

Guidelines for Progression from Master's Degree (by Research) to PhD, and Direct Progression from Bachelor's Degree to PhD

Preamble

This document provides guidelines for the *Progression* from a Master's degree (by Research) to PhD and *Direct Progression* from a Bachelor's degree to PhD.

Applicants who are applying for a Progression from a Master's degree (by Research) to PhD must at least possess a Second Upper Class Honours in his/her Bachelor's degree.

Applicants who are applying for a Direct Progression from a Bachelor's degree to PhD must possess a First-Class Honours in his/her Bachelor's degree.

1. Preparation of Documents

In order to evaluate an application for Progression from a Master's degree (by Research) to PhD, and Direct Progression from a Bachelor's degree (First-Class Honours) to PhD, the applicant has to submit the following:

1.1. PhD Proposal

The applicant must demonstrate that he/she has the level of competence required for a PhD study and must submit a PhD proposal. Progression applicants have to demonstrate exceptional progress in his/her Master's research work, which could be further extended to form a viable PhD study, while Direct Progression applicants have to demonstrate their potential in achieving the standard expected of a PhD candidate.

The recommended PhD proposal length is between 2,000 and 5,000 words, and should include the following key components:

- (i) A summary of the study and research problem/questions/objectives. Progression from a Master's degree applicants need to give a clear statement of how the current study has been revised to meet the expectation of a PhD study (between 200 and 500 words)
- (ii) A literature review relevant to the study (between 500 and 1,250 words)
- (iii) (*For Progression from a Master's degree applicants only*) Progress and preliminary results (if any) of the Master's study (between 200 and 500 words)
- (iv) Experimental methods, equipment requirements, resources, and estimated budget for the PhD study (between 500 and 1,250 words)
- (v) A discussion on plan for stages in the PhD study (between 400 and 1,000 words)
- (vi) Challenges which may arise in the PhD study (between 200 and 500 words)

1.2. Supervisor's Recommendation Letter

Progression from a Master's degree applicants must provide a recommendation letter from their principal supervisor, while Direct Progression applicants may provide a recommendation letter of their Bachelor's Final Year Project supervisor. The applicant's supervisor is required to include the following details in the recommendation letter:

- (i) For Progression from a Master's degree applicants: a brief report on the applicant's progress and research achievements to date. For Direct Progression applicants: a brief report on the research achievements of their Bachelor's Final Year Project.
- (ii) Comments on the following:
 - The knowledge of the applicant with regard to his/her field of research
 - The research skill and level of competence the applicant possesses for PhD study
 - Research achievements and publications of the applicant
 - The English language proficiency of the applicant
 - The motivation and work ethic of the applicant

1.3. Research Achievements

The applicant should provide any of the followings as supporting materials:

- (i) Peer-reviewed publication(s) in Scopus-indexed or WoS-indexed Journals (published or proof of acceptance) *
- (ii) Conference participation in oral or poster presentation
- (iii) Research or postgraduate award received during the Master's candidature or Bachelor's degree studies

* *Compulsory for Progression from a Master's degree to PhD applicants*

2. Process of Progression from Master's Degree (by Research) to PhD

2.1. Criteria for PhD Progression

To be recommended for a Progression from Master's degree (by Research) to PhD, the applicants must:

- (a) possess at least a Second Upper Class Bachelor's Degree
- (b) have completed at least 50% of the proposed MSc study objectives within twelve (12) months (full-time) or sixteen (16) months (part-time) since enrolment of the Master's (by Research) programme
- (c) have published or shown proof of acceptance of at least one (1) article in Scopus-indexed or WoS-indexed Journals
- (d) have not yet submitted the Master's dissertation/thesis for examination

2.2. Submission of Progression Documents

The applicant's supervisor will discuss with the applicant on his/her willingness to do the PhD Progression and initiate the progression process two (2) months prior to the PhD Progression examination. The submission is to be supported by the principal supervisor and the Faculty Dean.

Documents required to be submitted by the applicant:

- (i) Progression from Master's Degree (by Research) to PhD Form
- (ii) PhD Proposal
- (iii) A Recommendation Letter from his/her supervisor
- (iv) Supporting materials (e.g. publications, oral or poster presentation in conferences, awards)

The applicant needs to prepare five (5) copies of each required document listed above and submit them to the Faculty Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies, or the Faculty Head of

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Postgraduate Studies. Upon receiving the documents, the Faculty Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies, or the Head of Postgraduate Studies will set up the PhD Progression Committee.

2.3. The PhD Progression Committee

2.3.1 Membership

The PhD Progression Committee consists of:

- (a) The Chair, who is the Dean or a Professor of the respective faculty, appointed by the Dean
- (b) Two (2) senior members of the faculty, nominated by the faculty
- (c) At least one (1) Professor from another faculty (must have experience in supervising postgraduate students, especially PhD students)

The PhD Progression Committee is administratively supported by the Director of Office of Postgraduate Studies, or representative.

Note: The committee members must not be the examiner to the applicant in the future (to avoid possible conflict of interest).

2.3.2 Scope of PhD Progression Committee

The PhD Progression Committee shall:

- a) Evaluate the extent which the Master's research has progressed
- b) Evaluate the PhD proposal for acceptable quality of a PhD work
- c) Submit a report/minutes to the Faculty and the Office of Postgraduate Studies on the achievements or comments regarding the application concerned

The PhD Progression documents submitted by the applicant are subjected for review by the Committee members. If the applicant's documents have demonstrated work of an acceptable quality for progression, then the applicant will be called to present his/her work at the PhD Progression examination.

2.4. The PhD Progression Examination

The applicant must give an oral presentation in the PhD Progression Examination. The PhD Progression Committee members will act as the examiners who will evaluate the applicant's work and ask questions regarding the PhD Progression. The applicant's supervisor (or co-supervisor) is required to attend the applicant's presentation merely as an observer and should not interfere with the examination process, unless specifically requested by the Chair.

The applicant has to give a 20-minute presentation, which include:

- (a) Research progress to date
- (b) Research achievements to date, including publications
- (c) Literature review
- (d) Research plan for PhD (including research question, objectives, research significance, methods and equipment resources, estimated budget)
- (e) Gantt chart of the PhD work

The presentation will be followed by a question/comment session, after which the applicant is to leave the presentation venue. The PhD Progression Committee members, together with the

applicant's supervisor will then discuss whether the applicant has done sufficient work in his/her Master's study as well as the quality of his/her PhD proposal. In order for the progression to be successful, a **UNANIMOUS** approval from Committee members is required.

2.5. The Results of PhD Progression Examination

After the PhD Progression examination, the PhD Progression Committee may make one of the following recommendations for the TMM and University Senate's approval:

- (a) The applicant is upgraded to a PhD programme; *or*
- (b) The applicant is **NOT** recommended to be upgraded but has to complete the Master's degree.

Further to item 2.5(a) above:

- (i) In the event that the application is successful, the said applicant shall only be entitled to a PhD qualification award, upon successful completion of the PhD programme, and will **NOT** be entitled to a Master's qualification.
- (ii) In the event that the said applicant does not complete or fail the PhD programme, the student will **NOT** be entitled to any award.

2.6. Senate's Approval

The decision from the PhD Progression Committee will be deliberated at the Faculty Management Board (FMB), upon which it will be presented by the Faculty Dean for the approval of the University Senate.

[Note: The approval by TMM was omitted following the revamp of approval process as per the direction of Acting VC (Dato' Peter Ng) at Top Management Meeting dated 12/04/2021]

3. Process of Direct Progression from Bachelor's Degree to PhD

3.1. Criteria for PhD Direct Progression

To be recommended for a Direct Progression from Bachelor's degree to PhD, applicants must:

- (a) possess a First-Class Honours Bachelor's Degree; *or* score a minimum CGPA of 3.67 or its equivalent from an academic programme or a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme; and
- (b) have undergone a thorough internal evaluation by the PhD Direct Progression Committee; and
- (c) have obtained approval from the PhD Direct Progression Committee and supported by Faculty Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies, or the Faculty Head of Postgraduate Studies, and the Faculty Dean.

3.2. Submission of Direct Progression Documents

The applicant needs to prepare five (5) copies of each required document listed below and submit them to the Faculty Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies, or the Faculty Head of Postgraduate Studies. Upon receiving the documents, the Faculty Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies, or the Head of Postgraduate Studies will set up the PhD Direct Progression Committee.

Documents required to be submitted by the applicant:

- (i) Direct Progression from Bachelor's Degree to PhD Form
- (ii) PhD Proposal
- (iii) A Recommendation Letter from his/her FYP supervisor
- (iv) Supporting materials (e.g. publications, oral or poster presentation in conferences, awards)

3.3. The PhD Direct Progression Committee

3.3.1 Membership

The PhD Direct Progression Committee consists of:

- (a) The Chair, who is the Dean or a Professor of the respective faculty, appointed by the Dean
- (b) Two (2) senior members of the faculty, nominated by the faculty
- (c) At least one (1) Professor from another faculty (must have experience in supervising postgraduate students, especially PhD students)

The PhD Direct Progression Committee is administratively supported by the Director of Office of Postgraduate Studies, or representative.

Note: The committee members must not be the examiner to the applicant in the future (to avoid possible conflict of interest).

3.3.2 Scope of PhD Direct Progression Committee

The PhD Direct Progression Committee shall:

- a) Evaluate the PhD proposal for acceptable quality of a PhD work
- b) Submit a report/minutes to the Faculty and the Office of Postgraduate Studies on the achievements or comments regarding the application concerned

The PhD Direct Progression documents submitted by the applicant are subjected for review by the Committee members. If the applicant's proposed PhD work has demonstrated an acceptable quality with supportive elements (e.g. Recommendation from his/her supervisor and previous research achievements), then the applicant will be called to present his/her work at the PhD Direct Progression examination.

3.4. The PhD Direct Progression Examination

The applicant must give an oral presentation (face-to-face presentation either in-campus or via online) in the PhD Direct Progression Examination. The PhD Direct Progression Committee members will act as the examiners who will evaluate the applicant's work and ask questions regarding the PhD proposed work. The applicant's supervisor (or co-supervisor) is required to attend the applicant's presentation merely as an observer and should not interfere with the examination process, unless specifically requested by the Chair.

The applicant has to give a 20-minute presentation, which include:

- (a) Proposed research scope and objectives
- (b) Literature review
- (c) Research plan for proposed PhD work (including research question, objectives, research significance, methods and equipment resources, estimated budget)
- (d) Gantt chart of the proposed PhD work

The presentation will be followed by a question/comment session, after which the applicant is to leave the presentation venue. The PhD Direct Progression Committee members, together with the applicant's supervisor will then discuss whether the applicant's proposed PhD work has demonstrated an acceptable quality. In order for the PhD Direct Progression to be successful, a minimum score of **70%** (based on the Proposal Evaluation Criteria Rubric) and a **UNANIMOUS** approval from Committee members is required.

3.5. The Results of PhD Direct Progression Committee Evaluation

After the PhD Direct Progression examination, the PhD Direct Progression Committee may make one of the following recommendations for the TMM and Senate's approval:

- (a) The application for a Direct Progression to a PhD programme is successful; *or*
- (b) The application for a Direct Progression to a PhD programme is **NOT** successful; the applicant is recommended for a Master's programme.

Further to item 3.5(a) above, in the event that the said applicant does not complete or fail the PhD programme, the student will **NOT** be entitled to any award.

3.5. Senate's Approval

The decision from the PhD Direct Progression Committee will be deliberated at the Faculty Management Board (FMB), upon which it will be presented by the Faculty Dean for the approval of the University Senate.

[Note: The approval by TMM was omitted following the revamp of approval process as per the direction of Acting VC (Dato' Peter Ng) at Top Management Meeting dated 12/04/2021]

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