

Unified Regulations for Postgraduate Studies in Saudi Universities



بيت الحكيم

Higher Education Council Resolution N. (3/6/1417)

The Higher Education Council in accordance with the provisions stated in item (7) of Article (15) of the Statutes and Regulations of the Higher Education Council & Universities, stating that the Higher Education Council is entitled to issue conjoint regulations for Saudi Universities.

And as long as the Unified Regulation for Graduate Studies in Universities is considered as a conjoint regulation, its approval will definitely lead to organization and control of all procedures concerning Graduate studies in universities, And upon reviewing the attached memorandum of the General Secretariat of the Higher Education Council General Secretariat in this respect, and after reviewing the draft of the Unified Regulations for Postgraduate studies in Universities, the Council decrees the following:

((Approval of the Unified Regulations for Graduate Studies in Universities according to the form attached to the Resolution))

Chapter One

Objectives of Postgraduate Studies

Article One:

Graduate Studies aim at:

1. Generating interest in Islamic and Arabic studies and promoting, expanding and disseminating research in these fields.
2. Contributing to the progress of human knowledge in all possible fields through specialized studies and serious research in the theoretical and applied sciences in a manner that would lead to their development, innovation, and enrichment with new findings.
3. Enabling outstanding students with university degrees to pursue higher education locally.
4. Preparing scientifically and professionally specialized graduates in varied fields of knowledge and empowering them to become highly qualified.
5. Encouraging scientifically proficient graduates to keep pace with the rapid progress of science and technology, and inspiring them into creativity, innovation and greater participation in the development of scientific researches directed to the needs and interests of Saudi society.
6. Contributing to the improvement of undergraduate programs so they can properly interact with postgraduate programs.

Chapter Two

Academic Degrees

Article Two:

On recommendations of Departments and Colleges Councils and endorsement of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council, the University Council grants the following:

1. Diplomas
2. Master Degree (Global)
3. PhD (Higher Global)

Article Three:

Regulations of this Statute apply to all degrees stated in Item 2 except for:

1. Medical Diplomas
2. Medical Fellowships

Rules issued by the University Council regulate these exceptional cases.

Chapter Three

Organization of Postgraduate Studies

Article Four:

A Deanship for Graduate Studies is established in each university, maintaining links to the university Vice-Rector of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research. Its role is to supervise all graduate programs and involves coordination among them, initial endorsement of each, continuous assessment, evaluation and review of all.

Article Five:

The Deanship of Graduate Studies should have a council to look into and decide on all matters related to graduate studies in the university provided that they fall under its jurisdiction as defined by items in this Statute.

The council's main responsibilities are as follows:

- 1.To propose, amend and follow up implementation (after approval) of graduate studies' general policy and coordinate with all colleges and university institutes in this respect.
- 2.To propose internal regulations, in coordination with academic departments, for the organization of graduate studies.
- 3.To propose, implement and supervise admission criteria into graduate studies.
- 4.To study and recommend new programs for endorsement and coordinate them with current ones.
- 5.To recommend graduate courses for approval, amendment and modification, with the last two applying to programs as well.
- 6.To recommend titles of graduate degrees in both Arabic and English on recommendation of college councils.
- 7.To recommend awarding of graduate degrees.
- 8.To decide on all matters related to graduate students in the university.
- 9.To issue approval of theses supervision committees and Judging Panels.
- 10.To set the general framework for research plans, rules for theses writing, format for their production and templates of theses exam reports.
- 11.To periodically assess graduate programs at the university through specialized committees from inside or outside the university.
- 12.To examine periodic reports submitted by the departments of the university.
- 13.To study matters forwarded to it for consultation by the University Council or its Rector and offer suggestions and advice.

Article Six:

The Graduate Studies Deanship Council should include the following members:

- 1.The Dean of Graduate Studies, assuming the presidency of the Council.
- 2.The Dean of Scientific Research.
- 3.The Deputy-Dean of Graduate Studies, assuming the secretariat of the Council.
- 4.Faculty members (Associate or full Professors) as representatives of colleges holding graduate studies. These are appointed by the University Council on the recommendation of respective colleges' councils and the consent of the University Rector. Their term is two years each, subject to renewal.

The Council meets (at least once a month) upon the invitation of its president. Meetings are valid with the attendance of two thirds of Council's members. The Council's decisions are determined by a majority of votes of attending members. In the case of equality of votes, the president's favor shall be considered as the casting vote. The Council's decisions stay valid unless contested by the University Rector (no later than fifteen days from their arrival).

The Council can set up permanent or temporary committees, selected by its members or those from outside, for consultation on issues the Council assigns or requires.

Chapter Four

New Programs

Article Seven:

On the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council, the University Council will set detailed criteria for endorsing graduate programs. The following measures should be taken into account:

- 1.The initiating department should have a sufficient number of faculty members (professors and associate professors) specialized in the program area, in addition to research facilities (laboratories, computers and others) to ensure the success of the program in terms of teaching, supervision and research.

- 2.The department should have gained appropriate experience on the undergraduate level if proposing a master's program and the same on the master's level if the proposed program is a doctoral one.
3. Expectancy of the number of students to enroll in the program should be sufficient to ensure proper continuity.

Article Eight:

Taking into account measures enforced in article (7), the initiating department will submit a detailed program draft to its College Council, elucidating the following:

- 1.The program's objectives and the extent of the need for it in Saudi society.
- 2.The importance of the program and the justifications for initiating it, in light of its availability inside the university or outside in other universities in the Kingdom.
- 3.The availability of required facilities in the department to allow proper academic and professional running of the program, and identifying, in particular, the main research areas of the department.
- 4.The extent of faculty members' stability in the department over the past five years.
- 5.The Curriculum Vitae of faculty members in the department and of those associated with the program at the university.

Article Nine:

The Graduate Studies Deanship Council examines the draft program, coordinates between its requirements and the requirements of other extant programs, if any, to preclude duplication, and, on being satisfied, recommends to the University Council for endorsement.

Article Ten:

The University Council issues resolutions on course amendments, program requirements, and admission conditions on the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council as coordinated with relevant departments.

Article Eleven:

Joint graduate programs between two departments (or more) and two colleges (or more) can be established at the university according to rules set by the University Council on the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council in coordination with relevant departments.

Admission & Registration

Admission Requirements

Article Twelve:

The University Council determines the annual number of students to be admitted into graduate programs. Numbers are proposed by departments and college councils and recommended by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council.

Article Thirteen:

Admission into graduate programs requires the following:

1. The applicant should be a Saudi citizen or, if non-Saudi, have an official grant for graduate studies.
2. The applicant should be a university degree holder from a Saudi or any accredited university.
3. The applicant should be of good behavior, fair reputation and medically fit.
4. The applicant should submit two recommendation letters from professors who taught him/her.
5. The applicant, if employed, should provide employer's consent for studying.
6. The applicant for a doctorate program should enroll as a full-time student.

Each university council can stipulate any additional conditions it deems necessary.

Article Fourteen:

The Diploma admission requirement is a minimum grade average of "good" at the bachelor's level.

Article Fifteen:

The admission requirement for a master's program is a minimum grade of "Very Good" at the bachelor's level.

However, the Graduate Studies Deanship Council can admit a student with a "high good" average.

The Graduate Studies Deanship Council can, on recommendation of Department Councils and support of College Councils, admit students with "good" average in some programs (determined by the College Council), provided that the student has scored a minimum of "Very Good" in the specialization courses at the bachelor's level.

The Graduate Studies Deanship Council can stipulate, on recommendation of Departments Councils and support of Colleges Councils, any additional conditions it deems necessary for admission.

Article Sixteen:

The admission requirements for doctoral programs are a minimum grade of “Very Good” at the master’s level, if awarded by a university that uses such a grading system. The Graduate Studies Deanship Council can stipulate, on recommendation of Department Councils and support of College Councils, any additional conditions it deems necessary for admission.

Article Seventeen:

student may be admitted into a master’s or doctoral program in a field different from his specialization. Such admission requires the recommendation of both the Department and College Councils and the approval of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council.

Article Eighteen:

Department Councils may stipulate that students applying for a master’s or a doctoral program ought to complete a number of supplementary courses from the previous level. The time limit allotted to such courses should not exceed three semesters. The following conditions should also be taken into account:

1. A student should pass each supplementary course at first sitting with a minimum grade of “Good.”
2. The grade of supplementary courses should be a minimum of “Very Good.”
3. Registration in the graduate program becomes possible after proper completion of supplementary courses; Department Councils may permit registration in some graduate courses before the completion of one or two supplementary courses.
4. Time spent in supplementary courses is not counted within the time limit for obtaining the degree.
5. The grades of the supplementary courses are not included in the computation of the cumulative average of the graduate courses.

Article Nineteen:

The Deanship of Graduate Studies admits students into graduate programs and registers them in coordination with the Deanship of Admission and Registration.

Article Twenty:

A student is not allowed to enroll in two graduate programs at the same time.

Article Twenty-One:

Department Councils, College Deans and the Dean of Graduate Studies may approve postponement of students' admission into a program for a maximum period of two semesters; the period will not be counted within the time limit for obtaining the degree.

Article Twenty-Two:

Department Councils, College Deans and the Dean of Graduate Studies may approve postponement of students' registration under the following conditions:

1. The student must have successfully completed at least one semester in the program or covered a substantial part of the thesis.
2. The time limit of postponement should not exceed four semesters (two years of study).
3. Requests for postponement should be submitted at least two weeks before the start of the semester
4. The postponement period will not be counted within the maximum time limit for obtaining the degree.

Article Twenty-Three:

The student may (after registering) drop all the semester's courses according to the following regulations:

1. S/he must apply to the Head of the Department before the final exam period.
2. S/he must receive the approval of the Department Council and Deans of both College and Graduate Studies.
3. The semester should not be part of the Additional Opportunity period.

4. The semester counts as part of Postponement Period, as it stated in article 22.

Withdrawal: (Withdrawal means that a student's University record will be completely terminated.)

Article Twenty-Four:

A student who voluntarily withdraws from a graduate program will be treated as a new applicant on deciding to rejoin, and all new conditions will be applied to his case.

Interruption of Study

Article Twenty-Five

The student shall be considered as a dropout and his record as closed in the following cases:

1. If accepted in the program and did not register on time.
2. If registered on the courses and did not attend them.

Article Twenty-Six

A student's enrolment in the graduate program will be terminated by a decision of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council in the following cases:

1. If accepted in the program and does not register during regular the registration period.
2. If s/he fails to pass supplementary courses in accordance with the required conditions set out in (article 18).
3. If s/he drops courses for a whole semester or withdraws from the program without an acceptable excuse.
4. If s/he proves not to be serious in study or neglects academic obligations, as stated in (article 52) of these Regulations.
5. If his/her cumulative average drops below "Very Good" for two consecutive semesters.
6. If s/he uses up all permissible postponement periods, identified in (article 22), without completing the degree.
7. If s/he breaches scientific ethics during course work or thesis writing, or breaks university rules and regulations.

8. If s/he fails the comprehensive exam (where applicable) twice.
9. If the thesis judging committee finds that the thesis is not discussable or unacceptable after the defense.
10. If s/he doesn't obtain the degree within the maximum time limit specified in article (36).

Article Twenty- Seven:

A student whose record was terminated because he was impeded by personal obstacles, that both Department and College Councils excuse, may resume studying in a program on the subsequent recommendation of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council and the final approval of the University Council. However, the following conditions should also be taken into account:

1. On the lapse of more than six semesters, a student shall be treated as a new student regardless of the number of semesters completed in the program.
2. On return after six semesters or less, a student may be asked to repeat some of the courses already covered. Courses should be specified by Department and College Councils and approved by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council; the courses studied earlier are to be counted within the cumulative average after resuming study; the period spent in the program before termination is also to be counted within the maximum time limit for obtaining the degree.

Article Twenty- Eight:

With the exception of item (5) of article (26), the student whose cumulative average drops to less than "Very Good," may exceptionally be granted an extension period (technically called an additional opportunity) not exceeding in length two semesters to continue in the program; the recommendation of both Department and College Councils and approval of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council are necessary in this case.

Article Twenty- Nine:

With the exception of item (10) of article (26), a student (whose time limit for obtaining the degree has expired) may exceptionally be granted an extension, or additional opportunity (not exceeding in length two semesters). A report from the supervisor initiates the procedures in this case, to be followed by the recommendation of Department and College Councils, the Graduate Studies Deanship Council, and the final approval of the University Council.

Article Thirty:

Transfer of students to the university from another accredited university is possible upon the recommendation of both Department and College Councils and the Graduate Studies Deanship Council, taking into account the following regulations:

1. Local conditions for admission should apply to transfer students, in addition to any further conditions relevant departments may deem necessary.
2. Student should not have been dismissed (regardless of reasons) from the transferring university.
3. Courses studied earlier may be transferred, according to the following regulations:
 - a) Courses should not have been completed more than six semesters ago.
 - b) Course content should be directly related to the program transferred to.
 - c) Courses transferred should not exceed in ratio thirty per cent of the courses of the program transferred to.
 - d) Student's grade in transferred courses should not be less than "Very Good."
 - e) Courses transferred are not included in the computation of a new cumulative average.
 - f) Transfer of courses should be based on the recommendation of the Department Council and the approval of both the College and Graduate Studies Deanship Councils.

Article Thirty-One

The student may transfer from one major to another in the university on the recommendation of the respective department and college councils and approval of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council. The following regulations should be taken into account:

1. The current conditions for admission should apply to transfer students in addition to any further conditions the relevant department may deem necessary.
2. Courses already studied at the university may be transferred if related departments find that they correspond to their programs; they will be included in computing students' cumulative average.
3. The student's registration in the previous department should not for any reason have been repealed.

4. The time spent in the program transferred from shall be counted within the maximum time limit for obtaining the degree.

5. The transfer from one program to another is allowed only once during the period set for obtaining the degree.

Chapter Six

Study System

Article Thirty-Two:

The study for a diploma shall be through courses as well as practical application, laboratory training and field work. The following regulations should be taken into account:

1. The study period ranges from between two to four semesters.
2. Study units range between a minimum of 24 to a maximum of 36 accredited hours.

The University Council endorses, at the proposal of Department and College Councils and the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council, courses required for the diploma as well as its title.

Article Thirty-Three:

The study for a master's degree is possible through one of the two following routes:

1. The Course/Thesis mode: a minimum of twenty-four hours of graduate courses plus thesis.
2. The Course only mode: in some specializations of a professional nature, provided that study units are a minimum of forty-two accredited hours of graduate courses inclusive of a three units' research project.

The study plan for a master's degree should preferably include graduate courses related to specializations from other departments whenever possible.

Article Thirty-Four:

Study for a doctorate degree is possible through one of the two following modes:

1. The Course/Thesis mode: a minimum of thirty accredited hours of graduate, post-master's courses plus thesis.

2. The Dissertation/Course mode: a minimum of twelve accredited hours of graduate courses of directed studies, symposia and seminars, as called for by student's academic interests and specific specializations, plus a dissertation.

Article Thirty-Five:

The academic year is divided into two main semesters, (the duration of each is not less than fifteen weeks exclusive of registration and examination periods). A summer session of not less than eight weeks is also available, where the time span allotted to each course is to be doubled. A one-year study system is possible in colleges that require it, to be conducted in accordance with rules and procedures endorsed by the University Council and complying with provisions of this Statute.

Article Thirty-Six:

1 The duration for obtaining a master's degree is a minimum of four semesters and a maximum of eight; summer sessions are not counted within this period.

2. The duration for obtaining a doctorate degree is a minimum of six Semesters and a maximum of ten; summer sessions are not counted within this period.

Article Thirty-Seven:

The maximum period for obtaining a degree starts with registration in graduate courses until the date of submission of the thesis (or any other program requirements) together with a report by the student's supervisor to the Head of the Department.

Article Thirty-Eight:

The minimum number of study units covered by the graduate student at the University which will grant him the scientific degree is seventy per cent of program required units; the student should also fully prepare the thesis under the supervision of that university.

Article Thirty-Nine:

The student shall only graduate on having completed all program requirements, with a minimum grade of "Very Good".

Chapter Seven

Exam Regulations

Article Forty:

Exams for graduate courses in a diploma, a master's or doctoral program and recording of scores are conducted in accordance with the regulations in effect on the undergraduate level as issued by the Higher Education Council on its second session held on 11/6/1416 H, with the exception of the following:

1. The passing grade in a graduate course is an average of "Good."
2. Decisions on makeup exams and incomplete courses are made by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council on recommendation of the Department Council and approval of the College Council.
3. Students of master's programs (that require a comprehensive exam), and students of doctorate program should sit for the exam after completion of all required courses. An oral exam prepared by a specialized committee should follow. Both oral and written exams are governed by rules approved by the University Council on the recommendation of the Department Council and the approval of both the College and Graduate Studies Deanship Councils. The exam is supposed to cover the student's main and sub-specializations. Students shall be nominated for the granting of a degree on passing the test at first sitting, but on failing it, or part of it, a second chance will be granted to be used in the span of one or two semesters; on failing again, the student will be terminated from the program.

Chapter Eight

Theses

Article Forty-One:

Each graduate student should, at start of enrolment in a program, have an academic guide to direct the study, assist in selecting a thesis topic and preparing a research plan according to University Council regulations initiated by the Deanship of Graduate Studies.

Article Forty-Two:

The student should submit (where applicable) a thesis proposal to the department. The procedure is permissible after meeting all admission requirements and completing at least fifty per cent of the course work with a cumulative average of at least "Very Good." Once it recommends a proposal for approval, the Department Council should name a supervisor (and an Assistant Supervisor where applicable) of the thesis. In cases that require a Supervisory Committee, the council should name committee members and specify a Chairman. The College Council's approval of all previous procedures is necessary before ultimate approval by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council.

Article Forty-Three:

Master's these subjects should be characterized by newness and originality; doctorate dissertations by originality, innovation and active contribution to the development of knowledge in the student's discipline.

Article Forty-Four:

Master's theses and doctoral dissertations should be written in Arabic. It is permissible to have some written in a different language in certain disciplines on the recommendation of respective Department and College Councils, the Graduate Studies Deanship Council and the decision of the University Council, provided that an abstract in Arabic is supplemented to the thesis.

Article Forty-Five:

Theses should be supervised by Professors and Associate Professors from the University faculty members. Assistant Professors, holding this rank for two years, may supervise master's theses only on having published (or obtained acceptance for publication of) two research items (in the student's area of specialization) in a refereed academic journal.

Article Forty-Six:

Theses and dissertations may be supervised by outstanding and highly competent experts in the field of scientific research who are not necessarily teaching faculty members of the University, on the recommendation of respective Department and College Councils, the Graduate Studies Deanship Council and the decision of the University Council.

Article Forty-Seven:

Faculty members of other departments may assist in supervision, depending on the nature of the thesis, provided that the main supervisor comes from the student's department.

Article Forty-Eight:

Supervisors (individuals or joint) can supervise a maximum of four theses at a time; the number of theses may in urgent cases (on the recommendation of the relevant Department Council and the consent of both College and Graduate Studies Deanship Councils) be increased to five. Theses supervision counts as one credit hour each in faculty members' teaching loads (whether as individual or main).

Article Forty-Nine:

If the supervisor cannot continue, or his service in the University comes to end, a substitute will be proposed by the Department Council, approved by the College Council and authorized by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council.

Article Fifty:

The supervisor should, at the end of each semester, submit a detailed report to the Head of Department on the student's progress in the study, a copy of the report should be sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Article Fifty-One:

On student's completion of thesis, the supervisor should submit a report to the Head of the Department to announce this and declare the thesis's suitability for discussion. The act comes as a prelude to the rest of the procedures specified by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council.

Article Fifty-Two:

If it proves that the student is not serious in study or violates any of the study duties based on the supervisor's report, a warning notification should be delivered to the student by the concerned department, if a student is warned twice and does not obey, the council of postgraduate studies deanship will cancel the student's registration based on the department council's recommendation.

Thesis Defense:

Article Fifty-Three:

The Thesis Judging Panel is set up by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council on the recommendation of respective Department and College Councils.

Article Fifty-Four:

The following are required in a judging panel for a master's thesis:

1. Its members should be odd in number and the supervisor should be chairing it.
2. The minimum number in a panel is three teaching faculty members; the supervisor and assistant supervisor (if any) should never form a majority in the committee.
3. Conditions for thesis' supervisors apply to judging panel members.
4. At least one professor, or an associate professor, should be among the committee members.
5. Its decisions are made through consensus of, at least, two thirds of its members.

Article Fifty-Five:

The following conditions are required in a judging panel for a doctoral dissertation:

1. Its members should be odd in number, a minimum of three, and the supervisor should be chairing it.
2. Its membership should be exclusive to professors and associate professors; the supervisor and assistant supervisor (if any) should never form a majority in the committee.
3. One of the committee members, at least, should be a full professor.
4. One of the committee members, at least, should come from outside the university.
5. Its decisions are made through consensus of, at least, two thirds of its members.

Article Fifty-Six:

In case the thesis supervisor cannot participate in the judging panel (due to death, retirement or a long-term task outside the country), the department shall propose a substitute to be approved by the College Council and authorized by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council.

Article Fifty-Seven:

The Judging Panel will issue a report to be signed by all members and processed by the Head of Department within one week from the date of the defense. The report should include one of the following recommendations:

1. Accepting the thesis and recommending degree awarding.
2. Accepting the thesis with some amendments, but no further defense. A member of the panel shall be authorized to recommend degree awarding after ascertaining that the amendments have been made. Amendments should be completed within a time span not exceeding three months from the date of defense. However, the University Council may exceptionally permit a time extension.
3. Require rectifying of deficiencies in the thesis and another defense within a time limit (not exceeding in length one year from the first) to be specified by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council on recommendation of the relevant Department Council.
4. Not accepting the thesis.

Each member of the judging panel has the right to present different views or reservations in a detailed report to both the Head of Department and the Dean of Graduate Studies within a time limit not exceeding two weeks from the date of thesis defense.

Article Fifty-Eight:

The head of the related department will forward the panel's report to the Dean of Graduate Studies within a time limit not exceeding three weeks from the date of thesis defense.

Article Fifty-Nine:

The Dean of Graduate Studies will forward recommendations of degree awarding to the University Council for approval.

Article Sixty:

A master's degree supervisor from outside the university shall be paid a single reward of five thousand Riyals, and a doctoral degree supervisor from outside the university shall be paid a single reward of seven thousand Riyals.

Article Sixty-One:

A committee member participating in the judging panel of a master's thesis or doctorate dissertation is paid a single reward of one thousand Riyals (on being a teaching faculty in the same university to which the thesis is submitted). University personnel (non-teaching member) and participants from outside the university are paid a single reward of one thousand five hundred Riyals for a doctoral dissertation and one thousand Riyals for the master's. Panel members from outside the Kingdom receive two thousand five hundred Riyals. Panel members from outside the city where the thesis is examined (whether from inside or outside the Kingdom) are paid (in addition to the aforementioned reward) a two-way flight ticket, adequate accommodation (up to two nights), and subsistence allowance; a flight ticket is also paid for the person escorting the panel member if blind, and for the legal male, chaperone, if the panel member is a female, in addition to (up to two nights) accommodation. "The Postgraduate Council, based on a recommendation of the concerned college and department council may add one or two nights if necessary, and if the nature of study required it."

Chapter Nine

General Provisions

Article Sixty-Two:

University Council sets up rules to assess graduate programs based on the proposal of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council; the outcome of the assessment must be submitted to the University Council.

Article Sixty-Three

The Head of Department should submit to both the College Dean and the Dean of Graduate Studies at the end of each academic year a report on the progress of graduate studies in the department.

Article Sixty-Four:

Any issue not stated in any of the provisions of these Rules and Regulations shall be subject to the Statute of the Higher Education Council, its implementing regulations and resolutions effective in the Kingdom.

Article Sixty-Five:

This Statute supersedes all previous Statutes of Graduate Studies at the universities, and it shall come into force at the first academic year following the date of approval. The University Council shall address cases of students enrolled under previous statutes.

Article Sixty-Six

University Councils can set up rules, regulatory and executive procedures for graduate studies provided that they do not conflict with provisions of this Statute.

Article Sixty-Seven:

The Higher Education Council has the right to interpret this Statute.