

The Education University of Hong Kong

Research Postgraduate Programmes

Code of Practice

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

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List of Abbreviations

Acronym	Description
AS	Associate Supervisor
BGS	Board of Graduate Studies
CoP	Code of Practice
EdD	Doctor of Education
EdUHK	The Education University of Hong Kong
GAR	General Academic Regulations
GRF	General Research Fund
GS	Graduate School
GSEG	Graduate School Executive Group
HK	Hong Kong
MA	Master of Arts
MEd	Master of Education
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PS	Principal Supervisor
RDO	Research Development Office
RPg	Research Postgraduate

About the Code

The clauses described in this *Code of Practice* (The Code) stipulate the respective rights and responsibilities of Research Postgraduate (RPg) students, their supervisors and the University. The principal purpose of this *Code of Practice* is to ensure that all RPg students and supervisors are aware of the reciprocal responsibilities of each other and of the University. The University acknowledges that RPg students have a right to receive effective and constructive supervision and that they also have the responsibility to adhere to the University's regulations.

The Code should be read in conjunction with the University's regulations and the handbooks for the RPg programmes. Additional information and specific guidelines may be produced and communicated to RPg students by the Graduate School or relevant academic units at the induction sessions.

The Code consists of five parts:

1. Responsibilities at the University Level;
2. Responsibilities of the Graduate School;
3. Responsibilities at the Faculty/Departmental Level;
4. Responsibilities of the Supervisor(s);
5. Responsibilities of the RPg Student.

To ensure the highest possible quality of RPg programmes delivered in the University, the Code will be regularly reviewed by the Graduate School. Amendments will be endorsed by the Board of Graduate Studies.

Information stated in this Code is aligned largely with those *Codes of Practice* published by the Institute of Education, the University of London (United Kingdom), the University of Hong Kong (China) and Monash University (Australia).

1. Responsibilities at the University Level

The University has the responsibility to ensure that appropriate research postgraduate training guidelines and regulations are implemented University-wide and to educational institutions and other academic/research units affiliated with the University.

The University will ensure that:

1.1 Standards and Requirements

The standards and requirements for particular RPg programmes have been set up and are readily accessible.

1.2 Supervisors

All supervisors are aware of the University's *Code of Practice, the GAR for Taught Postgraduate Programme* for coursework component, *the GAR for Research Component of the RPg and professional doctorate programmes*, and relevant guidelines and regulations.

1.3 Resources and Support

RPg students have access to adequate support for their research training. There will be an appropriate level of access to physical facilities, office space and other learning support services.

1.4 Research Ethics

All members of the University, including RPg students and supervisors, are aware of their obligation to observe relevant codes of research ethics and to practise the highest standards of professional conduct.

1.5 Intellectual Property

1.5.1

RPg students are aware that the intellectual property rights of all parties are protected. In principle, the University does not have an intention to infringe upon the rights of RPg students, during the course of their study and as part of their research training and education, to write or otherwise generate, on their

own initiative, copyrightable materials to which they have sole rights of ownership and disposition;

- 1.5.2 However, the University claims the property rights on copyrightable materials generated or created by its RPg students when it provides facilities, salaries, or other support for the expressed purpose of creating such materials, which may be pamphlets or other printed matter, film, video tape or audio recordings, computer programmes, or computer-based materials, including data files.

1.6 Conflict of Interest

Research training programmes should not be compromised by even the slightest inattention to potential conflicts of interest. The University has clear guidelines for dealing with potential conflicts of interest.

1.7 Procedures for Dealing with Complaints and Grievances

There are grievance procedures for dealing expeditiously with any problems or misunderstandings in respect of matters relating to the RPg student's research at the University. It is the University's aim to prevent any serious issues which may lead to a complaint or grievance.

2. Responsibilities of the Graduate School

The Graduate School is an academic unit responsible for the oversight of the University's RPg programmes and for ensuring that their quality meets international standards

2.1 Quality Assurance

2.1.1 The Graduate School will assist the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) in providing advice and feedback on the development of strategic plans and their implementation, as well as on collaboration initiatives;

2.1.2 Specifically, the Graduate School will provide a research environment that allows all RPg students have a positive and successful research training experience in the University, and that ensures high quality research practice of both RPg students and their supervisors. The Graduate School should:

- i. Monitor and review the admission process and academic progress of RPg students;
- ii. Coordinate with Faculties in offering core and elective taught courses for RPg students;
- iii. Monitor, support and enhance the quality of research training and supervision;
- iv. Contribute to policy formulation and to the review of RPg programmes and the support of RPg students;
- v. Develop and implement strategies for attracting and recruiting high quality RPg students from different parts of the world to the University's RPg programmes;
- vi. Ensure that mechanisms are in place to provide support for supervisors and RPg students to conduct professional development activities;
- vii. Ensure that the responsibilities of the supervision panel and RPg students are clearly communicated to and understood by supervisors and RPg students;
- viii. Work closely with the University-level and Faculty-level Research Centres, Faculties and Departments to promote international collaboration and to provide integrative research learning activities for RPg students;
- ix. Ensure the implementation of transparent and consistent procedures in relation to the monitoring of RPg students' progress and assessment across the University; and,
- x. Organize research supervision training workshops for supervisors.

- 2.1.3 The Graduate School should work closely with Faculties, Departments and Research Centres in the development and delivery of RPg programmes. All concerned parties can propose new programmes or changes to existing offerings, with the Graduate School ensuring that these fall within the University's strategic plan and policy framework. Faculties, Departments and Centres are responsible for designing the content of and providing the staffing for graduate programmes, with the Graduate School performing a pan-University quality assurance role in both these aspects.

2.2 Admission, Induction and Training

- 2.2.1 The admission of RPg student is conducted in accordance with the University's admission standards and requirements;

- 2.2.2 The Graduate School will run a University -level induction programme for all new RPg students. This will help to ensure that all RPg students are aware of the *Code of Practice*, relevant GAR and the University's standards and requirements for specific degrees. It will also help to expose RPg students to the resources and support available to them while enrolled in the University's RPg programmes;

- 2.2.3 To strengthen RPg student capacity building, the Graduate School will organise regular research skills seminars and related activities. These activities will be designed in close consultation with the University's Research Development Office, in order to identify useful synergies.

2.3 Evaluation and Feedback

The Graduate School will conduct an annual evaluation survey of all RPg programmes and courses as well as evaluation survey on supervision. Information will be sought from RPg students and supervisors. Focus groups will also be conducted as a channel for RPg student and staff feedback. A summary report will be produced and submitted to the Board of Graduate Studies for consideration and endorsement of action to be taken.

2.4 Induction and Training of Supervisors

The Graduate School will run induction sessions to ensure that new and existing supervisors are fully aware of their responsibilities as supervision panel members. Research supervision training workshops will be organised by the Graduate School to communicate relevant guidelines, regulations, policy and procedures in relation to supervisors and RPg students.

2.5 Appointment of Supervisors

2.5.1 For the supervisory arrangements for RPg students, please refer to Section 1.2 of the General Academic Regulations for the research component of the RPg and professional doctorate programmes.

2.5.2 The Graduate School will advise the RPg student on appointed supervision panel and its criteria of appointing supervisors.

2.6 Monitoring Supervision Performance

The Graduate School will ensure the quality of its RPg degree supervision by implementing quality assurance mechanisms to monitor supervision performance. Specifically, the mechanism will include the following:

- i. Reviewing data collected from annual evaluation surveys of RPg students and supervisors;
- ii. Analysing indicators of the effectiveness of RPg student support, such as the success rates of RPg students' completion, duration of candidature, thesis submission, presentations and publications;
- iii. Monitoring RPg students' academic progress.

2.7 Candidature

2.7.1 The Graduate School will ensure that all RPg students are aware of the requirements of candidature confirmation and that all RPg students to sign a candidature agreement detailing the proposed research training plan and study progress plan;

2.7.2 The Graduate School will monitor the candidature of RPg students so as to ensure that they do not exceed the maximum duration of study according to the University's guidelines.

2.8 Monitoring RPg Student Progress

The Graduate School, in conjunction with those academic units involved, will regularly review the progress of all RPg students throughout their studies. This includes the following aspects:

- i. Satisfactory completion of any assignments according to the specified or agreed timetable;

- ii. An Annual Progress Report completed by both the RPg student and the Principal Supervisor to confirm that satisfactory progress has been made;
- iii. Meetings with the Head of the academic unit/centre, the supervision panel and the RPg student to discuss the RPg student's progress;
- iv. In the case that satisfactory progress has not been made, both the RPg student and the Principal Supervisor will be invited to provide explanations as well as practical solutions, failing which the RPg student's enrolment may have to be suspended;
- v. Endorsement of the Annual Progress Report by the RPg Programme Committee.
- vi. The Graduate School will annually evaluate the quality of research supervision through a student research evaluation questionnaire.

2.9 Thesis Examination

- 2.9.1 The Graduate School will ensure all RPg students are aware of the standards of the thesis component and submission. Advise on the professional presentation of the thesis and that the writing embodied in the thesis is properly referenced;
- 2.9.2 For the assessment grades of thesis, please refer to Section 10 of General Academic Regulations for Research Component of the Research Postgraduate and Professional Doctorate Programmes.

3. Responsibilities at the Faculty/ Department Level

3.1 Guidelines and Regulations

The faculty/department will ensure that RPg students are aware of the University's *Code of Practice* and regulatory guidelines in relation to the RPg programmes and, in conjunction with the Graduate School, that RPg students are appropriately capable of undertaking the proposed research programmes.

3.2 Supervision Arrangements

The following supervision arrangements should be in place:

- i. Mechanisms to disseminate relevant guidelines, regulations, policy and procedures to supervisors and RPg students;
- ii. When the Principal Supervisor is anticipated to be absent for more than 6 weeks, one Associate Supervisor should act as the Principal Supervisor on a temporary basis to provide ongoing support to the RPg student;
- iii. When a supervisor is no longer able to continue in the role, or the RPg student's research focus changes to an area for which the appointed supervisor is no longer the most appropriate person, the Principal Supervisor (or Head of the academic unit, in the case of the Principal Supervisor is no longer able to continue in the role) must advise the Graduate School in writing as soon as possible and make all efforts to identify and appoint a suitable replacement supervisor. During the transition period, to ensure the continuity of supervision, the Associate Supervisor in the supervisory panel (or the 1st Associate Supervisor if there is more than one Associate Supervisor in the supervisory panel) should take up the role of Acting Principal Supervisor temporarily until the replacement supervisor is appointed.

3.3 Access to Resources

The faculty/department will, in conjunction with the Graduate School and relevant divisions within the University, provide appropriate supervisory and technical support, equipment and other assistances for RPg students to complete their degrees as expeditiously as possible. The University's minimum resource guidelines for full time on-campus RPg students should be met. These include but are not limited to:

- i. Furnished office and research space, with flexibility of after-hour access;
- ii. Secure data storage space.

- iii. Access to photocopying, printing, computer facilities including software and Internet access at an appropriate level;
- iv. Access to telephone and facsimile for study purposes;
- v. Where appropriate, access to laboratory or industry facilities with consumables.

3.4 Affiliation of RPg Students to Research Centres & Research Participation

The faculty/department should assign RPg students to a University -level or Faculty-level Research Centre according to their research areas. By affiliating all these students to the research clusters of the University, the research capacity of individual research postgraduate students as well as the University could be built and enhanced as a whole.

3.5 Involving RPg Students in Academic Unit Activities

The Head of the academic unit/centre and supervisors to provide more opportunity to engage RPg students in professional dialogue and research-related activities for those holding a postgraduate studentship. The Head of the academic unit should discuss with the RPg student in the planning of such activities so that the RPg student is able to give necessary time and effort to satisfy the requirements for the RPg programmes.

4. Responsibilities of the Supervisor (s)

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to maintain a professional relationship at all times with the RPg student, and to model a research culture of excellence, professionalism, integrity and mutual respect. The specific responsibilities of the supervisor include the following:

4.1 Regulations and Guidelines

Be familiar and comply with the *Code of Practice, the GAR for Taught Postgraduate Programme* for coursework component, *the GAR for Research Component of the Research Postgraduate and professional doctorate programmes*, and the University's regulations and procedures in relation to the RPg programmes and other policies governing the degree.

4.2 Guidance to RPg Students

Provide academic guidance to the RPg student and guide the RPg student through to completion. The supervisor should:

- i. Discuss with the RPg student the overall expectation of the RPg programme;
- ii. Give guidance in defining a coherent and manageable research topic, preparing a research proposal and identifying the requisite techniques for the research;
- iii. Advise on strategically planning the research;
- iv. Discuss with the RPg student taught courses and thesis component;
- v. Advise on literature retrieval, presentation and academic writing style; avoid plagiarism and comply with ethical requirements and good research practice;
- vi. Encourage the RPg student to pursue independent research initiatives and exercise self-motivation in the final stage of the candidature;
- vii. Undertake Research Supervision Training Workshops organized by the Graduate School if the appointed supervisor has no prior research supervision experience.

4.3 Continuity of the Research Supervision

When the supervisor finds himself/herself no longer able to continue in the role, the supervisor should discuss with the Principal Supervisor (or Head of academic unit, in the case of the Principal Supervisor is no longer able to

continue in the role) so that the Principal Supervisor or Head of academic unit could identify a suitable replacement supervisor as soon as possible. In such circumstances, the Principal Supervisor / Head of academic unit should provide advice and guidance to the student in the re-appointment of supervisor.

4.4 Feasibility of the Research Project

Give detailed advice on the feasibility of the research project in terms of time, physical facilities and human resources required. The supervisor will advise the RPg student on productive use of time in conducting research work and ensure that the RPg student is fully aware of the University's requirements of project timeline and progress.

4.5 Ethics and Responsible Research Practice

Ensure that the RPg student is aware of any legal and ethical concerns in relation to the research, including relevant Codes of Ethics and Research Ethics Guidelines. The supervisor will discuss with the RPg student the importance of meeting all ethical clearance requirements in research activities.

4.6 Monitoring Student Progress

4.6.1 Work with the RPg student to establish a clear timetable and work plan to ensure the RPg student completes the RPg programme within the University's maximum period of candidature;

4.6.2 Schedule regular meetings to discuss the specifications of the project; written meeting records should be kept to help both RPg student and supervisor to monitor progress and take action on any problems identified;

4.6.3 Make arrangements to comment constructively on, or suggest revisions to, written work, within a reasonable time frame (e.g. within 1-4 weeks depending on the content and quantity of the written work);

4.6.4 Evaluate the quality of the RPg student's work on a regular basis to ensure any concerns on the RPg student's progress can be addressed promptly, and any difficulties may be resolved at an early stage;

4.6.5 Take appropriate action if the RPg student is not progressing towards their planned goals. Written advice relating to any unsatisfactory progress should be

communicated with the Graduate School so that the RPg student has a clear understanding of their progress;

4.6.6 Recognize that non-local RPg students may need special assistance to adjust to life in Hong Kong, particularly if these adjustments may impede the progress of their study.

4.6.7 Work with RPg student(s) to submit an Annual Progress Report on their study progress in the past twelve months for review.

4.7 Presentations

Provide advice and make necessary arrangement for the RPg student to present research work at conferences, seminars or forums in the relevant fields at least once a year on average. The supervisor will also facilitate meetings for the RPg student to meet other researchers in the field as appropriate.

4.8 Qualifying Examination

4.8.1 Provide guidance to the RPg student in working out a research proposal of no more than 8,000 words for submission to the Qualifying Examination Panel.

4.8.2 Facilitate the student to do a formal presentation of the research proposal to the Qualifying Examination Panel which consists of the RPg Programme Director or nominee (Chairperson), the Supervision Panel, and at least one Independent member.

4.8.3 Nominate at least one Independent member to participate in the Qualifying Examination Panel and ensure that the nominee(s) is/are qualified to be Principal Supervisor of RPg students according to the criteria stated in Section 1.2 of the GAR for the research component of the RPg and professional doctorate programmes.

4.9 Thesis Examination

4.9.1 Must be familiar with current policy and procedures of thesis examination including procedures of appeal against the outcome of the examination;

4.9.2 Prepare written comments to the RPg student on the thesis prior to the RPg student entering for examination;

4.9.3 Ensure the RPg student serves a written notice of intention to submit a thesis for examination at least 6 weeks prior to the expected date of submission;

4.9.4 Nominate thesis examiners according to relevant GARs and ensure that all external thesis examiner(s) should be independent and have no formal collaborations (e.g., joint research projects or publications) with members of the supervision panel in the previous three years.

4.10 Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest including, but not limited to, those of a financial nature, have the potential to threaten the integrity of research and scholarship. There are a wide range of types of activities which may constitute a conflict of interest, and which the supervisor has a responsibility to avoid. The following are a few examples, all of which apply both to supervisors and RPg students:

- i. Activities that will lead to making an unfair offer of a studentship or other award;
- ii. Unprofessional faculty-student relationship;
- iii. Accepting over-scale financial or other forms of support to conduct a research project;
- iv. Accepting / offering unreasonable gifts for examination / evaluation purposes; and,
- v. Appointment of (close collaborators as) external thesis examiners.

5. Responsibilities of the RPg Student

RPg students are members of the academic unit of their Principal Supervisor. It is the responsibility of the RPg student to adhere to the following conditions:

5.1 Regulations and Guidelines

Be familiar and comply with the *Code of Practice, the GAR for Taught Postgraduate Programme* for coursework component, *the GAR for Research Component of the Research Postgraduate and professional doctorate programmes*, and the University's regulations and procedures in relation to the RPg programmes and other policies governing the degree.

5.2 Induction

Attend the University's induction sessions organised by the Graduate School and those organised by the faculty, department or other academic unit at the commencement of candidature.

5.3 Candidature

5.3.1 The RPg student's candidature will be confirmed only after completing formal qualifying requirements including:

- i. Successfully complete at least 12 credit points of taught core courses;
- ii. Submitting a research proposal of no more than 8,000 words;
- iii. A formal presentation of the research proposal to the Qualifying Panel which consists of the RPg Programme Director or nominee (Chairperson), the Supervision Panel, and at least one Independent member; and
- iv. Signing a candidature agreement detailing the proposed research training plan and study progress plan.

5.3.2 Once the candidature agreement is signed, any substantial departure from this can be made only after consultation with the Principal Supervisor, approval by the Chair of the Faculty Committee on research and research training, and endorsement by the Dean of the Graduate School;

5.3.3 Comply with the minimum, normal and maximum durations of the candidature as shown in the table below:

(Years)	Full-time			Part-time		
	Minimum*	Normal	Maximum	Minimum*	Normal	Maximum
PhD	2	3 – 4**	5	3	5	7
MPhil	1	1.5	3	2	2.5	4

* Special approval is required

** The normal study period for FT PhD student without and with a research master's degree# is four years and three years respectively.

[# *Research master's degree - Master's degree with more than 50% of research components (e.g. a thesis / major project / dissertation but excluding taught courses on research methods and skills) in the programme.*]

5.3.4 Comply with the study modes for the RPg programmes, as approved at the application stage. Any substantial change upon registration must be approved by the Board of Graduate Studies. There is no guarantee that a proposed change of study mode will be approved;

5.3.5 Remain continuously enrolled for all semesters and throughout the summer months. Any deviation to enrolment must be approved by the Dean of Graduate School. RPg student who plan to suspend their registration for more than six months are required to submit to their Principal Supervisor, a detailed written statement outlining their research progress, including a formal plan and timetable as to how the research will be completed. Written notification from the Principal Supervisor on this matter should be submitted to the Graduate School prior to re-registration.

5.4 Use of Resources and Facilities

Utilise the physical facilities and other resources available to manage their research progress responsibly and appropriately.

5.5 Academic Activities

5.5.1 Actively engaged in research and other related academic activities and environment of the University;

5.5.2 Actively contribute to the development of the intellectual research culture of the University;

- 5.5.3 Consult with supervisors regarding opportunities to meet other researchers in the field and to attend seminars, workshops and conferences, as appropriate;
- 5.5.4 Consult with supervisors to master the requisite techniques for the research, including skills on literature retrieval, presentation and academic writing;
- 5.5.5 Strategically plan for research activities to meet the milestones of the project, be self-motivated and pursue independent academy activities during the RPg candidature.

5.6 Meetings with Supervisors

Maintain a professional relationship at all times with the supervisor, other staff of the University, and external supervisors and consultants. RPg students should:

- i. Initiate and confirm schedules for meeting with the supervisor(s);
- ii. Respond promptly and appropriately to supervisor's guidance and feedback;
- iii. Maintain regular contact with the supervisor(s).

5.7 Ethical Practice

- 5.7.1 Adhere to legal and ethical guidelines and relevant codes of ethics; follow good research practice as appropriate to particular profession and specific discipline;
- 5.7.2 In consultation with the supervisor, prepare and obtain ethical approval prior to embarking upon experimental fieldwork (data collection);
- 5.7.3 Reference to the University's relevant policies and guidelines, such as the ethical guidelines.

5.8 Publications and Presentations

- 5.8.1 With support from the supervisor, prepare timely publication of the research work and disseminate research findings through contributions to both internal and external conferences;
- 5.8.2 It is not acceptable to publish the same research findings in several places (i.e. duplicate publications); RPg student should obtain permission from the original publisher or made appropriate citations when referencing to any published materials;

- 5.8.3 Acknowledge the contribution of the supervisor and all other consultants' research advice in any published work;
- 5.8.4 The contribution of funding body should also be acknowledged and all sources of financial and in-kind support for the research and any potential conflicts of interest must be stated in the publication, and that no confidential agreements have been breached;
- 5.8.5 Discuss with supervisors to reach an agreement on authorship, which fairly and appropriately acknowledges contributions of all researchers to research work during and/or after the candidature;
- 5.8.6 It should not be assumed that the names of both the supervisor and the RPg student will appear on all published work and that the practices in different academic disciplines vary in this regard.

5.9 Retention of research data

- 5.9.1 Ensure that all original research data are recorded in a retrievable and appropriately referenced form, and make the data readily accessible to the supervisor;
- 5.9.2 Ensure that the data are stored safely in the academic unit for a period normally not less than five years from the date of submission of thesis, or as appropriate for the specific discipline.

5.10 Research Progress

Satisfactorily complete all assignments of the taught courses according to the specified timetables, and actively monitor own research progress. The latter includes:

- i. Provide regular research progress report to the supervision panel, as agreed in the supervisory meeting;
- ii. Provide annual progress report and other reports to the Graduate School, as required;
- iii. Complete a student research evaluation questionnaire annually;
- iv. Document the progress of the work in their study portfolio;
- v. Present written or other material on progress for comment in a timely manner;
- vi. Keep supervisors informed of any issues that may impact on their progress and prepare variation to candidature as appropriate.

5.11 Thesis Examination

- 5.11.1 Serve written notice of intention to submit a thesis for examination at least 6 weeks prior to the expected date of submission, to allow sufficient time for the appointment of thesis examiners. The notice shall be accompanied by a provisional thesis title and a two-page structured summary of the study;
- 5.11.2 The RPg student should not submit work that has been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this or any other university for a degree, diploma, or other qualifications. Original work of the RPg student related to the thesis may be published or presented in a conference prior to submission of the thesis and may be included in the thesis with proper acknowledgement.

5.12 Appeal against Result in Thesis Examination

For appeal against the result in the thesis examination, please refer to Section 11 of the General Academic Regulations for the research component of the RPg and professional doctorate programmes.

5.13 Complaint and Grievance Procedures

Before recourse to the grievance procedures, RPg student should seek advice from the Supervisor, Head of the academic unit and/or the Graduate School as appropriate. If the matters are unresolved, the RPg student can initiate a formal complaint or grievance following the University's procedures (see 1.7).

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