

Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs)
for
Managing PhD Programs



SUPERIOR UNIVERSITY

Directorate of Postgraduate Studies (DOPS)



NOTIFICATION

No. SU/DOPS/24-3. On the recommendations of the Directorate of Post Graduate Studies the Board of Advanced Studies and Research has approved the following:

- i. SOPs and Forms for Managing MS Programs
- ii. SOPs and Forms for Managing PhD Programs
- iii. PG Students Handbook
- iv. PhD Admission Criteria Revision

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Director
Directorate of Postgraduate Studies

Copy is forwarded for information and necessary action to:

1. Director General (P &D)
2. Deans/HoDs/Program Leaders
3. Director, QEC
4. Director, ORIC
5. Controller of Examinations



SOPs for Managing PhD Program

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Preamble

The Superior University has destined itself to become the leading research university of the country. Therefore, efforts are being made in all directions to promote high quality research through postgraduate studies, publications and research projects. To achieve this vision, the University strives to foster a culture of high-quality academic and research practices through standardized processes and structured postgraduate programs. This SOP document has been developed to streamline the management of MS and PhD programs, ensuring consistency, transparency, and efficiency across all operations. By implementing these SOPs, the University aims to provide clear guidance to faculty, staff, and scholars, enabling them to effectively contribute to the academic and research goals of the institution.

Scope of the Document

This SOP document encompasses all aspects of managing MS and PhD programs at Superior University, including admission processes, coursework, research credits, proposal and thesis evaluations, and degree completion requirements. The SOPs are designed to align with the policies and guidelines set forth by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) for graduate and postgraduate programs.

The Directorate is envisaged to function as a central platform for improving rigor and quality across postgraduate programs through standardized policies and processes. Collaborating with Deans and stakeholders, DOPS ensures adherence to HEC guidelines and university policies, facilitating students in producing top-tier research and timely degree completion.

PhD Milestones

Following are the PhD milestones and sequence-wise details of SOPs:

- Admission
- Course Work
- Comprehensive Examination
- Research Work Proposal
- Publication of at least Two Research Papers
- Foreign Evaluation
- Dissertation Defence
- PhD Milestone Summary
- PhD Country Directory

1- Admissions

Superior University offers admission opportunities through both online and manual channels for all postgraduate (PG) programs.

a) Procedures

- i) **Planning and Announcement of Admissions:** To ensure compliance with HEC GEP 2023 clause 1.1 (e) and Superior University Governance System (Statutes, Regulation and Rules) an Admission Committee has been constituted that is responsible for planning and announcing the admissions each year.
- ii) **Formation of Faculty-Specific Admission Committees:** In support of the University Admissions Committee, Each Faculty will have a Postgraduate Admission Committee approved by the Rector for its program(s) as per following details.

1	Chairman Convener	Dean of the Faculty Concerned
2	Members	Minimum three faculty members from various programs offered by the faculty having PhD/MS/MPhil qualifications provided that at least two of the faculty members must be PhD

- iii) **Admission Criteria:** The Postgraduate Admission Committees will propose and refine admission criteria, ensuring alignment with institutional goals and compliance with HEC and Superior University standards.
- iv) **Admission Test Creation:** The committees will develop admission test materials based on the academic standards of HEC GEP 2023 clause 2.1(ii) and Superior University's objectives.
- v) **Conducting Interviews:** The committees will conduct the interviews with prospective students based on a predetermined evaluation framework to ensure fairness. The committee will also verify the students' prequalification to grant them admission.
- vi) **Merit List Finalization:** Admission Committee will finalize the merit list of selected candidates and forward it to the admissions office for fee voucher issuance.
- vii) **Provisional Supervisor Allocation:** The committees will provisionally allocate supervisors to selected students during the interview process based on the candidate's research interests or other relevant factors.
- viii) **Issuance of Admission Offer Letters:** Following interviews, the committees will ensure that admission offer letters, signed by the respective Dean, are issued to successful candidates.

b) Terms of Reference (TORs)

i) University Admissions Committee

- Plan and oversee the annual admission process for all PG programs.
- Ensure compliance with HEC GEP 2023 and the University's governance system.
- Establish timelines for the admissions process, including announcements and application deadlines.

ii) Postgraduate Admission Committees (Faculty-Specific)

- **Admission Criteria Development:** Propose, review, and update the admission criteria for PG programs.
- **Formation of Admissions Test:** Design and finalize comprehensive and relevant admission test materials that align with the academic standards laid out by HEC GEP 2023 clause 2.1 (ii) and objectives of Superior University.
- **Interview Process:** Conduct interviews with prospective students and evaluate them based on predetermined interview and evaluation criteria.
- **Provisional Supervisor Allocation:** Ensure the allocation of provisional supervisors to selected students during interviews based on research alignment.
- **Offer Letters:** Ensure the issuance of admission offer letters signed by the Dean post-interview.

c) Admission to the program

Candidates interested in applying for PhD admissions at Superior University will have to meet the admission criteria highlighted in **HEC GEP 2023, clause 3, and/or Superior University Admissions Policy Fall 2024 & Spring 2025.**

i) Procedures

a. Basic Academic Qualification:

- Before admission into a PhD program, the student must fulfill the criteria defined in HEC GEP 2023, clause 3.1-3.

b. Admissions Tests and Interview:

The candidate is required to submit/pass the test as per **HEC GEP 2023, clause 3.4,**

- Conduct the test equivalent to GRE/HAT General developed at the University, with a passing score of 60%. OR
- Accept a test equivalent to GRE/HAT General, conducted by testing bodies accredited by HEC, with a passing score of 60%.
- In addition to clause 3.4(a), the university may conduct subject test for admission in PhD programs, if required.

- c. **Admission Process Management:** The Admissions Office will manage the entire admission process, from information provision to student ID issuance. This includes

supporting prospective students, maintaining accurate records, and ensuring efficient service.

- d. **Logistics for Admission Tests and Interviews:** The Admissions Office will announce test and interview dates, manage logistics, and ensure applicants are informed about the admission test/interview dates and venues in advance.
- e. **Merit List Publication:** The Admissions Office will display the merit list of selected candidates approved by the faculty admission committees and issue fee vouchers to successful candidates.
- f. **Communication with Admitted Students:** Upon admission, the team will inform newly admitted students about the commencement of the Research Edge Program via email and SMS.
- g. **Coordination with DOPS and OEC:** The Admissions Office will provide support to the Office of Engagement and Co-creation (OEC) and Directorate of Postgraduate Studies (DOPS) to organize the Research Edge Program for newly admitted students. Admissions office will share the students' records (Student Name, Roll number, Faculty, Program, Mobile no. and Email, etc.) with DOPS and OCE for future correspondence.
- h. **Provision of the Students' files to the Program Leader:** Admission office will be responsible for sharing the complete files of the admitted students with the respective program leaders before the commencement of classes.

ii) TORs for Admissions Office

- a. **Information Provision and Data Collection:** Provide accurate and essential information about the postgraduate programs and collect comprehensive student data for processing admissions.
- b. **Student Documentation Management:** Prepare student files with all required documents and hand them over to the respective Postgraduate Program Leaders for interview purposes.
- c. **Provision of Admission File to the Admission Committee:** At the time of the interview, the admission office will share the complete admission file of the prospective student with the admission committee. Each file must include the admission form, educational documents, and any other required or supportive documentation necessary for the assessment and decision-making process.
- d. **Admission Process Management:**
 - Assist prospective students in completing admission forms.
 - Coordinate with applicants and faculties for a smooth and structured admission process.
 - Announce admission tests and interview dates in collaboration with relevant faculties.

- Ensure all admission test and interview logistics are in place, including venue arrangement and applicant communication.
- e. **Merit List Management:** Display the merit list of selected candidates as finalized by admission committees of respective faculties and issue fee vouchers for enrolment.
- f. **Collaboration with DOPS and OEC:** Coordinate with DOPS and OEC to organize Research Edge Program, ensuring smooth onboarding of newly admitted students.

2- Research Edge Program

The Research Edge Freshmen Program aims to equip first-year students with foundational research skills and foster a culture of inquiry and critical thinking. This program is essential for building a strong academic foundation for students at the university with the following objectives,

- To establish a solid foundation for PG research journey.
- To equip students with crucial skills and insights for academic and research endeavors.
- To orient postgraduate students about the research ecosystem at Superior University.
- To master resource utilization and understand university and HEC governance mechanisms.
- To gain knowledge about postgraduate journey milestones and essential research skills.

Scope

These SOPs apply to all stakeholders involved in the Research Edge Program, including the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies (DOPS), Office of Engagement and Cocreation (OEC) and Program Leaders. The program includes 4 cutting-edge modules, designed on innovative and experiential learning methodology and creative assessments.

- Module 1: Orientation of Superior Research Culture and Resources
- Module 2: Research Databases, Platforms, and Journal Ranking System
- Training Module 3: Literature Search and Management Module
- Training Module 4: Indexing, Formatting, and Overview of Research Software

a) Procedures

- i) **Scheduling and Trainer Finalization:** DOPS will create the training calendar and finalize trainers at least one week before the start of the program.
- ii) **Student Communication:** OEC will send SMS notifications to students one week before the program begins, providing details about the program and any necessary preparations.
- iii) **WhatsApp Groups:** DOPS will ensure the making of faculty-specific WhatsApp groups by the Program Leaders for effective communication and coordination within the Research Edge Program.



- iv) **Account Creation and Access:** OEC will ensure that all LMS and Gmail accounts are created one week before the program starts and will notify students of their login credentials.
- v) **Logistics Arrangement:** OEC will arrange and manage each Research Edge session's logistics (venue, refreshments, IT support, etc.)
- vi) **Material Upload:** OEC will upload session materials to the LMS portals before each session.
- vii) **Research Edge Certificates:** The OEC will design and arrange printed certificates for participants of the Research Edge Program. These certificates will be distributed during the fourth session to students who have attended all four sessions of the program.
- viii) **Session Report:** Program Leaders will submit student attendance to DOPS and ensure that students complete their feedback through the LMS. DOPS will then forward the attendance to OEC for compiling the post-event report.
- ix) **Marketing and Media Coverage:** DOPS will handle all marketing activities, ensuring that promotional content is prepared and shared on social media platforms, before and after each session.

b) Terms Of References

i) Directorate of Postgraduate Studies (DOPS)

- Develop and maintain the Research Edge training calendar.
- Finalize and onboard trainers for the program.
- Conduct an onboarding meeting with Program Leaders to outline the objectives, roles, and expectations of the Freshmen Program.
- Ensure the creation of faculty-specific WhatsApp groups for communication and coordination related to the program, with the support of Program Leaders. Ms. Natasha will provide the enrolled student lists.
- Arrange and oversee LMS training for students, ensuring the availability of a qualified trainer.
- Manage marketing activities related to the Research Edge Program, including:
 - Pre and post-social media marketing of each session.
 - Watermarking of session materials.
 - Photography and media coverage of each session.
- Organize and execute the Train The Trainer program for the Research Edge.

ii) Office of Engagement and Cocreation (OEC)

- Obtain student lists from the Admissions Office and send SMS notifications to students about the Freshmen Program.
- Create LMS and Gmail accounts for postgraduate students and inform them accordingly.

- Arrange logistics for each Research Edge session, including venue, refreshments, and IT support.
- Provide a diary and pen to each participant in the Research Edge Program.
- Upload all necessary materials to the LMS portals for student access.
- OEC will maintain and upload the students' attendance on LMS portals. DOPS will be sharing the students' attendance with OEC.
- OEC will share the post-session report of Research Edge program with the DOPS. This report will be based on students' attendance and feedback submitted through LMS.
- Certificates printing and distribution to the students of the Research Edge Program.

iii) Program Leaders

- Establish and manage faculty-specific WhatsApp groups, in consultation with DOPS, for effective communication and coordination within the Research Edge Program.
- Get respective students on board and mark attendance during each program session.
- Program Leaders will contact absent students from the Research Edge program and submit a report to DOPS regarding the absentees along with reasons.

c) Evaluation and Feedback

- After completing each session of the Research Edge Program, Program leaders will collect feedback from students to assess the program's effectiveness.
- Participation by Program Leaders (or Coordinators) is mandatory. At the end of the program, the rector and HR department will receive a list of attendance.

3- Course Work

Upon completion of the Research Edge program, PG students will enrol himself/herself in the courses offered in the first semester.

a) Procedures

- i) Course Registration and Enrolment:** Each department will finalize the course registration and semester enrolment of its students within two weeks prior to the commencement of the semester/session.
- ii) Course Load:** A regular student may register for credit hours as per university policy during a Fall/Spring semester. In exceptional cases, with the recommendation of the Academic Advisor/Supervisor, the Department Chairman may adjust the student's course load.
- iii) Course Add/Drop:** As per Superior University PhD Regulations.
- iv) Learning Management System (LMS):** Each faculty member will upload the course materials on the LMS portal for students' access before the semester begins.

- v) **Course Calendar Development:** The department will prepare a Course Calendar, including faculty allocation and load adjustments, which will be reviewed by Hoods and approved by the Dean.
- vi) **Coursework Completion:** To proceed with the comprehensive exam, each student must complete the required coursework (minimum 18 credit hours) with a minimum of 3.00 CGPA out of 4.00 as per HEC and University policy.
- vii) **Admission Cancellation:**
 - An unauthorized absence of the scholar from the University for two consecutive regular semesters will lead to cancellation of the admission.
 - Where the admission of a scholar has been cancelled, the re-admission request may be considered if supported by the Supervisor, and if the scholar has a chance to complete the program within the maximum allowed duration.

b) TORs for Program Leader

- Program Leader will ensure the semester enrolment of the students.
- Management of exceptional cases for add or drop of the courses
- Program Leaders will ensure the uploading of course materials by the respective faculty members.
- Program leader will Coordinate classroom and resource bookings with the Registrar's Office, and students will be informed accordingly.
- Program Leaders will provide academic support throughout the degree program, with assistance from relevant departments.
- Program leaders will ensure that PhD students complete a minimum of 18 credit hours of coursework with a minimum CGPA of 3.00 to proceed to the next stage.

4- Comprehensive Exam

A student/PhD Scholar, who has completed the prescribed coursework of the program (minimum 18 credit hours with 3.00 CGPA), will be eligible to appear in the comprehensive exam, conducted by the Examination Office. Each student will be allowed a maximum of two attempts as per **HEC GEP 2023 clause 3.7** to be granted candidacy as PhD researchers. Following are the guidelines,

a) Procedures

- i) **Examination Schedule:** The Directorate of Postgraduate Studies (DOPS), Controller of Examinations (COE), and respective faculties will finalize and announce the date for the comprehensive exam at least one month before the exam date.
- ii) **Registration for Comprehensive Exam:** After the announcement of the examination date, the student/PhD scholar must submit a request using the **C-1 Form** (Comprehensive Exam Registration Form) to the Program Leader within one week to appear in the exam.

iii) Preparation of Question Papers:

- The comprehensive exam will consist of a written exam with long subjective questions, to evaluate the student's knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- The courses and course contents will be finalized by the respective FRBs of faculties for a given program. Faculty members will then prepare the question papers based on the approved content and submit them to the Dean. The dean will compile the question paper and ensure the necessary number of copies are made.
- The passing percentage for the comprehensive exam will be 70%.

iv) Question Paper Submission: The Dean will prepare the question papers in sealed envelopes, ensuring integrity and confidentiality, and submit them to the COE at least one week prior to the examination.

v) Conduct of the Examination:

- The comprehensive exam will be administered by the Controller of Examination Office (COE) once each semester (Spring and Fall).
- If a student fails to appear in the exam after registration, it will count as one of their two attempts.
- Students who pass the comprehensive examination will proceed to candidacy as PhD researchers.
- Reference to **HEC GEP 2023 clause 3.7 (ii)** *"The required coursework, comprehensive exam, and defines of synopsis/research proposals should be completed within the 1st six semesters of the registration into a PhD program. The responsibility in this regard rests collectively with the PhD student and the university. In case of non-compliance, the registration shall be cancelled and transcripts for completion of coursework may be issued to the student."*

vi) Result Announcement: The Controller of Examinations Office will announce the comprehensive exam results within 15 days of the exam date.

b) Terms Of References

i) Program Leaders

- **Eligibility Verification:** Ensure that the student/PhD scholar has completed the required coursework with a CGPA of 3.0 or above before registration for the comprehensive exam.
- **Notification and Communication:** Notify eligible PhD students about the comprehensive exam details (Date, Time, Venue) via formal emails and WhatsApp groups.
- **Candidate Verification:** Prepare an eligibility list of candidates for the comprehensive exam, containing the following details and submit that list to the COE office:
 - Name
 - Student ID



- Program
- Faculty
- CGPA
- Completed Credit Hours
- **Examination Support:** Work with COE and the faculty to ensure a smooth examination process, including question paper handling and logistics on the exam day.

ii) Controller of Examinations (COE)

- **Exam Scheduling:** Controller of Examination Office (OEC) will announce the exam date after consultation with the DOPS.
- **Examination Logistics:** Organize university-wide comprehensive exams at a single venue (campus) during regular semesters (Spring and Fall).
- **Question Paper Management:** Receive sealed question papers from the Dean at least one week before the exam and ensure secure handling until the examination day.
- **Result Announcement:** The Controller of Examinations Office will announce the comprehensive exam results within 15 days of the exam date.

iii) Faculties and Deans

- **Question Paper Preparation:** Faculty members are responsible for course-specific question banks for the comprehensive exam and submit the prepared question papers to the Dean of the respective faculty for review and compilation.
- **Compilation of Question Papers:** Collect and compile all course-specific question papers for the comprehensive exam, ensuring they are aligned with the syllabus and program requirements.
- **Submission of Question Papers:** Dean will submit the compiled question papers in sealed envelopes to the COE at least one week before the exam and ensure the necessary number of copies are prepared based on the number of registered candidates.

5- Supervisor Allocation/Change

Once the student/PhD scholar passes the comprehensive exam, they can proceed with supervisor allocation milestone. While selecting or Changing the Supervisor, it is mandatory to ensure that the supervisor meets the supervision criteria as per **HEC GEP 2023 clause 4.2.2(i)** and supervisor's research area aligns with the student's intended research area. The following procedure will be adopted:

a) Procedure

- iv) **Research Registration:** The student's research work will be registered as a regular course after passing the comprehensive exam. Registration and examination of the research work will be managed via the Thesis Management System (TMS). Program



leader will update TMS about the supervisors' lists and available slots for PhD scholars to apply accordingly.

- v) **Supervisor Allocation Request:** The student will initiate the supervisor allocation process by submitting the T-2 Form (Supervisor Allocation Form) to the program leader.
- vi) **Supervisory Load Management:** The supervisory load will be managed according to **HEC GEP 2023 clause 7.1.1 (c)**, where each supervisor may supervise up to twelve (12) MS/MPhil and PhD students, with no more than five PhD students at a time.
- vii) **Supervisor Change Request:** If a supervisor leaves the faculty or proceeds on long leave (i.e. leave for more than six months) then the faculty must appoint a new supervisor from the faculty and the outgoing supervisor may be appointed as co-supervisor if required (as per FRB/BASAR approval). Faculties are to ensure all such changes before processing the leave of the concerned supervisor. The student may request a change of supervisor by submitting the **T-3 Form** (Supervisor Change Form) to the program leader.
- viii) **Approval by Faculty Research Board (FRB):** All supervisor allocation/change requests submitted to the program leader, will be presented to the Faculty Research Board (FRB) for approval. All FRB cases will be forwarded for BASAR approval and notification.
- ix) **Notification Issuance:** Notifications regarding supervisor allocation or changes will be issued to students within one week following the BASAR meeting.
- x) **Regular Meetings with Supervisor:** The supervisor and Supervisee are responsible for holding at least one meeting every six months to discuss research progress.

b) TORs for Program Leaders

Following are the TORs of the program leaders

- i) **Eligibility Verification:** Program Leaders will ensure that the student has passed the comprehensive exam as per policy and all requirements are being met by the students before registering for the thesis.
- ii) **Supervisor Allocation Facilitation:** Facilitate the supervisor allocation and change process for students and ensure alignment with their research areas.
- iii) **Supervisory Load Management:** Manage and monitor supervisory loads in accordance with HEC GEP 2023, clause 7.1.1(c).
- iv) **Approval Process:** Prepare and present cases for supervisor allocation/change to the Faculty Research Board (FRB) for formal approval and notification.
- v) **Thesis Management System (TMS):** Ensure all relevant records, including supervisor allocations and meeting details, are uploaded and maintained in the Thesis Management System (TMS).

6- Proposal Stage

As per HEC GEP 2023 clause 3.7 (ii) *“The required coursework, comprehensive exam, and defense of synopsis/research proposals should be completed within the 1st six semesters of the registration into a PhD program. The responsibility in this regard rests collectively with the PhD student and the university. In case of non-compliance, the registration shall be cancelled and transcripts for completion of coursework may be issued to the student.”*

The Research Scholar will arrange regular meetings with their assigned supervisor to ensure consistent progress. The supervisor, in turn, will actively monitor the scholar's progress and facilitate the timely completion of the research proposal.

At the end of each semester, the supervisor will evaluate the research credits registered by the scholar, providing an assessment of either Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory.

- A single Unsatisfactory evaluation will place the scholar on probation.
- A second Unsatisfactory evaluation may result in the termination of the scholar from the degree program.

a) Procedure

- Proposal Preparation:** The student/scholar will develop a research proposal (proposal) in consultation with the assigned supervisor. The research proposal must align with UNSDGs, National Research Priorities (NRP), and have practical implications for relevant industries. The supervisor will review the proposal and approve the **A-1 Form (UNSDGs and NRP Alignment Form)** to confirm the alignment.
- Proposal Submission for Evaluation:** Student/research scholar will submit the updated proposal to the supervisor along with **T-4 Form (Proposal Submission Form)** for evaluation. The proposal must be written in the university's approved format.
- Plagiarism Check:** The supervisor will check the Similarity Index through SIRC and attach the plagiarism report, with an overall similarity index of $\leq 19\%$ and $\leq 5\%$ from any single source, which will be attached to the proposal before submission to the program leader.
- Proposal Review Process:** Program Leader will be responsible for scheduling the FRB meeting to review and evaluate the proposal. The proposal will be evaluated in proposal defence through Faculty Research Board (FRB). **FRB** will use **E-1 Form (Proposal Evaluation Form)** to evaluate the proposal. Minimum of 70% marks are required for the proposal to be considered successful.
- Feedback Incorporation:** Recommendations and comments made by the FRB will be shared with Students/scholars for incorporation in proposal. Once the proposal is revised, the student will resubmit it through the supervisor to the FRB for final approval in case of major changes. The proposal will be evaluated with one of the following decisions:

- Accepted as is
- Accepted with minor changes
- Accepted with major changes
- Rejected

vi) Revision/Rejection and Resubmission:

- If the proposal is accepted with revisions, the revised proposal must be submitted within four weeks along with changes certificate. Failure to do so will result in the rejection of the proposal.
- A rejected proposal may be submitted at any time during a semester for re-examination with a certificate from the supervisor that 'reasons of rejection have been addressed adequately.

vii) Consequence of Failure: There will be a maximum of two chances to qualify the PhD research proposal and if the scholar fails to defend the proposal even after the passage of three years (Within 1st six semesters) from the admission, then reference to **HEC GEP 2023 clause 3.7 (ii)** the registration will be cancelled and transcripts for completion of coursework may be issued to the student

viii) Approval and Endorsement: All research proposals and Supervisors' names approved by FRB will be forwarded to the DOPS by the Dean of the respective faculty for the endorsement of BASR.

ix) Research Ethics Approval: Once the proposal will be approved by the FRB then as per **HEC GEP 2023 Clause 1.1 (k) & 5** and **University Policy on Research Ethics and Integrity**, the student/scholar will submit his/her proposal with the consent of the supervisor to the concerned HOD for consideration and permission of the Research Ethics Committee (REC). The REC will forward its recommendations (if any) within **10 days** of submission of the proposal for improvement/incorporation.

b) Terms of Reference

i) Supervisor

- Supervisor will ensure that the proposal is aligned with UNSDGs and NRP and have practical implications for relevant industries.
- Check the Similarity Index and attach the plagiarism report with the proposal before submission.
- Endorse the A-1 Form and submit the proposal for defence.
- Attend the FRB meetings for proposal evaluation and defense. Provide feedback on the proposal and oversee revisions if required.

ii) Program Leader

- Schedule FRB meetings for proposal evaluation and defense.
- Ensure timely communication of FRB recommendations and feedback to the scholar.



- Oversee the proposal evaluation process, ensuring all relevant forms (A-1, T-4, and E-1) are completed and submitted on time.
- Facilitate the resubmission process for proposals requiring revisions.
- Forward the minutes of FRB meetings to the DOPS for BASR approval.
- Program Leader will ensure the timely issuance of Ethical Approval Letters by the REC.

iii) Faculty Research Board (FRB)

- Evaluate the submitted proposals based on their academic merit, alignment with UNSDGs, and plagiarism standards.
- Provide feedback and recommendations for improvement if necessary.
- Use the E-1 Form to evaluate proposals and ensure consistency in evaluation.

7- Research Work

The process for conducting and submitting PhD research, ensuring adherence to HEC GEP 2023 guidelines and university standards. The procedures ensure timely evaluation, submission, and foreign review of the dissertation and compliance with publication requirements.

a) Procedure

- i) Research Meetings:** The PhD scholar will arrange regular meetings with their assigned supervisor to discuss progress on their research work. The supervisor will provide guidance and ensure the timely completion of the dissertation.
- ii) Evaluation of Research Credits:** The scholar's supervisor will evaluate research credits registered by a PhD scholar at the end of each semester. The evaluation will be either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If a scholar receives one Unsatisfactory evaluation, they will be placed on probation. A second Unsatisfactory evaluation may result in the termination of the scholar from the degree program.
- iii) Thesis Submission:**
 - PhD scholar may submit their dissertation to the supervisor after completion of 30 Cr. Hrs. Of research provided, they meet following conditions
 - Dissertation is as per the approved format of the University
 - PhD scholar has an active registration status at the time of submission
 - **E-2 Form (Final Thesis Submission Form)** would be used for dissertation submission.
 - Supervisor will submit the students' thesis to the program leader for internal thesis defence.
- iv) Internal Thesis Defence:**
 - The Program Leader will schedule the internal thesis defence after the submission of the dissertation.
 - The internal defense committee will review the dissertation and provide feedback/suggestions for improvement.

- The feedback will be shared with the scholar for incorporation before proceeding to foreign evaluation.
 - PhD scholar will submit the thesis to the supervisor for plagiarism check, after changes incorporation
- v) **Plagiarism Check:** After the internal thesis defence and changes incorporation, supervisor will check the similarity index from SIRC and submit the report. The similarity index must be $\leq 19\%$ in total, and $\leq 5\%$ from a single source. The Similarity index should be considered very seriously in the section of findings and conclusion of the document. The similarity index for that section should not be more than 9% as per HEC GEP 2023 clause 5.4. Similarity index from the PhD scholar's own published work carried out during the PhD studies will be excluded as per HEC policy.
- vi) **Thesis Proofreading:** AI tools would be used for thesis proofreading only and not for the improvement of the thesis content. The proofreading report will be submitted along with the thesis to proceed with the next stage.
- vii) **Research Publications:**
- Publish at least two research papers in Scopus-indexed journals with the supervisor/co-supervisor as co-author.
 - Publication of at least one research paper from the PhD research work after the approval of proposal, representing the scholar's sole affiliation with the University as the principal author.
 - The mandatory papers will have a co-author as his/her supervisor/co-supervisor only.
- viii) **Thesis Submission to the DOPS:** Supervisor will submit the thesis to the DOPS along with the plagiarism report from SIRC, thesis proofreading report and Publication to proceed with foreign evaluation of the thesis.
- ix) **Selection of Foreign/Local Reviewers:** COE office will recommend four examiners to the worthy Rector for approval. The examiners would be from the BASR-approved pool including two foreign examiners from **technologically/academically advanced countries**, as per the list published by the HEC and two local examiners. **Foreign Evaluation Fee:** Student/research scholar will pay the fee associated with the foreign review.
- x) **Thesis Evaluation and Feedback:**
- The Controller of Examinations Office will send the thesis along with E-4 Form to the selected foreign and local examiners for evaluation, with the entire evaluation process expected to be completed within 6 to 8 weeks.
 - If a reviewer does not share their consent to review the thesis or fails to respond after three reminders, the thesis will be forwarded to the next approved reviewer by the competent authority.



- If the reviewer rejects the dissertation of the student, then the thesis will be sent to the third approved foreign reviewer for evaluation.
- A PhD dissertation must have at least two out of three positive foreign reviews to make the scholar eligible for the final defense.
- COE office will share the combined (foreign + Local) thesis feedback with DOPS team to share with the scholar and supervisor

xi) Changes Incorporation: PhD scholar will incorporate the changes and the supervisor will make sure that the suggested changes by the foreign and local examiner have been incorporated. C-2 Form will be used to complete the process before proceeding with the final defence.

b) Terms of Reference (TORs)

i) PhD Scholar

- Arrange and attend regular meetings with the supervisor to discuss research progress.
- Submit the dissertation in the approved university format and ensure active registration status at the time of submission.
- Ensure the dissertation's similarity index adheres to the HEC GEP 2023 guidelines before submission.
- Get the thesis proofread through AI tools and submit the report.
- Pay the required fee for foreign review
- Address any minor/major revisions requested by foreign and local reviewers.
- Publish two research papers in Scopus-indexed journals before the final defense.

ii) Supervisor

- Guide the scholar through the research process and ensure timely completion of the dissertation.
- Evaluate the scholar's research credits each semester and provide feedback.
- Check the dissertation's similarity index from SIRC and submit the report for evaluation.
- Ensure the proofreading as per shared guidelines.
- Forward the thesis to the Program Leader for internal defense and then to the DOPS for evaluation.

iii) Program Leader

- Schedule the internal thesis defense and ensure the student documents/file is complete.
- Share the internal defense committee feedback with the PhD scholar.
- Coordinate with the supervisor, DOPS and COE office to ensure the dissertation evaluation.

iv) Controller of Examination

- Manage the foreign and local review process by forwarding the dissertation to selected reviewers.
- Share the reviewers' feedback with the DOPS.
- Facilitate the final defense process after receiving feedback from foreign reviewers.

8- Final Defence

Final Thesis defence will be arranged by the Controller of Examination Office, and following steps will be followed.

a) Procedure

i) Thesis Defence Committee:

- A PhD dissertation will be examined, in an open defense, by a defense committee comprising of:
 - Session chair
 - Dean – Member
 - Supervisor – Member
 - Two external examiners - Members
 - One internal examiner - Member
 - COE

ii) Defence Process:

- The defence committee will use **E-6 Form (Thesis Defence Form)** for evaluation.
- After the defense, the chairman of the defense committee will invite the recommendations of the examiners that:
 - Dissertation may be accepted as is
 - Dissertation may be accepted after minor revisions
 - Dissertation may be accepted after major revisions; or
 - Dissertation may be rejected.

iii) Thesis Feedback:

- Controller of Examination office will share the recommendations/feedback received by the defence committee with student/PhD scholars to incorporate into the dissertation.
- Supervisor will ensure the incorporation of the suggested changes through C-2 Form.

iv) Post Defence Process:

- **Minor Revisions:** Dissertation with minor revisions will be submitted within 04 weeks from the date of defense and will be accepted with a certificate of changes from the supervisor that 'the revisions have been incorporated'.

- **Major Revisions:** Dissertation with major revisions will be submitted within 12 weeks from the date of examination and will be accepted with certificates of changes from both external and internal examiners that 'the revisions have been incorporated satisfactorily'. Dissertation with major revision requires re-defense by the same defense committee, however, the re-defense can be waived-off by the BASR by evaluating the certificates furnished by the examiners.

v) Rejection of the Dissertation:

- If, after the final defense, a scholar fails to submit the corrected version of his/her dissertation, within specified time then, unless a time extension request is made in writing and approved by the Chairman FRB/BASR, his/her dissertation may be rejected with the approval of the FRB/BASR.
- A dissertation may be rejected if the examiners are convinced, for reasons to be recorded, that most of the research work presented in the scholar's dissertation is not carried out by him/her independently and there is significant external help involved and the scholar does not have reasonable strength of knowledge on the material presented in the dissertation.
- PhD scholar whose dissertation has been rejected by the BASR on the recommendations of the defense committee will cease to be a student at the University.

vi) PhD Degree Completion and Award:

- Upon successful completion of the thesis defense, the PhD scholar will be honored with a souvenir and a ceremonial sash presentation ceremony. This gesture symbolizes the scholar's accomplishment and marks their transition into the community of researchers.
- PhD Scholar will be awarded with the degree as per HEC GEP 2023 section 3 which must be met by a student or the department.
- Minimum duration for the PhD degree will be three (03) years and the maximum allowable duration, inclusive of semester breaks, will be seven (07) years from the date of admission. However, the BASR can relax the upper limit to a maximum of one year.
- By auditing the compliance for the award of PhD degree, a PhD completion notification will be issued under the seal of the Controller of Examination.

b) Terms of Reference (TORs)

i) PhD Scholar

- Submit the final thesis along with the Changes Incorporation Certificate to the supervisor and COE after incorporating feedback from the foreign reviewers.
- Submit the plagiarism report (as per policy) along with the thesis for final defence.
- Be prepared to defend the dissertation in an open defense before the defense committee.

ii) Supervisor

- Ensure that the final thesis meets all academic and formatting requirements before submitting it to the COE for the final defense.



- Act as a member of the defense committee and guide the scholar during the defense process.
- Verify and sign off on minor or major revisions made by the scholar post-defense.

iii) Controller of Examination

- Send the final thesis to local examiners for evaluation/review
- Schedule the final thesis defense of the PhD scholar and arrange souvenir and sash to honour the PhD Scholar.
- Share defense outcomes with the PhD scholar and coordinate the completion process.
- Issue the PhD completion notification under the COE seal after all degree requirements are met.

9- PhD Milestone Summary

A PhD milestone summary will be compiled by the program Leader for seeking degree approval from BASR.

10- PhD Country Directory

After BASR approval the case will be prepared and the nominated person for HEC portal will enter the name of PhD holder in PhD country directory.