
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Research Postgraduate Handbook

MPhil and PhD candidature, 2026/27 academic year

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This handbook records Faculty practice for research postgraduate students. Where it differs from the Regulations Governing Research Postgraduate Studies or from a decision of the Graduate School, the University regulation prevails. Students should read this handbook alongside their offer letter and their programme requirements.

1. Using this handbook

This handbook is written for candidates registered for the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) within the Faculty of Education and Human Development. It applies to new and continuing candidates in the 2026/27 academic year, whether studying full-time or part-time, and to candidates in the writing-up stage.

Each section sets out what the Faculty expects of a candidate, what a candidate may expect of the Faculty, and where the responsibility for a decision sits. Deadlines given here are Faculty deadlines; where the Graduate School sets an earlier University deadline, the earlier date applies.

Who to ask first

- Day-to-day academic questions: your principal supervisor.
- Registration, leave of absence and study load: the Faculty Research Office.
- Ethical approval: the secretary of the Faculty Human Research Ethics Committee.
- Fees, studentship payments and visas: the Graduate School and the Registry.

2. Candidature and registration

Candidature begins on the registration date stated in your offer letter. Full-time MPhil candidature is normally two years and full-time PhD candidature three to four years, depending on the entry route. Part-time candidature runs at approximately half the full-time rate. The maximum period of candidature, including any approved extension, is four years for MPhil and six years for PhD.

Candidates register for coursework in each of the first two semesters. Research postgraduate coursework is assessed on a pass or fail basis and does not contribute to the thesis examination, but a failed course must be retaken before the confirmation of candidature.

Change of study mode or leave of absence

A change between full-time and part-time study, or a period of leave, must be applied for in writing before the change takes effect. Applications are supported by the principal supervisor, endorsed by the Associate Dean (Research) and approved by the Graduate School. Leave granted on medical or compassionate grounds does not count towards the maximum period of candidature; leave granted for other reasons normally does.

3. Supervision

Every candidate is supervised by a team of at least two members of academic staff. The principal supervisor holds academic responsibility for the candidature; the co-supervisor provides a second perspective and covers periods of leave. Supervisory teams are confirmed within six weeks of registration and are recorded on the Faculty research management system.

Meetings and records

- Full-time candidates meet their principal supervisor at least once a month during teaching semesters; part-time candidates at least once every two months.
- A short written record of each meeting is made by the candidate and confirmed by the supervisor within two weeks.

- A candidate who has not met a supervisor for three consecutive months should contact the Faculty Research Office.
- A change of supervisor may be requested by either party, in writing, and is decided by the Associate Dean (Research).

What supervision covers

Supervision covers the design of the study, the choice and defence of method, the ethics application, progress against the agreed timetable, the structure and argument of the thesis, and preparation for the oral examination. Supervisors comment on written work within four weeks of receiving it during semester, and within six weeks outside semester. Supervisors do not proofread, and they do not act as a substitute for the language support available through the Faculty.

4. Annual progress review

Progress is reviewed formally once in each year of candidature. The review is conducted by a panel of two members of staff who are not members of the supervisory team, and is chaired by the Associate Dean (Research) or a nominee.

Submission	A progress report of no more than 3,000 words, a revised timetable, and a sample of recent writing, submitted through the research management system.
Supervisor comment	A separate written statement from the principal supervisor, seen by the candidate before the panel meets.
Meeting	A meeting of 30 to 45 minutes with the review panel, normally held in the second half of the academic year.
Outcome	Satisfactory; satisfactory with conditions; or unsatisfactory, in which case a further review is held within three months.

The first annual review of a PhD candidature also serves as the confirmation of candidature. A candidate whose candidature is not confirmed at the second attempt may be permitted to transfer to MPhil, or may have candidature terminated by the Graduate School on the recommendation of the Faculty.

5. Research ethics approval

All research involving human participants, personal data or identifiable records must be approved by the Faculty Human Research Ethics Committee before any data is collected. This applies to pilot studies, to secondary analysis of identifiable data, and to work carried out in a candidate own workplace.

Applying

- Applications are submitted through the online ethics system with the endorsement of the principal supervisor.
- The Committee meets monthly during semester. Standard applications are normally determined within three weeks of the meeting deadline.
- Studies involving children, students in a class taught by the candidate, or participants with impaired capacity are reviewed in full committee rather than by delegated review.

- Approval is granted for a fixed period, normally 24 months. An extension or an amendment must be applied for before the approved work changes.

Data collected before ethical approval is granted cannot be used in a thesis submitted to this University, and cannot be retrospectively approved. If in doubt, ask the Committee secretary before you start.

6. Thesis submission and examination

A candidate gives notice of intention to submit at least three months before the expected submission date, so that examiners can be nominated and appointed. The thesis is submitted electronically in a single file, together with a signed declaration of originality and a statement of any work carried out jointly with others.

Length	MPhil: normally not more than 60,000 words. PhD: normally not more than 100,000 words. Word limits exclude references and appendices.
Examiners	Two examiners for an MPhil and three for a PhD, of whom at least one is external to the University. Examiners are nominated by the Faculty and appointed by the Graduate School.
Oral examination	Held normally within three months of submission, chaired by an independent chair. Supervisors may attend as observers with the candidate agreement.
Outcomes	Pass; pass subject to minor corrections (three months); revise and resubmit (up to twelve months); award of a lower degree; or fail.

After the examination, the corrected thesis is deposited in the University repository. A candidate may apply to restrict access to the full text for up to three years where publication, commercial confidentiality or participant protection requires it.

7. Funding, studentships and extensions

Most full-time candidates hold a Faculty or University studentship, paid monthly for the normative period of study. Studentship holders are expected to be on campus during semester and to take part in the academic life of their department. Payment stops at the end of the normative period, whether or not the thesis has been submitted.

Conference and fieldwork support

- Each candidate may claim conference support once in an MPhil candidature and twice in a PhD candidature, subject to an accepted paper and the annual Faculty budget.
- Fieldwork costs directly required by the approved study may be claimed against the Faculty research postgraduate support fund.
- Claims are submitted within one month of the expenditure, with receipts, through the Faculty Research Office.

Extensions

An extension of candidature is granted only where progress has been delayed by circumstances outside the candidate control and where a realistic completion plan is in place. Applications are made at least two

months before candidature lapses, and are supported by the supervisory team. An extension does not restore studentship payments.

8. Support, wellbeing and complaints

Research degrees are long pieces of work and periods of difficulty are common. The Faculty runs a research postgraduate seminar series, a writing group in each semester, and a peer mentoring scheme pairing new candidates with candidates in their third year or beyond. Confidential counselling is available through the University Student Affairs Office and is not recorded in any academic file.

A candidate who wishes to raise a concern about supervision, facilities or the conduct of a review should first raise it with the principal supervisor or, where that is not appropriate, with the head of the department concerned. Concerns that cannot be resolved at department level are referred to the Associate Dean (Research). Formal complaints and academic appeals follow the University procedures published by the Registry.

9. Key dates and contacts

Semester 1 begins	1 September 2026
Ethics deadlines, Semester 1	15 September, 13 October, 10 November 2026
Annual progress reports due	31 March 2027
Progress review panels	April to May 2027
Semester 2 begins	6 January 2027
Conference support round 2	28 February 2027
Faculty Research Office	Block B, 3/F, 10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po. Telephone (852) 2948 7169.
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