

Notes for Guidance of Candidates for the Degree of Master of Medical Sciences

These notes are applicable to candidates admitted in 2017-18 and thereafter and should be read in conjunction with *the Regulations for the Degree of Master of Medical Sciences (MMedSc)*, and the *Regulations Governing the Format, Binding and Presentation of Dissertations for Higher Degrees by Coursework*.

1. Admission Requirements

To be eligible for admission to the Master of Medical Sciences (MMedSc) Course, a candidate shall:

- (a) comply with the General Regulations;
- (b) comply with the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
- (c) hold a Bachelor's degree with honours or the degrees of MBBS of this University, or another qualification of equivalent standard from this University or from another university or comparable institution accepted for this purpose; and
- (d) satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination if required.

Advanced standing for up to 12 credit units may be granted to a candidate who has successfully completed equivalent courses subject to approval by the Faculty Board. Candidates seeking advanced standing should submit a written application to the Faculty Office before commencement of the programme. Such course(s) should be completed no more than 5 years prior to the candidate's commencement of the MMedSc.

2. Qualifying Examination

- (a) A qualifying examination may be set to test the candidate's formal academic ability or his/her ability to follow the course of study prescribed, *e.g.* for applicants holding a degree without honours.
- (b) The teaching departments offering the Specialised Fields of Study will be responsible for deciding the date, format and requirements, *etc.* of the qualifying examinations and making the relevant arrangements.
- (c) A candidate who is required by the department concerned to satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination shall not be permitted to register until he/she has satisfied the examiners in the examination.

3. Period of Study

- (a) The programme shall begin in September each year.
- (b) Candidates are required to complete 69 credit units (equivalent to 1380 learning hours) throughout a 1-year and 2-year study period for full-time and part-time candidates respectively.
- (c) The maximum period of study is 2 years and 4 years for full-time and part-time study respectively.
- (d) Any extra period allowed for revision or re-submission of the dissertation shall not count towards the period of study.
- (e) Candidates engaging in full-time employment should normally be registered for part-time study only, unless special permission is granted by the Board of Studies of the MMedSc.

4. Fees

- (a) The details regarding course fee payment are stipulated in G17 of the General Regulations.

- (b) A candidate becomes liable for fee payment immediately upon acceptance of the University's offer of admission and remains liable until his/her candidature is formally terminated - by completion of the requirements for the degree or by withdrawal from candidature.
- (c) Course fees will be paid in two instalments by full-time candidates and four instalments by part-time candidates within the period of study, with the first payment to be made before the start of the academic year.
- (d) Repeating, re-assessment and extension fees shall be paid in accordance with the University's Schedule of fees.

5. Leave of Absence

A candidate who wishes to be absent from Hong Kong and/or from the approved course of study and research shall be required to submit in writing an application for leave of absence, with the endorsement of the Head/Director of the Department/School where the Specialised Field of Study is taken, to the Board of Studies.

6. Award of the Degree

To be eligible for the award of the degree a candidate shall:

- (a) comply with the General Regulations;
- (b) comply with the Regulation for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
- (c) complete the coursework and examination requirements for the degree as stipulated in the *Regulations for the Degree of MMedSc*;
- (d) complete, to the satisfaction of the examiners, a dissertation as specified in the *Regulations*; and
- (e) satisfy the requirements under Overall Assessment as set out in this document.

7. Curriculum Requirements

To fulfil the curriculum requirements, a candidate shall follow the course of study listed below, with a total of 69 credit units (1380 learning hours) of prescribed work, and satisfy the examiners in each Course.

- (a) 12 credit units of Core Courses (240 learning hours total), for which part-time candidates should complete within the first year of study. Part-time candidates who cannot attend all of the chosen Core Courses in the first year may apply in writing to the Board of Studies for deferment of a maximum of 2 Core Courses to their second year of study.
- (b) 18 credit units of Specialised Courses in a selected Specialised Field of Study (360 learning hours total), which should commence concurrently with the Core Courses. At least 12 credit units of Specialised Courses should be taken in the department/school in which the candidate is based, while the remaining 6 credit units may be taken in another department/school provided they are relevant to the main Specialised Field of Study, subject to approval of the supervisor and Board of Studies. The study of the 18 credit units of Specialised Courses will be spread over 2 years for part-time candidates.
- (c) 39 credit units of capstone experience, i.e. dissertation (780 learning hours total) on a selected project in the chosen Specialised Field of Study. The project will be guided by a supervisor assigned by the department where the candidate is based. The project should be spread over 2 years for part-time candidates.
- (d) All candidates are required to take the Induction Courses which comprise (a) Dissertation Writing, and (b) Clinical Trials and Biostatistics. There will be no examination for the Induction Courses, but candidates must attend all the teaching sessions to satisfy the course requirement.

- (e) In addition, candidates are required to complete the web-based learning course on Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) of the CITI Program (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative at the University of Miami). Candidates must complete all topics required and achieve an average score of at least 80% on all quizzes. On successful completion of the course, please print the completion report and submit to the Faculty no later than July 31 of the final year of study.
- (f) Candidates are advised to consult their departmental coordinators and/or Core Course Co-ordinators concerned about their selection of courses. Changes to the chosen Core and Specialised Courses will only be allowed before the end of September each year, subject to the approval of the Board of Studies.
- (g) Candidates are expected to attend at least 80% of the teaching sessions of each Core Course and Specialised Course.

8. Grading System

A two-tier grading system of Pass or Fail is adopted in all of the curriculum components (i.e. Core Course, Specialised Field of Study and Dissertation).

9. Assessment for Core Courses

- (a) The in-course assessments, which contribute to not more than 40% of the final marks unless otherwise approved by the Board of Studies, will be carried out by the Course tutors throughout the study period. The 2-hour written final examinations will be held at the end of each Course, i.e. normally in February and May each year.
- (b) Results of Core Course examinations should be submitted to the Faculty Office by the Core Course coordinators, for approval by the Board of Examiners and the Faculty Board, within one month of the completion of the examinations.
- (c) A candidate who fails to obtain the minimum pass mark of 50% for a Core Course may be required:
 - (i) to sit for a supplementary examination, which should take place by a specified date not less than one month after the publication of results; or
 - (ii) to repeat the Course in the following academic year and to retake the prescribed examination or examinations; or
 - (iii) to retake the prescribed examination or examinations in the following academic year without repeating the Course; or
 - (iv) to change his/her study plan and enrol in an alternative Course for which additional fee for the Course should be paid.
- (d) Part-time candidates may be allowed to take the supplementary examination for a Core Course in the second year of their study. However, in cases where a candidate has attended a supplementary examination in the first year of study (*i.e.* after his/her first attempt) and fails again in that supplementary examination (*i.e.* second attempt), he/she will not be allowed to re-present himself/herself for examination in the second year of study (*i.e.* third attempt), unless approval is given by the Board of Examiners.
- (e) If a part-time candidate takes the supplementary examination (*i.e.* second attempt) for a Core Course in the second year of study and fails again, the Board of Examiners will, after the results of his/her Specialised Field of Study and Dissertation are obtained, decide whether he/she will be required to repeat the Core Course, to take an alternative course, to re-present himself/herself for examination in the next academic year, or to discontinue his/her study.
- (f) For failures in supplementary examinations, the Core Course coordinators should make a recommendation for consideration by the Board of Examiners, with reference

to points (c) - (e) above, M25 of the *Regulations for the Degree of MMedSc* and G11 of the General Regulations.

10. Assessment for Specialised Courses

- (a) There is no uniform timetabling and assessment method for the Specialised Fields of Study. Examinations for the Specialised Courses will be arranged and run by the teaching departments/schools concerned.
- (b) Details of the examination arrangements for the Specialised Courses, including nominations for internal examiners, external examiners (if applicable) and invigilators, and date, time and venue of the examinations, should be submitted by the departments/schools to the Board of Studies for approval by April 15 each year.
- (c) All examinations for the 18 credit units of the Specialised Courses should be completed not later than the end of June each year, to give sufficient time for the relevant candidates to take supplementary examination.
- (d) The average of the marks of the 18 credit units of the Specialised Courses will be taken to determine whether a candidate passes the Specialised Field of Study. Departments/Schools should forward the average marks of the candidates to the Faculty Office for onward submission to the Board of Examiners, within one month of the completion of the examinations.
- (e) However, in cases where a candidate takes 12 credit units of the Specialised Courses in the home department/school and 6 in another department/school (as approved by the Board of Studies at the time of admission), marks for the individual Course should be submitted to the Faculty Office, which will calculate the average mark for submission to the Board of Examiners.
- (f) A candidate who fails to obtain the minimum pass mark of 50% in the average mark of the 18 credit units of the Specialised Courses will be required to sit for a supplementary examination.
- (g) If a candidate fails again in the supplementary examination, the Board of Examiners will, after the result of his/her dissertation examination is obtained, make a decision on the recommendation of the Head/Director of Department/School concerned, as to whether he/she will be required to repeat the Specialised Course, or to re-present himself/herself for examination in the next academic year, or to discontinue his/her study.

11. Dissertation

- (a) A candidate shall submit the dissertation title, with the endorsement of the supervisor/Department Head concerned, to the Board of Studies for approval at least 3 months before the submission of the dissertation, i.e. by April 30.
- (b) The dissertation should be between 6,000 (minimum) to 10,000 words (maximum) (excluding references), and include two abstracts: one in laymen's language and another a scientific abstract of about 200 words each.
- (c) All candidates must check their dissertation using *Turnitin*. The purpose of which is to help candidates to identify potential plagiarism in their dissertation and to refine the dissertation to avoid plagiarism before formal submission. The workflow of the compulsory plagiarism check is available at <http://www0.hku.hk/facmed/images/document/03edu/taught/Workflow.pdf>. More information about *Turnitin* is also available at the web site of HKU Libraries (<http://lib.hku.hk/turnitin>).

- (d) The dissertation and the Dissertation Submission Form to be signed by the supervisor to confirm that he/she has read the dissertation and *Turnitin* report, and considered that the dissertation is ready for examination, must be submitted to the Faculty Office for arrangement of examination not later than July 31.
- (e) Request for extension of the deadline for submission of the dissertation will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Supervisors are requested to monitor the progress of the candidates closely to ensure that they will be able to submit their dissertations on time. If an extension is approved by the Board of Studies, the maximum period of extension to be granted will be 3 months normally and up to 4 months in exceptional circumstances. The candidate should submit an application with detailed justifications and a working plan together with the endorsement of the supervisor and Head/Director of Department/School concerned, for consideration by the Board of Studies.
- (f) A candidate, who is granted extension of the deadline to submit his/her dissertation (i) of one month or less shall not be required to pay an extension fee; (ii) of more than one month beyond the normative study period (i.e. beyond August 31) is required to pay the extension fee at 5% of the total composition fee for each 3-month extension or part thereof. An additional 5% of the total composition fee shall be charged if a candidate is granted further extension under exceptional circumstances.
- (g) A candidate shall deliver to the Faculty Secretary two copies of the dissertation in temporary binding, in accordance with the *Regulations governing the Format, Binding and Presentation of Dissertations for Higher Degrees by Coursework*. For general guidance in preparing the dissertation, reference may be made to the booklet, entitled "Preparing and Submitting Your Thesis: A Guide for MPhil and PhD Students", published by the Graduate School of The University of Hong Kong.
- (h) One internal examiner who should not be the supervisor and one external examiner (who can also be the external examiner for the MBBS degree if appropriate) shall be nominated by the Department/School concerned for the dissertation of each candidate. Nominations, together with a copy of the curriculum vitae of the proposed external examiner, should be submitted to the Board of Studies for approval by April 30 of the year (same as the deadline for submission of dissertation titles).
- (i) The examiners shall give a total score and their comments on the dissertation on the Examiner's Report Form, and return the completed Form within one month of receipt direct to the Faculty Secretary.
- (j) The average of the marks given by the examiners for a dissertation will normally be taken for submission to the Board of Examiners, except in cases where the substantive recommendations of the examiners are different.
- (k) In the event of a big discrepancy in the marks given by the internal and the external examiners for a dissertation (i.e. one passing and one failure grade), the examiners will be invited to come up with an agreed mark for consideration by the Board of Examiners or a third examiner be nominated by the Board of Examiners to assess the dissertation, and the Board will take into consideration the majority view of the specialist examiners in determining the result of the dissertation examination.
- (l) Upon approval by the Board of Examiners for a candidate to pass the dissertation, the candidate will be required to make corrections and amendments to the dissertation as indicated by the examiners to the satisfaction of the supervisor within a maximum period of one month.

- (m) In accordance with M24(b) of the *Regulations for the Degree of MMedSc*, a candidate who has failed in the dissertation examination (*i.e.* below the pass mark of 50%) but has passed the written papers and has satisfactorily completed the prescribed written and practical work, may be permitted by the Board of Examiners to revise the dissertation and to re-present it for re-examination by the same examiners within a specified period of not more than 4 months after receipt of a notice that it is unsatisfactory.
- (n) A copy of the finalised dissertation will be an accession to the Library, as provided under the *Regulations governing the Format, Binding and Presentation of Dissertations for Higher Degrees by Coursework*.
- (o) An oral examination is not mandatory.

12. Overall Assessment

- (a) A candidate is deemed to have passed the MMedSc programme if he/she has obtained a minimum pass mark of 50% for each of the curriculum component, *i.e.* Core Course, Specialised Field of Study and Dissertation.
- (b) A candidate must satisfy the attendance requirement of the Induction Courses on (a) Dissertation and (b) Clinical Trials and Biostatistics. A candidate must also complete the web-based learning course on Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) of the CITI Program (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative at the University of Miami) and obtain “Pass” in the transcript report and submit to the Faculty by July 31 of the final year of study.
- (c) The Board of Examiners may consider the award of a distinction if a candidate has obtained an average mark of at least 65, 75 and 70 for the Core Course, Specialised Field of Study and Dissertation respectively, and subject to the University’s norm-referencing guideline, *i.e.* within the top 10% of the awardees.
- (d) Only the first attempt of any examination will be taken into account for the award of distinction.
- (e) A distinction should however not be awarded in case where a candidate has failed to submit the dissertation or complete all the courses within the period of study and is granted an extension thereof.
- (f) A candidate who is unable because of his/her illness to be present for any part of an examination may be permitted to present himself/herself at the supplementary examination of the relevant course(s). The application shall be made in writing to the Board of Studies within two weeks of the first day of absence from the examination.
- (i) A candidate who has failed to satisfy the examiners in an examination may be required to discontinue his/her studies (under G12 of the General Regulations).
- (j) A candidate who has failed to satisfy the examiners and who is not required to discontinue may be required to repeat the whole or any part of the Course, as prescribed by the Board of Examiners, before re-presenting himself/herself for examination.

VC/aw

March 2018