



## Ph.D. GUIDELINES<sup>1</sup> – INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

*Applicants and Ph.D. candidates are strongly advised to refer to [Doctor of Philosophy - Ph.D. - Degree Regulations \(2023\)](#) and [Centre's PhD Bye-Laws \(2018\)](#) for complete information on procedures and regulation related to the postgraduate doctorate studies and award of the Ph.D. Degree.*

A Ph.D., Doctorate of Philosophy, is a prestigious qualification. It is the highest degree awarded in academia that signifies the highest level of competence in a particular field of study. This qualification is also important for employment and career considerations as well as for name recognition. Over a three-year period of full-time study (six years part time) the candidate investigates a research topic and develops his/her/their research skills, while making his/her/their own arguments and reaching own conclusions. The process culminates in the completion, submission and defence, via an oral examination, of a 100,000-word doctoral dissertation.

Applicants may submit their application form, together with a comprehensive research proposal outlining the proposed project, including research sources and materials, at any time of the year. Before formally submitting an application, prospective candidates are advised to consult with the Director of the Centre for the Study and Practice of Conflict Resolution. Proposals for research leading to Ph.D. degree are accepted when they are related to the main areas of expertise within the Centre (for details please refer to the 'Research areas and potential Ph.D. supervisors' document available on the Centre website). A sample copy of the Ph.D. proposal is available online at [https://www.um.edu.mt/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/379605/phdproposal.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/379605/phdproposal.pdf).

Registration is open to applicants in possession of a Pass with Merit (or equivalent) in a Master's degree in Conflict Resolution, Law, Politics, Diplomacy or International Relations or in a related area from a recognised higher education institution. Experience of academic research in the previous four years is necessary, normally in the form of either an undergraduate degree with a research element in the final year, or work-related experience with evidence through research undertaking reports.

Further information regarding University of Malta Ph.D. Regulations and requirements is available online. For queries on the Ph.D. research programme and admissions, please contact the Centre Administrator at [cspr@um.edu.mt](mailto:cspr@um.edu.mt).

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<sup>1</sup> These guidelines apply mutatis mutandis to M.Phil. students since all UM doctoral students are initially registered as M.Phil. students

<sup>2</sup> These guidelines are based on the guidelines formulated by the Department of International Relations, Faculty of Arts that consented to the Centre's adaptation of their Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation Guidelines.

## **Ph.D. Thesis**

Every Ph.D. candidate in the Centre is required to successfully complete and submit a thesis to qualify for degree conferral. The thesis must pose and answer a specific research question and document the work used to substantiate the candidate's academic answer to the research question.

Thus, the Ph.D. dissertation is a formal, stylized document used to answer a specific research question through a review of arguments, analysis, and conclusions of the candidate. It must demonstrate academic excellence and thirst for knowledge with evidence of the ability to undertake further research without supervision. The thesis must be clear and complete, providing evidence of comprehensive research and knowledge of the key literature relating to the research question.

Sources of information and data that the writer has consulted as well as the ones from which it was quoted have to be accurately cited with a properly constructed bibliography. Considerable importance is attached to matters of presentation of the Ph.D. thesis as a piece of advanced academic work. Adherence to proper academic writing and presentation style is mandatory and is taken into consideration when assessing the work submitted, and candidates are urged to familiarize themselves with these requirements early in the course of writing. Ph.D. thesis style guide and details pertaining to submission are outlined in the second part of the Guidelines available on the Centre web page. This document neither replaces nor amends the University of Malta general regulations governing the Ph.D. degree, which all applicants must familiarise themselves and fully comply with.

Planning is important and self-discipline is needed to ensure a good quality and completion on time. The writing of the thesis remains, by definition, a self-directed process in terms of management, usually with no regular discussions with classmates, effectively no reading assignments and no weekly deadlines from tutors and supervisors.

The Centre assists in formulating a valid Statement of Question / Statement of Problem / Statement of Project Objective that expresses the candidate's own thoughts and ideas. Once the candidate has a statement of question/thesis, he/she/they begin to develop the thesis. The supervisor/tutor will assist in gradually working towards a sharper definition of the analytical and conceptual framework of the thesis.

The University of Malta's Doctoral School provides a doctoral training programme with a range of courses and workshops that offer the opportunity for Ph.D. candidates to develop personal and professional skills and acquire transferable know-how that will be invaluable in subsequent careers. These include the research techniques and methodologies will enable candidates to make a direct contribution to the advancement of knowledge in his/her particular subject area.



Doctoral students are required to maintain a logbook and keep it up to date. The main purpose of the logbook, which is available on the Centre webpage, is to keep a record of meetings with the supervisor and states their outcomes as well as recommendations provided to the student or actions required to be taken on the student's side.

The research background and the skills gained through the doctoral degree are essential within academia and learning centres or in research-intensive occupations in industry. They are also very useful in a variety of other fields. They signal to employers the possession of appropriate training in methodology with requisite analytical skills to carry out rigorous research, and give certain advantages in the job market.

### **Ethical Considerations**

As soon as the title of thesis and supervisor are approved by the Centre Board, every Ph.D. candidate is required to fill in the [Research Ethics and Data Protection online form](#). This form must be completed by all University of Malta researchers, students or anyone else planning to carry out research under the auspices of the UM, regardless the nature of such research. This form must be completed by all University of Malta researchers, students or anyone else planning to carry out research under the auspices of the UM, regardless the nature of such research. It enables users to assess ethical and data protection aspects of their research through a series of structured questions, helping them to self-assess as to whether the form should be submitted to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee<sup>3</sup> (FREC) for records or for review. Students are advised to familiarise themselves with the [UM Research Code of Practice](#) and the [UM Research Ethics Review Procedures](#) prior to completing the form.

Upon submission your supervisor will be given access to the system to assess and endorse the submitted document.

Further information and forms relating to research ethics are available on the UM Research Ethics Committee website at <https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/resources/instructionalvideos/>.

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<sup>3</sup> The committee that carries out ethics review of applications from students registered with the Centre is the **Faculty of Laws Research Ethics Committee**.