations by the GSA Faculty Council and Higher Degrees Committee as laid out in Article 15 of the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Degree Regulations.

16. Cancellation of/Disqualification from Conferral of a Degree

If the candidate is found to have obtained their degree through improper means or to have done anything to damage the university's good reputation, the president of the university may, after thorough screening by the GSA Faculty Council and the Higher Degrees Committee, rescind the degree.

17. Archiving Dissertations and Registering Dissertations to the National Diet Library Online Database (Handling of Dissertations After Graduation)

17-1. Archiving Doctoral Dissertations

A soft copy of dissertations that pass examination and an abstract of said dissertations must be submitted by the student's date of completion of the doctoral program. Dissertations in their entirety will be permanently bound and archived with the APU Library.

17-2. Registering Doctoral Dissertations to the National Diet Library Online Database (Making Dissertations Publicly Available Online)

An abstract outlining the content of the dissertation and a summary of the doctoral dissertation examination results shall be made publicly available online within three (3) months of the conferral of the doctoral degree.

All doctoral dissertations that pass examination must be registered to the National Diet Library online database within one (1) year of the conferral of the doctoral degree. The registration is completed through uploading the dissertations in their entirety to the university online repository.

17-3. Exemptions from Registering Doctoral Dissertations to the National Diet Library Online Database

In the case that any of the reasons stipulated below disallow a dissertation from being made publicly available online for more than one (1) year from the date of conferral of the

doctoral degree, it will be possible to submit an extended summary of the content in place of the entire dissertation upon approval of the Dissertation Committee and GSA Faculty Council. However, in the case the reasons stipulated below cease to apply, the entire dissertation shall be made publicly available online.

- a) The doctoral dissertation cannot be made publicly available online for more than one (1) year from the date of degree conferral due to copyright or the protection of personal information.
- b) The doctoral dissertation cannot be made publicly available for more than one (1) year from the date of degree conferral because it would clearly be disadvantageous to the graduate as they are planning to publish their dissertation or part thereof, and making it publicly available online may infringe academic journal publication rules against multiple publications, or due to applications for patents pending approval. If the application is approved, the graduate may be granted an exemption from their dissertation being made publicly available online for a period of up to five (5) years from the date of degree conferral. After that time, if there are no other circumstances impeding the dissertation from being made publicly available online, then the dissertation will be automatically made publicly available online.
- c) Making the doctoral dissertation publicly available online for more than one (1) year from the date of degree conferral would clearly be disadvantageous to graduates who have published their dissertation or part thereof, and making it publicly available online infringes academic journal publication rules against multiple publications, or due to patents.
- d) The doctoral dissertation cannot be made publicly available online because it includes material that is in a three-dimensional format.

17-4. Declaration from the Candidate

In line with the regulations stipulated in Articles 17-2 and 17-3, upon application for conferral of a doctoral degree candidates must confirm (using the prescribed form) to the Dissertation Committee that there are no problems with regard to copyright, patents, confidential information, or personal information which would impede making the dissertation public. Supervisors (or other faculty involved in the degree applicant's instruction) shall coordinate and assist during the process of confirmation.

17-5. Confirmation by Examiners

The examiners will confirm in writing whether it is appropriate for the entire dissertation to be made publicly available online. The Dissertation Committee will deliberate on the documents submitted by the candidate and examiners regarding the doctoral dissertation being made publicly available online and determine the process to be followed for each dissertation. Their decision will be presented to the GSA Faculty Council for approval.