Document Title:	AU Graduate Studies, Procedures and Guidelines (PG)
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Abbreviations	Terminology
AU	Ajman University
RGS	Research and Graduate Studies
DRG	Deanship of Research Graduate Studies
VCAA	Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
HEI	Higher Education Institute
OIPE	Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness
CAA	The Commission for Academic Accreditation
CGS	Council of Graduate Studies at AU
CoR	Council of Research at AU
College	Academic College at Ajman University
Dean	Dean of Academic College
CFAA	Council for Academic Affairs
GPC	Graduate Program Coordinator
PDC	Proposal Defense Committee
TEC	Thesis Examination Committee
DEC	Dissertation Examination Committee
GA	Graduate Assistant - An individual who serves in a support role while completing his/her graduate studies at AU.
Graduate Student	A student who is studying for a degree that is higher than the one received after four years of study at a college or university.
Graduate Program	A graduate program is an advanced academic curriculum that leads to a higher-level degree (a master's or doctorate), with specific eligibility criteria, coursework, assessments, and qualifications upon completion.
Graduate Faculty	AU faculty teaching/supervising graduate courses/students
Thesis	A compilation of research work that demonstrates that a student is knowledgeable about the information learned throughout the master's program. Thesis is a research work that marks the end of a master's program.
Dissertation	A compilation of research work and the creation of new knowledge, theories, practices during doctoral studies. Dissertation is a research work that marks the end of a doctoral program.

Notice: It is essential that both the AU Graduate Studies Policy and AU Procedures and Guidelines (PG) are reviewed together, as they complement each other and should be considered together when seeking information and guidance related to AU's graduate programs policies and procedures.

1. Introduction

Ajman University (AU) is dedicated to realizing its vision and mission by enhancing the quantity and quality of research and scholarly output across its various disciplines in the colleges. To achieve this objective, the establishment of graduate programs and the implementation of unified policies for managing these programs at Ajman University are crucial steps. The University ensures that it has appropriate structures and processes in place to govern graduate studies effectively. The administration of graduate studies is entrusted to the academic colleges, the Council of Graduate Studies (CGS), the Deanship of Research and Graduate Studies (DRG), and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA).

This document aims to provide procedures and guidelines (PG) on the AU Graduates Studies Policies. It outlines the practical steps should be followed considering the associated graduate study policy.

1.1. Scope of Document

1) The AU Graduate Studies Policies and Procedures apply to everyone involved with the graduate studies at AU, including faculty academicians, staff, researchers, and students. The VCAA has the authority to decide on all cases not provided for in this document and awarding any exceptions, if needed.

2) The AU Graduate Studies Policies and Procedures provide information related to the following: a) Role and responsibilities of the DRG in relation to AU graduate programs; b) Policies related to respectively master and doctoral thesis/dissertation supervision, defence examination regulation, selection of external examiner, submission of thesis/dissertation, and so forth; c) Graduate faculty members; d)Degree completion; d)Joint/Dual Degrees, and e)Exit qualification and credit transfer.

3) The Policy and Procedures documents do not cover graduate admission and registration requirements, admission criteria, student rights, plagiarism policy, student right of appeal, academic and non-academic conflict resolution, IP rights, authorship of research publications, and research ethics, and all the other information that is available in the AU Graduate Student Catalogue, DRG policies and procedures and other AU documentations.

4) The Policy and Procedures documents don not change any existing AU policy (e.g., IP policy, Authorship policy or any other relevant policy). The governing structure of DRG (e.g., councils, committees) is explained in DRG by-laws.

1.2. Role and Responsibilities of DRG

The DRG vision, mission, and administrative structure is defined in DRG By-Laws and DRG Policies and Procedures documentation. The role and responsibilities of DRG in relation to AU graduate programs are as follows:

1) To provide strategic initiatives related to graduate education and research at AU;
2) To propose new initiatives related to research and scholarly activities and promote AU graduate programs to ensure that AU graduate education and experience is on par with that of internationally recognized universities;
3) To provide assistance to the Office of International Academic Affairs in fostering relationships with international academic partners to support and promote graduate studies at AU;
4) To provide quality control for graduate education and encourage and maintain fair standards across all academic disciplines, as applicable, with the support from CGS;
5) To provide clear and uniform guidelines in the management of thesis/dissertation defence, administration of thesis/dissertation examination and related matters and ensure uniform standards are adopted in AU;
6) To advocate issues important to the success of graduate programs including research integrity, values, and ethics in graduate education and research;
7) To ensure that a common framework, as possible, for the operation of all graduate degree programs (Master's and Doctoral) is adopted and to ensure common standards and due processes are in place across the university. The implementation of the graduate studies policies and procedures at AU, stipulated in this document, is a shared responsibility of the deans, DRG and the VCAA;
8) Additional rules and regulations, as necessary for the subject area or discipline, for any of the AU graduate programs may be proposed by the colleges, as appropriate. These additional rules and regulations must not contradict any part of the existing policies and procedures. Any additional rules and regulations for any graduate program, must be submitted by the Graduate Program Coordinator to the CGS, which shall submit recommendations to the VCAA for approval before their implementation;
9) To provide graduate assistanceship to highly talented graduate students, propose sufficient budget, monitor and assess performance of Sponsored Graduate Research Assistants (SGRAs) as per Graduate Assistantship (GA) policy. The deanship of research and graduate studies generally does not involve in the following:
    a. Graduate student admissions, eligibility criteria, selection of graduate faculty, student issues related to instructors, missing credit hours and any other related issues;
    b. Course assessments, final examination of courses, attendance related issues etc., the relevant AU/college policies and procedures are applicable in such cases;
10) Academic review of existing graduate programs, the periodic review of all programs, including graduate programs, is the responsibility of college.

Although the DRG supports high level aspects of the administration of graduate studies at AU, each college/department is responsible for its academic program (including the curriculum and examinations), the selection of faculty to participate in its graduate program, the recruitment of

students to the program, the monitoring of student progress, timely completion of graduate students as per study plan, maximum time to degree completion etc.

DRG shall monitor the progress of the overall graduate program. Individual graduate faculty/supervisors at AU bear the full responsibility for the mentoring/supervising graduate students for the timely completion of their degrees. All graduate students, who are enrolled in thesis/dissertation-based programs, must have their academic and research progress evaluated by their Thesis/Dissertation Principal and Co-supervisors, as applicable. The student supervisor/co-supervisor keeps a record of all such meetings/evaluations, and any situation that might negatively impact a student's timely progress to degree must be promptly reported to the Graduate Program Coordinator and the HoD/College Dean.

1.3. Role and Responsibilities of the College Dean

The Dean of each academic college offering graduate program(s) shall appoint a Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) for each graduate program offered in the college and a representative of graduate programs in the Council of Graduate Studies (CGS). Collectively, the followings are examples of relevant responsibilities related to graduate studies:

1) The Dean of each academic college designates a faculty liaison who acts as the primary communication channel between the DRG and the college.
2) The faculty liaison is a member of the Council of Graduate Studies, which is led by the DRG. Typically, the faculty liaison holds the position of the GPC for the graduate program.
3) Where multiple graduate programs are offered within a college, one GPC should be appointed as a member of the Council of Graduate Studies and is responsible for overseeing all graduate programs offered in the college.
4) The college shall prioritize the support of graduate students throughout their studies, aiming to facilitate timely graduation. This includes providing appropriate supervision and training to ensure successful fulfillment of degree requirements.
5) Graduate students may be eligible for partial scholarships (i.e., tuition waivers) in accordance with the AU scholarship, assistantship, and fee waiver policies and procedures.
6) The college Dean is responsible for ensuring the availability of necessary support and resources, such as suitable classrooms, laboratories (if applicable), clinical resources (if applicable), IT hardware and software, library resources, and so forth.
7) The college must provide support to the graduate program coordinator(s) of graduate programs within the college, facilitating their tasks to ensure smooth operation and completion.
8) It is mandatory for the college to enforce a policy of limiting class sizes for graduate courses. This is to ensure effective learning at the graduate level, complying with the current standards set by the CAA and AU class-size policy.
9) When a graduate student is offered a Graduate Assistantship (GA), it is the responsibility of the GPC and Dean to assign a supervisor to ensure that the student fulfills the responsibilities and requirements of the GA.
10) In the event that a student encounters performance difficulties, the program coordinator and/or supervisor may recommend the termination of the assistantship to the Dean.

11) Grounds for recommending termination may include continual deficient performance, misconduct while carrying out assistantship duties, or violations of academic integrity or conduct, or other conditions as per GA policy.

12) The college Dean is obligated to promptly inform the DRG about such cases.

13) In the event of termination, the student must receive written notification from the college Dean, providing specific reasons for the termination of the assistantship or termination from the program in the case of serious violations.

1.4. Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) / Member of CGS

The general role and responsibilities of a graduate program coordinator are as follows:

1) Collaborate with the Dean or Head of Department (HoD) to prepare or assist in preparing the timetable for all courses offered throughout the academic year.

2) Assess the program's needs for databases, software, subscriptions, and other resources.

3) Assist students with registration, address registration-related issues, and provide academic advising, as applicable.

4) Manage and address students' complaints related to courses, teaching methods, training, and other relevant matters.

5) Work with graduate faculty to monitor students' progress throughout the academic year.

6) Provide accurate information and assistance to graduate students regarding their program.

7) Ensure the completion of course files by the end of each semester, including follow-up with graduate faculty and part-time lecturers.

8) Provide recommendations for the need of part-time faculty if required, and submit requests to the college Dean.

9) Establish and manage an advisory board for graduate studies.

10) Ensure appropriate supervision for thesis/dissertation students and follow up on issues related to supervision, completion, and examination.

11) Assist in thesis/dissertation examinations according to approved procedures outlined in the document.

12) Manage and coordinate the workload for thesis/dissertation supervisors, committee chairs, and committee members, providing aggregated/tabulated figures to the college Dean and HoDs for consideration of teaching load.

13) Assist in establishing an alumni database of graduate students in cooperation with the university alumni office.

14) Stay updated on the program's regulations and ensure that public documents such as the website and brochures accurately reflect the approved regulations and information.

15) Ensure that all graduate students who admitted are meeting the admission conditions.

16) Mediate conflicts between students and supervisors, redirecting conflicts involving the supervisor to the college Dean.

17) Provide necessary assistance for the program's accreditation renewal in coordination with other departments in the college and relevant offices in the University.

18) Prepare and submit an annual effectiveness program report to Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE).

19) Coordinate overall graduate activities within the program.
20) Periodically review all graduate programs in the college, led by the graduate faculty involved in the program, focusing on student-centric, evidence-based evaluations aligned with AU's goals and the college's objectives. Develop an action plan to address weaknesses and enhance strengths.
21) Establish and nurture relationships with professional organizations and government agencies to promote the program and explore international collaboration opportunities.
22) Represent the college in meetings and communications with the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) regarding the program(s).

1.5. Classification of Graduate Programs

1) Research or Professional Graduate Programs: a. Graduate students admitted to a research or professional graduate program at AU where thesis/dissertation is a requirement must follow the procedures outlined below: b. Complete and successfully defend a thesis/dissertation that includes original research work. c. Present the thesis/dissertation before a designated Thesis or Dissertation Examining Committee (TEC or DEC) for evaluation.
2) Full-time and Part-time Graduate Students: The definitions of full-time and part-time graduate students are available in the AU Policies and Procedures Manual.

2. Master's Degree at Ajman University

2.1. Master's Thesis

The guidelines for the master's degrees and theses at AU are as follows:
1) The master's degree programs at AU consist of a minimum of one year of advanced graduate study, emphasizing research skills and methodology.
2) Students enrolled in master's research degree programs are required to undertake independent research guided by their thesis supervisor and produce a thesis demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the field.
3) The thesis component is allocated 6-9 credits as specified in the approved study plan by CAA.
4) The thesis should showcase the student's ability to conduct research, effectively organize research findings, and adhere to AU's guidelines for formatting and presentation.
5) Evaluation of the thesis involves a Thesis Examination Committee (TEC), as detailed in Section 2.4.
6) Successful completion and acceptance of the thesis fulfill the requirements for the master's research degree program.

2.2. Thesis Supervisor / Co-Supervisor(s)

The procedures for the supervisor nomination and responsibilities in a graduate program:
1) Supervisor Nomination:
   a. Prior to thesis registration, the GPC, in consultation with the student, identifies and nominates supervisor(s) for each student in the program.

      b. The nominated supervisor(s) are sent to the college Dean for approval.

2) Principal Supervisor's Role:

      a. The principal supervisor has the primary responsibility for overseeing the student's progress during their studies.

      b. The principal supervisor must be a full-time AU active faculty member in research, exceptions can be approved by the VCAA on case-by-case basis. Other alternative arrangements are applicable in cases where there are formal MoU with other institutions.

3) Maximum Number of Theses:

      a. Normally, an AU faculty member can serve as a principal thesis supervisor for a maximum of 10 master's theses at any given time.

      b. In certain cases, this number may be increased subject to Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) approval.

4) Conflict of Interest:

      a. It is crucial to avoid situations that may constitute conflict of interest when forming a supervisory team.

      b. In case of any conflict, the GPC and college Dean work together to resolve the dispute.

      c. If necessary, the DRG may be involved in resolving the conflict.

5) Co-supervisors' Responsibilities:

      a. Co-supervisors meet regularly with students, at least once per semester, to advise on the student's progress in their research thesis.

      b. Co-supervisors identify any potential concerns or problems and provide possible solutions to help the student overcome difficulties.

      c. A record of these meetings, discussions, and minutes of meetings should be maintained by the student and supervisor(s).

6) Adjunct Faculty as Co-supervisors:

      a. Adjunct AU faculty members who are participating as graduate faculty within a program may serve as co-supervisors.

By following these steps and guidelines, the graduate program ensures the proper nomination and responsibilities of supervisors in the program, promoting effective guidance and support for students throughout their studies.

2.3. Thesis Proposal

The procedures for the thesis proposal submission and approval:

1) Thesis Proposal Requirement:

      a. A thesis proposal is mandatory for all students enrolled in a research based graduate programs, unless stated otherwise in the program approved study plan by the CAA.

      b. The purpose of the thesis proposal is to identify a research problem, describe the research approach, and define the required resources and time needed to complete the study.

2) Submission of Thesis Proposal:

a. Students are expected to submit their thesis proposal by no later the end of the semester in which they registered for the thesis, unless stated otherwise in the program approved study plan by the CAA.

b. The thesis proposal is submitted to the Proposal Defense Committee (PDC) through the GPC or their principal supervisor.

3) Approval Process:
   a. The thesis proposal must go through an approval process conducted by the PDC.
   b. The PDC reviews and evaluates the thesis proposal to ensure its quality and feasibility.

4) Principal Supervisor's Role:
   a. The principal supervisor plays a crucial role in facilitating the submission and approval of the thesis proposal.
   b. The principal supervisor assists the student in preparing the proposal and provides guidance throughout the process.

2.4. Thesis Examination Committee (TEC)

The procedures for the TEC formulation and composition:

1) Formulation of TEC:

   a. As soon as the student registers for the thesis, the supervisor nominates at least the co-supervisor and later (prior to final submission) nominates the external examiner to the GPC.

   b. The GPC forwards the nomination with their endorsement to the college Dean for final approval.

2) Composition of Master's TEC:

   The TEC consists of the following members:
   a. Student's principal supervisor and co-supervisor(s) (if applicable).
   b. One well-recognized external examiner (can be appointed later before the thesis defense).
   c. One internal examiner selected from the following options:
      i. Any full-time faculty member within the student's programs of study.
      ii. Any full-time faculty member from within or outside the student's program of study (i.e., from another graduate program at AU).

3) Submission of Soft Copy of Thesis:

   Before scheduling the thesis defense, the student must submit a soft copy of the thesis as a trail to the principal supervisor or the GPC to check plagiarism and then allow student to submit a final copy which will be distributed to TEC.

4) Selection of External Examiner(s):

   a. The supervisor recommends external examiner(s) to the graduate program coordinator.

   b. The graduate program coordinator forwards these nominations to the college Dean for final approval.

c. The external examiner(s) must not have any conflict of interest with the student's research, such as engagement in the student's master's research, joint publications with the student or supervisors, or being the student's ex-supervisor or teacher.

d. Preferably, the external examiner should hold the rank of full Professor at an internationally recognized university with a successful record of thesis supervision and no affiliation with AU.

5) Submission of TEC Report:
   a. The Chair (GPC or a nominee [i.e., internal examiner]) of the TEC submits the TEC report to the student after receiving approval from the Dean.

2.5. Research Publications Requirements

The guidelines for the master's degrees research publications:
1) In preparation for the thesis defense, the graduate student is required to publish or submit at least a draft version of one research paper to internationally recognized journal (Scopus-indexed journal).
2) As a minimum, one paper should be submitted to internationally recognized conference.
3) However, the specific requirements and exceptions may vary based on the nature of the discipline. For example, master's students working on theses in Arabic are expected to submit a comprehensive summary written in Arabic and English, approximately 4-5 single-spaced A4 pages, before the thesis defense.

These steps/procedures outline the general guidelines for submitting research papers and summaries as part of the thesis defense process. It's important to consult the specific guidelines of AU's graduate programs for comprehensive information and any discipline-specific variations.

2.6. Related Procedures for Final Master's Thesis Defense / Examination

Procedures for Thesis Defense in a Graduate Program are as follows:
1) The thesis defense consists of a presentation followed by an oral examination conducted by the Thesis Examination Committee (TEC), all is conducted as a closed-door, although an open-door/public option may be chosen as deemed relevant/common practice to field/degree.
2) When the student is ready for a thesis defense, they must obtain approval from their supervisors and submit a draft version of the thesis to the GPC for approval.
3) The supervisor suggests potential external examiner(s) and submits a request to appoint them to the GPC.
4) The GPC forwards the request, along with their endorsement, to the College Dean for approval.
5) The GPC invites the external examiner, communicates the arrangements to the TEC, and notifies the student.
6) At least 3-4 weeks prior to the thesis defense, the thesis supervisor sends a soft copy of the student's thesis to all TEC members.

7) The student's TEC is responsible for approving all aspects of the final thesis before the formal defense. The supervisor provides the TEC with a thesis acceptance form, which must be signed and returned by all TEC members before scheduling the defense.

8) The supervisor takes care of all necessary arrangements for the thesis defense, such as room booking. They inform all TEC members about the arrangements, provide instructions to the student regarding the format, distribute relevant forms, and serve as the chair of the TEC.

2.7. Procedure for Examination Outcomes

Outcomes in a Thesis-Based Graduate Program are:

1) Pass: The candidate must receive affirmative votes from a majority of the committee members to pass the final examination or thesis defense.

2) Pass with Minor or Major Modifications: The TEC may recommend passing the student with either minor or major modifications to the thesis or project. The student is given time to implement the corrections accordingly. For minor modifications, the supervisor ensures the changes are incorporated. In the case of major modifications, the student may need to make another presentation to satisfy the TEC.

3) Fail and Retake: If the student fails to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the literature in their research area or fails to articulate the motivation and design of the research, they are allowed one more opportunity to retake the exam.

4) Re-examination: Upon the request of the TEC and approval of the DRG, a student who fails the oral thesis examination may be granted a re-examination in the following semester. Appropriate fees may apply, as per university regulations.

5) Appointment of Liaison: The DRG appoints a liaison (observer) for the re-examination of the thesis. If a student fails two final examinations, they are dismissed from the graduate program. However, in case of procedural irregularities or extenuating circumstances, the student may appeal and submit an application to the DRG.

6) Certification of Corrections: Passing the oral examination does not imply immediate acceptance of the thesis. The thesis is approved only after all corrections specified by the examining committee are incorporated. The student's advisor or committee chair must certify that the corrections have been made.

7) Final Thesis Submission: Passing the thesis examination (after all corrections and supervisor confirmation), the student must submit the final approved thesis within enough time before the end of the semester to be considered for graduation.

8) Submission of Documents: The supervisor must complete and submit an oral thesis defense report, a similarity index approval form, and the final thesis copy to the GPC. Additionally, and per AU and Library procedures, the student must submit printed and bound copies of the thesis, along with an electronic copy, to the college secretary. The college may require additional or fewer copies as per their guidelines.

9) Distribution of Copies: As per AU and Library procedures, the college secretary distributes copies of the thesis to the AU Library, college, supervisor, and RDG.

10) Recommendation for Degree: Following these steps, the college Dean recommends the student for the master's degree to the AU/Registrar.

Summary for associated policies, associated guidance, and relevant forms in this section

Associated policies	Associated guidance	Relevant forms/Templates
AU Graduate Studies Policies	Dissertation/Thesis Proposal Guide	AGS3: TEC/DEC form
Thesis and Dissertation Support Policy	Dissertation/Thesis Guide	AGS6A: Progress Report Form
Supervision Load Policy	External Examiner Payment	AGS7: Change Supervision Form
Graduate Assistant Policy		AGS8A: Final Submission Cover
		AGS9: Examination Committee Report
		AGS10: Letter of Degree Completion
		AGS11: Change Major Form
		Master's Thesis Proposal Template
		Master's Degree Thesis Template

3. Doctorate Degrees at Ajman University

3.1. Doctorate dissertation and research

Procedures and guidelines:

1) The doctoral program requires a minimum of three years of advanced-level study, with at least 54 credit hours or equivalent of study, including a minimum of 24 credits or equivalent of advanced courses that are more challenging than master's-level courses in the same discipline.
2) Training in research skills and methodology is an integral part of the doctoral program.
3) A research dissertation appropriate to the field is a requirement for the doctoral degree.
4) Professional doctorate degrees, such as the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), require a minimum of one year of coursework beyond the master's degree and independent research, focusing on research skills and advanced professional knowledge in an applied field of specialization.
5) The doctoral program includes a comprehensive exam, proposal defense, and dissertation defense. The dissertation must be of a publishable standard and make an original contribution to knowledge in the relevant field.
6) The dissertation defense must be examined by at least two independent experts in the field with relevant experience in supervising and/or examining doctorate degrees.
7) The PhD/Doctorate program coordinator, who works closely with the DRG, should demonstrate active scholarship within their discipline.
8) Graduate students pursuing a PhD or professional doctorate degree are expected to present a dissertation based on their own research, as guided by their supervisory team.
9) The specific number of credits allotted to the doctoral thesis and other relevant details are outlined in the approved study plan.
10) The final dissertation must adhere to AU guidelines for formatting and presentation.
11) Doctoral students must pass three exams: the comprehensive examination, proposal defense, and dissertation defense examination.

12) These steps/procedures outline the general framework and guidelines for PhD and professional doctorate degrees at AU. It's important to consult the specific guidelines of AU's doctoral programs for comprehensive information and any discipline-specific variations.

3.2. Dissertation Supervisor/Co-Supervisor(s): Guidelines for Selection, responsibilities, conflict of interest, and change supervision

1) Supervisor Nomination:
   a. Prior to dissertation registration, the GPC in consultation with the doctoral student should identify and nominate a dissertation principal supervisor and co-supervisors (if needed) for the student. These nominations require approval from the college dean.
   b. The name of the supervisor(s) approved by the Dean is then notified to the DRG. Any changes in the doctoral supervisors must be promptly communicated to the DRG by the GPC.

2) Principal Supervisor's qualifications:

The doctoral student's principal supervisor must be a full-time AU graduate faculty member with a preferable minimum academic rank of Associate Professor. They have the primary obligation for overseeing the student's progress during their studies.

3) Maximum Number of Theses:

Typically, a full-time AU faculty member can supervise a maximum of 5 dissertations at any given time as a principal supervisor. However, subject to VCAA approval, this number may increase in certain cases.

4) Doctorate Dissertation Supervisor(s) General Responsibilities: Dissertation supervisor(s) are expected to:
   a. Ensure that students are familiarized with and abide by the relevant AU regulations and any additional regulations that may affect the student's registration, learning, and progress towards degree completion.
   b. Discuss all AU relevant policies and procedures with graduate students at the start of their research, such as the authorship policy and ethical guidelines and procedures, in advance of starting research work.
   c. Regularly meet with students to discuss their work, research, training and development needs, and academic progress.
   d. If applicable, co-supervisors also regularly meet with the student to advise on their progress in the research thesis, identify concerns/problems, and provide possible solutions to address difficulties.
   e. It is important for the student and supervisor(s) to maintain a record (document and copy of emails) of these meetings, discussions (e.g., minutes of meetings), and be able to provide this information upon request.
   f. Ensure that students use written logs to record meetings, submission deadlines, posts, and comments on written work.
   g. Implement an effective orientation process for new research students.

   h.   Interact with students in a professional and civil manner consistent with university policies.

   i.   Encourage students to learn creatively and independently.

   j.   Develop a clear understanding of specific research expectations and responsibilities, including timelines for the completion of dissertations.

   k.   Provide timely feedback on the student's research work and progress towards the degree.

   l.   Acknowledge student contributions to research presented at conferences, in publications, and in applications for copyright and patents.

5)   Adjunct Faculty as Co-supervisors:

Adjunct AU faculty members participating as graduate faculty within a program may serve as co-supervisors. External co-supervisors' agreements, where approved by the VCAA, can be applied.

6)   Conflict of Interest:

It is essential to avoid situations that may constitute a conflict of interest when forming a supervisory team. Any conflicts raised by student supervisor(s) should be resolved by the GPC and college Dean. If necessary, the Dean of RGS has the authority to replace a supervisor in the best interest of the student and the program.

7)   Change of Supervision:

   a.   Requests to change the dissertation supervisor can be submitted by the student or supervisor. Such requests should be directed to the GPC, who will forward them to the college Dean for final approval. The DRG must be notified by email.

   b.   Changing the dissertation principal supervisor should be avoided after the student has started their dissertation research and the research proposal has been approved. However, if unavoidable (e.g., faculty leaving the university), the GPC and college Dean will arrange a meeting involving the departing supervisor, student, and supervisory team to address issues related to authorship, publication, intellectual property rights, etc. Any disputes will be referred to the DRG for resolution.

   c.   If a supervisor leaves the institute, exploring the possibility of them continuing as a co-supervisor should be considered.

   d.   Any cases not covered by these guidelines, exceptions, or disputes should be forwarded to the DRG with recommendations from the GPC and college Dean for a final decision.

      Throughout the entire process, the GPC must ensure that the student is kept informed of any updates or changes.

3.3. Dissertation Examination Committee (DEC)

1)   Formulation of the Dissertation Examination Committee (DEC):

   a.   The DEC should be established shortly after the student registers for the dissertation.

   b.   The principal supervisor nominates the DEC members to the GPC.

   c.   The GPC forwards the nomination, along with their endorsement, to the college Dean for approval.

    d. The composition of the DEC includes:
- i. Student's principal supervisor and co-supervisor(s) (if applicable)
- ii. At least one internationally recognized external examiner (can be appointed later before the dissertation defense)
- iii. At least one internal examiner from the following:
  - Any full-time faculty member within the student's programs of study
  - Any faculty member who is an expert in applicable research methods in the field (if applicable)

2) Appointment of an independent chair:
   a. The DRG appoints an independent chair, before the defense based on GPC's request, who serves as an impartial representative of academic standards, further details on the role of the appointed chair of DEC is given in Section 3.9.

3) Conflict of interest and dispute resolution:
   a. It is crucial to avoid situations that may constitute a conflict of interest when forming the DEC.
   b. In case of any conflict, the responsibility to resolve the dispute lies with the college Dean.
   c. If necessary, the college Dean forwards all details to the DRG for further action.
   d. The DRG has the authority to replace or remove a faculty member from the DEC after consultation with the PhD/Doctorate program coordinator, the college Dean, and the VCAA (Vice President for Academic Affairs) if it is deemed in the best interest of the student.

3.4. Comprehensive Examination for Doctoral Students

1) Requirement and Purpose:
   a. Doctoral students are required to pass a comprehensive examination.
   b. The comprehensive exam assesses the student's cumulative knowledge in subject areas and research skills.
   c. It evaluates the breadth and depth of the student's knowledge and scholarly potential in their discipline.

2) Timing and Academic Standing:
   a. Each college may set its own timing for the comprehensive exam, typically at the end of formal coursework.
   b. The exam should be taken no later the specified timeframe in the approved study plan by CAA.
   c. Students must be in good academic standing after completing the required coursework to be eligible for the exam.

3) Format and Conduct:
   a. The format and conduct of the comprehensive exam are the responsibility of the doctoral program in the college.
   b. The exam may consist of individual examinations in several areas or a single combined examination.
   c. If both written and oral examinations are given, the written exam usually precedes the oral exam.

4) Approval and Communication:
   a. The rules and regulations for the comprehensive exam must be approved by the college's council and college's Dean.
   b. The college must keep a written record of the rules and regulations and communicate them clearly to all doctoral candidates and their supervisors.
   c. During orientation in the student's first semester, the college must provide each doctoral student with a copy of the rules and regulations for the comprehensive exam.
5) Logistics and Grading:
   a. The rules and regulations outline the nature of the examination, logistics of administration, and the passing score.
   b. Each department or college must provide appropriate grading rubrics for each comprehensive exam.
6) Retake and Termination:
   a. The comprehensive exam may be repeated only once, no later than the end of the student's fifth or sixth semester. for full-time study mode. For part-time study mode, the approved study plan by CAA should be checked for specification.
   b. If the student is unsuccessful in the second attempt, their enrollment in the doctoral program is immediately terminated.
7) Change in Enrolment Status:
   a. Any change in the student's enrolment status must be recommended by the GPC (Graduate Program Committee).
   b. The change must be approved by the college Dean and then the DRG.

3.5. Doctorate Proposal Defense
1) Proposal Defense:
   a. Doctoral students are required to pass the proposal defense.
   b. The purpose is to provide direction, feedback, and assess the student's ability to complete a dissertation.
2) Timeline for Proposal Defense:
   c. The proposal has to be defended by the fourth semester but no later than the fifth semester following enrollment in the graduate program, for full-time study mode. For part-time study mode, the approved study plan by CAA should be checked for specification.
3) Attempts Allowed:
   a. Students have a maximum of two attempts to pass the proposal defense.
   b. Failing both attempts results in academic dismissal from the program.
4) Research Proposal Submission:
   a. The student prepares and submits a concise and complete research proposal to the Proposal Defense Committee (DEC) through their principal supervisor.
   b. The proposal defines the research problem, objectives, and outlines the research methodology.

5) Logistics for Proposal Submission:
   a. Each college provides the logistics for the submission and approval of research proposals to its doctoral students.
   b. Ethical approval is required for research involving human or animal subjects at AU or elsewhere, following AU research ethics guidelines.

6) Research Proposal (Written Component):
   a. Structure of the Written Proposal:
      ▪ The student must write and submit a structured proposal, consistent and complying with AU Template for Doctorate Proposal, refer to the provided table in the end of this section.
      ▪ The proposal includes an abstract, introduction, aims and objectives, proposed experiments and methodology, preliminary results (if any), and references.
   b. Proposal Submission:
      ▪ The research proposal should be sent to the PDC by the supervisor before the oral presentation.

7) Research Proposal (Oral Component):
   a. The student prepares a presentation based on the written research proposal.
   b. The student presents and defends the proposal in front of the PDC.
   c. The oral examination includes a discussion of the research presented, knowledge of literature relating to the proposed research, and overall understanding of the proposal.

8) Outcomes of the proposal defense:
   a. Pass: A successful candidate must receive affirmative votes from a majority of the PDC members to pass the examination and become a doctoral candidate.
   b. Fail:
      i. If the student fails to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the literature or fails to articulate the motivation and design of the research in the written proposal or during the oral examination:
      ii. The student is allowed to retake the exam only once after one semester.
      iii. If the retake the proposal defense is failed, the student may be dismissed from the program.

9) Notification of the outcome:
   a. The PDC Chair (GPC or nominee) notifies the student, college Dean, and supervisor regarding the outcome of the proposal defense.
   b. Comprehensive feedback is provided to improve the student's research work.
   c. A detailed assessment report is submitted to the supervisor.

3.6. Admission to Dissertation: Advancement dissertation stage

1) Pre-requisites for Advancement:
   a. The student must pass the comprehensive exam.
   b. Complete all required coursework.
   c. Successfully defend their research proposal.

   d. Maintain good academic standing.

2) Recommendation by GPC:
   a. Upon meeting the above criteria, the GPC formally recommends the student for advancement to the dissertation stage.
3) Approval by College Dean:
   a. The Dean of the College reviews the recommendation.
   b. Upon approval, the Dean communicates the decision to the Office of Admission & Registration.
4) Registration for Dissertation:
   a. Once approved, the student is eligible to register for dissertation credit hours.
5) Continuation of Research:
   a. After the admission into the dissertation stage, the doctoral student will proceed with the proposed research leading towards the completion of their dissertation.

3.7. Research Publications Requirements

1) Prior to submitting a request for dissertation defense, doctoral students must either:
   a. Have their research papers from their dissertations published in a peer-reviewed journal recognized by AU.
   b. Receive confirmation of the final acceptance of their research papers by a journal recognized by AU.
2) Minimum Requirement for professional doctorate's defense:
   One paper or more should be submitted to an internationally recognized journal.
   Having such a draft is a precondition for scheduling the thesis/dissertation defense.
3) Submission of Papers:
   a. Inclusion with the Dissertation:
   Where applicable, the published paper(s), accepted, and/or submitted should be made available along with the dissertation.

3.8. Dissertation Defense

1) Draft Version Submission and Plagiarism Check:
   a. After receiving confirmation and approval from the supervisors, the student submits a draft version of the dissertation to the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) for plagiarism testing.
   b. If the draft version is approved, the student can proceed to submit the final version before the dissertation defense.
   c. The final version of the dissertation is distributed to the Dissertation Examination Committee (DEC), including the chair, at least 4 weeks before the defense.
2) Recommendation for Examiners:
   a. The dissertation supervisor, who is closely aligned with the dissertation topic, makes initial recommendations for external and internal examiners.
   b. Doctoral students can propose potential examiners, but the final decision is made without their direct involvement.

      c. The recommended external examiner(s) must hold a terminal degree and have expertise in an area related to the dissertation.

      d. The external examiner(s) should not have a conflict of interest with the candidate, supervisors, and/or the institution.

      e. The external examiner must hold or have previously held a senior-level faculty appointment (preferably a full Professor) at a peer level or higher QS ranked institution.

      f. It is required that the external examiner has a successful record of dissertation examinations and/or supervision.

3) Examination Arrangements:

      a. Upon DEC approval, the GPC informs the DRG about the examination arrangements, including the DEC members including external and internal examiners details.

      b. The DRG appoints a chair for the DEC (more detailed are given in following point) and may assign an additional member as a liaison, this is a requirement, for repeat examinations/defense.

      c. The GPC schedules the final examination in consultation with the dean and invites the external examiner.

4) Role of the Chair of the Dissertation Examination Committee (DEC):

      a) Ensure the defense upholds academic integrity and is free from biases.

      b) Guarantee students can effectively present findings and address committee queries.

      c) Manage the defense flow and ensure adherence to the allotted time.

      d) Gather examiner feedback, draft the examination report, and reflect the committee's assessment.

      e) Deliver the report to the student promptly, addressing any subsequent queries.

5) Thesis Defense Arrangements:

      a. The supervisor makes all necessary arrangements for the thesis defense, such as room booking and informing the DEC members about the details and format of the defense.

6) Dissertation Defense:

      a. The committee convenes in a closed meeting immediately after the defense to deliberate on the student's dissertation and overall performance.

      b. The chair of the DEC communicates the verbal decision to the student, and within three days, prepares and submits a report stating the examination outcome to the GPC, Dean, and DRG.

      c. The chair of the DEC communicates the final decision, required changes, and next steps to the student (copying the supervisor and college Dean) within three working days of the defense.

7) Examination Outcomes:

The recommendation concerning the dissertation defense is made by a majority vote of the DEC members (excluding supervisor/co-supervisors) and can show one of the following outcomes:

a. Recommendation to Approve the Dissertation as Presented.
b. Recommendation to Approve the Dissertation after Minor Modification and Verification by the Student's Supervisor: The student must submit the modified dissertation to the supervisor within one month of being informed of the decision.
c. Major Revision of the Dissertation:
   - The DEC provides stated guidance for major revisions.
   - The student is required to revise the dissertation according to the guidance.
   - The resubmission of the revised dissertation for review must occur within a period of not less than three months and no longer than one year.
   - In cases where major revision and resubmission are required, a second and final oral examination is scheduled and conducted by an examination committee. The committee should consist of at least two-thirds of the original members of the previous committee, including the student's supervisor. The committee's recommendation after the second oral examination can only be either to approve the dissertation as presented or to reject it.
d. Rejection of the Dissertation and Academic Dismissal from the Doctoral Program:
   - In cases of dissertation rejection, the student is academically dismissed from the program.
   - The student has the option to file a written appeal to the Dean within five (5) working days from the date of being informed of the college's decision.

8) Submission of Final Dissertation:
   a. After making all necessary corrections/modifications, the student submits an error-free, unbound copy of the dissertation to the supervisor for approval.
   b. The supervisor and college may require further changes to meet the standards.
   c. Once all changes are made, the student must submit an electronic version, along with other required documents and the required number of copies of the approved dissertation.
   d. The signed and bound copies of the dissertation are distributed to the student's department or college, while an electronic copy is sent to the GPC.

9) Degree Verification and Award:
   a. The Office of Admission and Registration verifies that the student has fulfilled all degree requirements.
   b. Upon verification, the student is cleared and approved for the award of the doctoral degree.

Summary for associated policies, associated guidance, and relevant forms in this section

Associated policies	Associated guidance	Relevant forms/Templates
AU Graduate Studies Policies (P)	Dissertation/Thesis Proposal Guide	AGS2B: Supervisor Nomination Form
		AGS3: TEC/DEC form
AU Graduate Studies Procedures and Guidelines (PG)	Dissertation/Thesis Guide	AGS6B: Progress Report Form
Thesis and Dissertation Support Policy	External Examiner Payment	AGS7: Change Supervision Form
Supervision Load Policy		AGS8B: Final Submission Cover
		AGS9: Examination Committee Report
		AGS10: Letter of Degree Completion
		AGS11: Change Major Form
		Doctorate Dissertation Proposal Template
		Doctorate Degree Dissertation Template

4. Graduate Faculty Members

1) Research and Supervisory Qualifications:
   Faculty members who participate in a graduate program by teaching graduate-level courses or supervising/co-supervising graduate students are considered "Graduate Faculty Members" of that program.

2) Research and Supervisory Experience:
   Faculty members teaching and supervising theses/dissertations in doctoral programs must possess an extensive research record and experience in supervising graduate theses/dissertations.
   It is important to thoroughly and regularly monitor and assess the qualifications of faculty members to participate in graduate education and doctoral student supervision.

3) Transition to Supervisor Role:
   Junior research-active faculty members or those without prior graduate student supervision experience are recommended to participate in TEC/DEC or serve as co-supervisors before taking on the responsibility of becoming the main supervisor of a graduate student.

4) Responsibility of College Deans:
   The Deans of colleges offering respective degrees are responsible for ensuring that the requirements for graduate faculty are met.
   AU college Deans should advocate for the hiring of research-active faculty members who can contribute to the strategic development of both undergraduate and graduate programs at AU.
   Professionals who are not AU faculty, such as scholars, scientists, professionals from government agencies, clinical researchers from hospitals, or researchers from national laboratories, may participate in AU graduate programs (e.g., teaching graduate courses) or serve on student Dissertation/Dissertation Advisory Committees after being approved as AU adjunct faculty members.

Qualifications and limits for the participation of adjunct faculty must be clearly defined and approved as graduate faculty of the program according to AU Policies and Procedures.

5. Degree Completion Time and Change of Major

1) Collaborative Planning: Students should actively engage with their supervisors, academic advisors, and program coordinator to develop a comprehensive timeline for completing program requirements. This collaborative planning ensures that students have a clear roadmap to follow throughout their academic journey.

2) Master's Degrees, as per CAA directives and standards:
   a. Duration: Full-time master's students typically require 2-3 years to complete their program.
   b. Time Limit: The maximum time allowed for completing a master's degree is 4-5 years from the start date of enrollment.
   c. Extension Possibility: In exceptional circumstances, an extension may be granted by the VCAA. This extension is subject to applicable policies set by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA).

3) Doctoral Degrees:
   a. Duration: Most students enrolled in doctoral degree programs at AU require 4-5 years to complete their program.
   b. Time Limit: The maximum time allowed for completing a doctoral degree is 7 years from the start date of enrollment, unless stated otherwise in the CAA approved study plan.
   c. Extension Possibility: In exceptional circumstances, the VCAA may grant an extension. However, any extension in degree completion time is subject to applicable policies set by the CAA.
   d. Extension Request Process:
      i. Petition Submission: To request an extension, the student must submit a petition to the registrar.
      ii. Document Forwarding: The registrar forwards the extension request to the DRG, including all necessary details.
      iii. Recommendations: The DRG reviews the request and provides their recommendations to the VCAA.
      iv. Final Decision: The VCAA makes the final decision regarding the extension request and informs the DRG and the respective college Dean.

4) Switching Graduate Programs Procedure: A student may request to switch from their current graduate program to another, subject to the following conditions:
   a. Same College: The change is permitted if both the current and requested majors are in the same college and the student fulfills all the admission requirements of the desired program.
   b. Different College: If the requested major is in a different college, the student must submit a new application for admission into the desired program as per the college's admission procedures.

 c. PhD Program: A change of major in the PhD program is only allowed prior to the student sitting for the comprehensive examination. After the comprehensive examination, a change of major is not permitted.

 d. Support and Approval: The student must seek support from their current program's supervisor (if applicable), as well as the coordinators of both the current and desired programs. The change of major request must be approved by the college Dean. For PhD students, the approval of the college Dean is also required.

 e. Credit Transfer: Once the change of major request is finally approved, all credits earned in the first program that are applicable to the second program will be counted towards the student's second program degree.

6. Joint/Dual degrees

This section outlines the guidelines and procedures for the Joint/Dual Degrees.[1]

1) International Partnerships:
    a. Align with AU's Internationalization Strategy to form partnerships with top-ranked academic institutions globally, prioritizing those within the Top 200.
    b. Formalize these international collaborations through agreements that are consistent with strategic objectives.

2) Recognition and Accreditation:
    a. Verify that each partner institution is recognized and accredited in its own higher education system.
    b. Maintain documentation confirming the status of each institution's accreditation.

3) Program Development and Delivery Standards:
    a. Design and deliver all joint/dual degree program elements in compliance with CAA Standards, WSCUC Standards of Accreditation, and WSCUC policies for joint and dual degrees.
    b. Develop curricula collaboratively, ensuring alignment with these standards.

4) Legal Framework Compliance:
    a. Confirm that the joint/dual degree program adheres to the legal frameworks of the national higher education systems of all partners.

5) Compliance Responsibility:
    a. Ensure that AU takes the lead in meeting CAA Standards for the programs, as well as satisfying partner institutions' criteria.

6) Curriculum Delivery Limitation:
    a. Limit the portion of the program curriculum delivered by the partner institution to a maximum of 50% for qualifications awarded by AU.

7) Quality Assurance:

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[1] The advancement of this section will be carried out based on practical observations from the currently existing and future joint/dual degrees.

     a. Apply the same quality assurance mechanisms for dual degrees as for equivalent AU programs, adhering to CAA Standards.
8) CAA Approval:
     a. Before implementation, submit all joint/dual degrees approved by the Chancellor through the Office of International Programs and Engagement (OIPE) to the CAA for approval.
9) WSCUC Correspondence:
     a. Have the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) handle correspondence with WSCUC for any joint/dual degree programs, as requested by the College proposing the program.
10) Internal Approval Processes:
     a. Obtain approval for the joint/dual degree program through AU's standard decision-making processes, including faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees review and endorsement.

7. Exit qualification

This section is related to unfinalized policy for Exit Qualification. The advancement of procedural aspects will be subject to the content of this policy following the approval from CAA. This section will outline the guidelines and procedures for the Exit qualification.

8. Credit Transfer for Graduate Degrees

This section outlines the guidelines and procedures for AU's Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). These procedures are designed to ensure a thorough and fair evaluation of prior learning for credit recognition at AU. This section gives first the guide for course exemption for doctoral students and then details the procedures for credit transfer application.

8.1. Course Exemption for Doctoral Students

1) Bachelor's Degree: No exemptions from any course can be awarded if the student holds a Bachelor's degree.
2) Master's Degree from AU (Same Program for Doctoral Qualification): If the student has a master's degree or equivalent from AU and is registered in the same program for a doctoral degree, exemptions can be granted for all AU and program compulsory courses.
3) Master's Degree from AU (Different Program for Doctoral Degree): If the student has a master's degree or equivalent from AU but is registered in a different program for a doctoral degree, exemptions can be granted only for the AU compulsory courses.

4) Master's Degree from a University other than AU: If the student's master's degree is awarded from a university other than AU, the GPC should follow the detailed procedures provided in Section 8.2.
5) Minimum Grade Requirement: The grade for any exempted course cannot be less than "B" or its equivalent.

6) Maximum credit hours granted through PLAR must not exceed 25% of the total completion requirements for graduate programs.
7) Application for Exemptions is detailed in the following section.

8.2. Credit Transfer Application

1) Application Submission:
   a. Applicants must complete a PLAR e-request detailing prior learning experiences and propose courses for potential credit.
   b. Submit the completed request with all supporting documents to the Office of Registration.
2) Academic Advisor Assistance:
   a. Seek guidance from an academic advisor when completing the PLAR request.
3) Initial Processing:
   a. The registrar will forward the application and supporting documents to the College Dean, who then passes it to the GPC for evaluation.
4) Ad-Hoc Committee Formation:
   a. The GPC will establish an ad-hoc departmental committee to examine the application.
5) Evidence Submission:
   a. Applicants may need to provide evidence such as certificates, portfolios, projects, and must pass a challenge exam for each course credit being requested.
6) Additional Documentation:
   a. The Committee may request further documents or evidence as needed.
7) Assessment and Evaluation Reporting:
   a. After assessment, the Committee fills out an Assessment Evaluation form, listing credits granted and denied, and submits it to the GPC.
8) GPC Review and Recommendation:
   a. The GPC reviews and approves the Committee's recommendations or requests clarification or reconsideration of the decisions.
9) Dean and Registration Office Notification:
   a. The Dean sends the completed PLAR e-request and Assessment Evaluation form back to the Office of Registration, which informs the student. The student is required to pay the approved course fee.
10) Appeals Process:
   a. If dissatisfied, the applicant may appeal the committee and GPC's decision.

Please note that these are general guidelines, and specific program requirements may vary. It's essential for students to consult their program coordinators or advisors for accurate information regarding course exemptions and degree requirements.