



ABBOTTABAD UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

GRADUATE ACADEMIC RULES, REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

REVISED 2026

Approved by the Academic Council and Syndicate
Abbottabad University of Science & Technology, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Contents

Short Title, Commencement and Application	v
Definitions	vi
List of Abbreviations	viii
I Regulations and Procedures for Master of Philosophy or Equivalent Degree Programs	1
1 Eligibility Criteria for MS/MPhil Admissions and Merit	2
1.1 Eligibility Criteria	2
1.2 Evaluation of the Candidate and Preparing Merit List	2
1.3 Admission Procedure	3
1.4 The Role of Advanced Studies and Research Board (ASRB)	3
2 General Rules	3
2.1 Degree Completion Timeline ³	3
2.2 Coursework Requirement for Award of MS/MPhil/ Equivalent Degrees	4
2.3 Transfer of Credit Hours at MS/MPhil Level. (Also, for PhD Level See Section 11.3 of PhD Regulations)	4
3 Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)	4
3.1 Functions of the Committee	5
3.2 Complaints Handling System	5
4 Synopsis and Appointment of Supervisor	5
5 Exit Seminar or Presentation (MS/MPhil or equivalent program by Research)	6
6 MPhil Thesis/Dissertation	6
6.1 Internal Evaluation of MS/MPhil Thesis/Dissertation	6
6.2 Antiplagiarism Certification	6
6.3 External Evaluation	7
6.4 Viva Voce	8
6.5 Reports from the Evaluators	9
II Regulations and Procedures for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	10
7 Introduction	11
8 Minimum Requirements For Award of Doctoral Degree (Level - 8)	11
8.1 Advertisement, Qualification, Admissions and Registration	11

8.2	CGPA	12
8.3	Admission Test	13
8.4	Statement of Purpose	13
8.5	Evaluation of the Candidates and Preparing the Merit-list	14
8.6	Role of ASRB in PhD Programs	14
8.7	Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)	14
8.8	Supervisor⁸ and Allocation of Supervisor to Student	14
9	General Conditions to Supervise Doctoral Research/ Criteria to be a PhD Supervisor	14
10	Publication Requirement to Supervise Doctoral Research	15
10.1	Role of Supervisor	15
10.2	Co-Supervisor	16
11	General Rules, Regulations and Procedures related to PhD Program	16
11.1	Degree Completion Timeline⁹	16
11.2	Course work and Residency Requirement	16
11.3	Credit Transfer, Evaluation and Grading at PhD Level	17
11.4	Removal of PhD Research Scholar	17
12	Examinations	17
12.1	Level – I: Comprehensive Examination	17
12.2	Level – II: Research Synopsis Defense	19
12.3	Change of Topic or Supervisor	19
12.4	Level – III Dissertation Evaluation and Examination	20
12.5	Approval of Dissertation	20
12.6	Evaluation of the PhD Dissertation	20
12.7	Plagiarism and Similarity Test	21
13	Appointment of Examiner/ Evaluator¹³	21
13.1	Selection of External Evaluators	22
13.2	Reports from the Evaluators	23
13.3	Research Publication	23
14	Viva Voce/Public Defense	23
15	Completion and Award of PhD degree	25
16	Foreign Research Scholars and PhD Program	25
17	Compliance and Violation	25
18	Entry into PhD Country Directory (PCD)	25
19	Graduate Grading System	26
	Annexure – A	28
	Annexure – B	29

Preface

An effective academic system requires continuous review, evaluation, and reform in order to respond to evolving national priorities, global academic standards, and emerging challenges in higher education. Pakistan's higher education system has undergone significant structural and policy developments since the establishment of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in 2001, with a sustained focus on quality assurance, standardization, and academic excellence.

In continuation of these reform initiatives, the HEC has recently introduced the *Graduate Education Policy (GEP)–2023* and the *Undergraduate Education Policy (UEP)–2023*. These policies provide a comprehensive framework for admission, curriculum design, assessment, supervision, research integrity, and degree completion, and are recommended for implementation from Fall 2023 onward across all higher education institutions in Pakistan.

In response to these policy directives, Abbottabad University of Science & Technology (AUST) has formally adopted the HEC policies through its Academic Council and other statutory bodies. The adoption of these national policies necessitated a thorough revision of the existing University rules, regulations, and procedures governing undergraduate and graduate programs, to ensure institutional alignment with HEC standards while addressing University-specific academic and administrative requirements.

Accordingly, the Office of the Registrar, Abbottabad University of Science & Technology, constituted a committee comprising relevant academic and administrative stakeholders to review, rationalize, and update the prevailing academic regulations. The committee examined the existing framework in light of **HEC GEP–2023**, identified areas requiring modification, and proposed revisions to ensure clarity, consistency, transparency, and effective implementation.

These revised Academic Rules, Regulations, and Procedures are intended to provide a coherent and standardized regulatory framework for students, faculty members, Departments, and administrative offices of the University. The document aims to facilitate smooth academic operations, uphold academic integrity, enhance quality assurance mechanisms, and promote a conducive environment for teaching, learning, and research at Abbottabad University of Science & Technology.

Short Title, Commencement and Application

Legal Title and validity

- a. These regulations shall be called “Abbottabad University of Science & Technology Graduate Programs (MS/MPhil/PhD) or equivalent regulations and procedures (revised 2026)”.
- b. These regulations emanate from the policies and guidelines of the Higher Education Commission regarding the conduct of graduate degree programs in various disciplines of study. These regulations derive their validity from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act, 2012 (Amended till now). Any amendment or changes to this regulation will be carried out as per the procedure described in the Act and Statutes.
- c. These regulations and procedures shall apply to all candidates/students enrolled in graduate programs (MPhil or equivalent and PhD) since Fall 2023 and afterwards.¹
- d. In situations where these regulations or procedures are not applicable/covered, other relevant rules and regulations (such as semester rules, various approved policy matters, etc.) of Abbottabad University of Science and Technology shall apply.
- e. In situations where it is difficult to interpret a section or clause or a group of these rules, regulations and procedures or there is a hardship case(s), the matter will be referred to the Postgraduate Regulations & Hardship Committee (PGRHC) by the Chairperson/HoD concerned through the Dean. The recommendations made by committee after approval from the Vice Chancellor shall be implemented accordingly. The Vice Chancellor shall constitute this Committee comprising the following

i.	Concerned Dean	Convener
ii.	Director QEC	Member
iii.	Controller of Examinations	Member
iv.	Additional/Deputy Registrar (Academics)	Member
v.	One Chairperson	Member
vi.	One Professor/ Associate Professor	Member
vii.	Concerned Chairperson/ HoD	Member
viii.	Director ASRB	Member/Secretary

Note: Quorum for the committee will be five (05).

¹As the University already has adopted GEP 2023, these rules and regulations are applicable to all the students enrolled in Fall 2023 and afterwards at their corresponding/current stage of studies. However, the benefits of the graduate policy 2023 and these regulations may be extended to students enrolled before 2023.

Definitions

In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions shall have meanings hereby respectively assigned to them, that is to say:

- a. **University** means Abbottabad University of Science & Technology.
- b. **Academic Council** means the Academic Council of Abbottabad University of Science & Technology.
- c. **Academic Calendar** A schedule of the whole academic year (including fall, spring and summer semesters, semester starting date, holidays during the semester, semester termination date, Mid-Term exam week, Final exam week, Result notification date etc.).
- d. **Academic Department** means a teaching, research and technology development Department maintained and administered by Abbottabad University of Science and Technology.
- e. **Authority** means any of the authorities of the University specified in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act 2012 (Amended till now).
- f. **Chairman/Chairperson of the Department/Director of the Institute/Principal of School** means head of an Academic Department/ Institute and includes the Chairperson.
- g. **Chancellor** means Chancellor of the University.
- h. **Committee** means Committee constituted for a specific purpose.
- i. **Dean** means the Dean of a Faculty of Abbottabad University of Science & Technology, who in his ex-officio capacity is also Chairman of the Board of Faculty.
- j. **Prescribed** means prescribed by Statutes, Regulation or Rules made under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act 2012 (Amended till now).
- k. **Registered Graduate** means a graduate of the University whose name is entered in the register maintained for this purpose.
- l. **Statutes, Rules and Regulations** respectively mean the Statutes, the Rules and the Regulations deemed to have been made under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act 2012 (Amended till now)
- m. **Syndicate** means the Syndicate of the University.
- n. **Teacher** includes Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors and Lecturers engaged full-time by the University or by the college for teaching diploma, degree or postgraduate classes and engaged in research and development and such other persons who may be declared as Teacher in Statutes.
- o. **Vice Chancellor** means the Vice Chancellor of the University.

- p. **Supervisor** means a full-time faculty member holding the necessary academic degree and experience appointed by the Advanced Studies and Research Board to supervise the MS/MPhil or PhD student.
- q. **Co-Supervisor** means a person holding the necessary academic degree and experience appointed by the Board of Advanced Studies and Research to supervise the MS/MPhil or PhD Student.
- r. **Comprehensive Examination Committee** means a committee constituted for the purpose of conducting comprehensive examination.

List of Abbreviations

HEC	Higher Education Commission, Islamabad, Pakistan.
ASRB	Advanced Studies and Research Board of The University.
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy.
MPhil	Master of Philosophy.
MS	Master of Science
GSC	Graduate Studies Committee within each Academic Department.
AUGAT	Abbottabad University Graduate Admission Test.
GAC	Graduate Admission Committee.
HEI	Higher Education Institute.
DAI	Degree Awarding Institute.
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
HAT	Higher Education Aptitude Test
GRE	Graduate Record Examination
COPE	Committee on Publication Ethics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Part I

Regulations and Procedures for Master of Philosophy or Equivalent Degree Programs

1. Eligibility Criteria for MS/MPhil Admissions and Merit

The following steps are required for the admission and preparation of merit lists of the MS/ MPhil degree programs:

1.1 Eligibility Criteria

- a. **Basic Academic Qualification:** Sixteen years of schooling or 4-year education (minimum 120 credit hours) after HSSC/ F.A./F. Sc/ Grade 12 or equivalent shall be required for admission in the MS/MPhil/Equivalent program.
- b. The CGPA (2.5/4.0 or equivalent) in semester system or 50% marks in annual system in Level 6 (MA/MSc or equivalent sixteen years education) in the relevant subject² shall be required for admission. Candidate having some other qualification will be required to produce equivalency and relevancy certificates from HEC, Islamabad, or any other authorized organizations.
- c. Conduct a rigorous admission test as an eligibility condition for admission to MS/MPhil/Equivalent programs (AUGAT as per GAT General Format), with a passing score of 50%, or accept the GRE/HAT General/Equivalent tests, with a passing score of 50%.
- d. AUGAT shall be conducted centralized by the Director Admissions in coordination with concerned Departments.
- e. The prerequisite degree required for admission in MPhil/MS, equivalent shall be determined by the concerned BoS of the Department.
- f. No objection certificate (NOC) for in-service candidate shall be mandatory from the respective employer to be attached with the admission form (in original).
- g. Good moral Character. All those candidates, who were punished by any Degree Awarding Institute (DAI) for acts of plagiarism, indiscipline and other undesirable activities and were awarded major penalties, shall not be admitted to MPhil or equivalent program in the University under any circumstances.

1.2 Evaluation of the Candidate and Preparing Merit List

Selection of the candidates for admission shall be made based on aggregate marks using the following parameters (previous academic record and Test/Interview).

- a. The passing of AUGAT/GRE-NTS/HAT is mandatory
- b. Distribution of the marks:
 - i. 80% [80 BS/Pharm D or equivalent four/five years programs (in case of conventional/annual system – 40 MA/MSc 2 years or equivalent and 40 BA/BSc 2 years or equivalent)].
 - ii. 20% interview

²The prerequisite qualification shall be decided by concerned Department BoS. In case of any relevancy claim, the case shall be decided by GSC.

1.3 Admission Procedure

- a. Admissions to the MPhil degree programs of the University shall be advertised in consultation with the Head of the concerned Departments/Centers/Institutes/Schools.
- b. The number of scholars to be admitted shall be determined by the respective Graduate Studies Committee.
- c. Applications on prescribed form shall be submitted to the office of the Director Admissions within the prescribed period, who will forward them to the concerned Chairpersons/Centers/Head immediately after the closing date. The Director Admissions shall keep a record of all the applications received.
- d. The names of the provisionally admitted candidates shall be forwarded to the Director Admissions through the concerned Dean duly recommended by the GSC within one month of provisional selection for approval/confirmation of the Vice-Chancellor.

1.4 The Role of Advanced Studies and Research Board (ASRB)

After completing all formalities as mentioned above, the Graduate Admission Committee shall recommend all admissions to the ASRB for approval/confirmation. The committee shall be composed of the following member

- | | | |
|------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| i. | Director ASRB | Member |
| ii. | Director Admissions or his nominee | Member/secretary |
| iii. | Two members of the ASRB | Member |

The Vice Chancellor shall nominate the ASRB members. The quorum of the committee shall be three (03). The Director Admissions shall ensure the genuineness and authentication of data prior to submission to GAC and will be responsible for record keeping of student(s) files.

2. General Rules

This section describes generic rules related to the MS/MPhil degree program:

2.1 Degree Completion Timeline³

- a. The MS/MPhil degree shall be awarded by the Universities not before the completion of 2 years or four (04) regular semesters and not after completion of four (04) years or eight (08) regular semesters, save exceptions mentioned at Clauses 2.1 (b, c) below
- b. In case a student is unable to secure an MPhil degree (or equivalent) within the prescribed timeframe and claims for extension in duration, the concerned Dean shall refer the case to hardship committee to determine the causes of delay. In the event of force majeure (i.e., delay on account of circumstance beyond the control of student), the ASRB may grant an extension in the period of award of MS/MPhil degree in accordance with the duration limiting factor(s) and shall also take corrective measures in case the delay is caused by process or administrative reasons.

³The students enrolled before the enactment of this policy shall be dealt following the procedure outlined in this document

- c. In case HEC allows any specific MS/MPhil or equivalent degree program to have a minimum duration of one and a half (1.5) years or three (03) regular semesters, and the same is duly approved by the statutory bodies of the University, the program shall be governed accordingly.

2.2 Coursework Requirement for Award of MS/MPhil/ Equivalent Degrees

The candidates shall:

- a. Either need to complete 32 credit hours of course work or
- b. Complete 26 credit hours of coursework along with a minimum of six (6) credit hours for research work/thesis
- c. Must have obtained a CGPA 2.5 or above.

2.3 Transfer of Credit Hours at MS/MPhil Level. (Also, for PhD Level See Section 11.3 of PhD Regulations)

- a. Students from other HEC recognized universities may be transferred subject to scrutiny by the Standing/Transfer Admission Committee. Transfer cases (if any) will be processed by the GSC as per University and HEC guidelines. The content should have at least 80% similarity in the said program of both institutions.
- b. The transfer of research work is permissible, provided that:
 - i. The Abbottabad University of Science & Technology may accept research conducted at the parent University.
 - ii. Research supervisors of both Abbottabad University of Science and Technology (host) and parent universities consented in writing for such transfer
 - iii. No credit hour of a course will be transferred if the grade is less than “B⁻ (B-minus)/equivalent”

3. Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)

There shall be a “Graduate Studies Committee” (GSC) in each Department, comprising the following members:

- a. Chairperson of the Department shall be the convener of the committee. In case of no full-time Chairperson in Department, the Dean concerned shall be the Convener of the committee and the HoD in-charge of the Department shall be the member.
- b. Two PhD faculty members from the Department concerned to be appointed by the Vice Chancellor from a panel of three PhD level faculty members forwarded by the Department.
- c. One external expert in the relevant field. The Chairperson/ HoD shall propose a panel of three external experts/examiners for the approval of Vice-Chancellor.
- d. Supervisor(s) concerned.

The quorum of the committee shall be three (03) members, must include the external expert for the synopsis evaluations. The tenure of the members other than ex-officio members will be three (03) years.

3.1 Functions of the Committee

- a. All matters related to the graduate students shall be handled by the GSC.
- b. MS/MPhil student shall present his/her synopsis to the GSC. The student will prepare synopsis under the supervision of his/her supervisor as mentioned in the later part of this document.
- c. After the successful defense of synopsis by the student, the committee shall issue a certificate and send the synopsis to the ASRB for final approval.
- d. The Chairperson/HoD shall ensure all the corrections/suggestions of committee have been incorporated by the student before sending synopsis to the ASRB.
- e. After the approval of the synopsis, the Committee shall monitor the progress of students regarding their theses and shall make sure that the these are of high quality.
- f. Any other function approved by the ASRB to be performed by the GSC.

3.2 Complaints Handling System

In case of complaint regarding the decision of GSC, the matter shall be referred to the Vice Chancellor for a final decision through the Director ASRB.

4. Synopsis and Appointment of Supervisor

- a. The ASRB shall appoint supervisor and/or co-supervisor on recommendation of the GSC.
- b. A supervisor appointed for the MS/MPhil thesis shall hold a Doctorate degree and shall be a full-time teacher at the University unless otherwise permitted by the ASRB as per HEC policy.
- c. The synopsis shall be prepared by the student under the guidance of the supervisor as per the approved format.
- d. Plagiarism test shall be conducted by the supervisor as per the HEC and Abbotabad University of Science & Technology policies before sending the synopsis the Chairperson/HoD.
- e. To qualify for thesis, a student must maintain a minimum CGPA of 2.5 in the course work (26 CrHr).
- f. Before submitting synopsis to the GSC, the student shall clear all dues.
- g. The synopsis shall be evaluated by the GSC and be submitted to the ASRB for final approval through the Chairperson/HoD concerned.
- h. Any changes/corrections, if proposed by ASRB, in the synopsis shall be communicated to the student through the Department for compliance within a week time of the approval of the minutes of ASRB. The Department shall submit a compliance report regarding corrections in the synopsis to the secretary ASRB and be presented to ASRB.

5. Exit Seminar or Presentation (MS/MPhil or equivalent program by Research)

- a. Publishing an article/research paper is not a requirement for the award of MS/M-Phil degree. However, the university encourages MS/MPhil level students to publish their research work in a HEC recognized journal and present the research work at a national/international level conference or workshop. The Chairperson/HoD shall determine the relevancy of the conference.
- b. In case a student is unable to find time to publish his or her research, he or she shall be required to deliver a seminar on the research to fellow students and other researchers at the University.

6. MPhil Thesis/Dissertation

- a. A student shall complete a thesis/dissertation on the approved topic. Any subsequent change in the title research objectives or any other approved component of synopsis shall require prior approval of the ASRB through the concerned GSC.
- b. A student shall prepare the thesis/dissertation strictly in accordance with the approved format
- c. Upon completion of the thesis/dissertation, a student shall submit to the supervisor one (01) spiral-bound or tap-bound copy along with a soft copy in PDF format.
- d. The supervisor shall:
 - i. In addition to the fulfillment of other codal formalities, run the anti-plagiarism test to ensure that the similarity index does not exceed the limit approved by the HEC.
 - ii. Generate and verify the similarity index report.
 - iii. Forward the submitted thesis to the Chairman for internal Evaluation.

6.1 Internal Evaluation of MS/MPhil Thesis/Dissertation

- a. The Chairperson shall convene a meeting of the GSC (internal members only) for the Pre-evaluation (exit) Seminar for the student(s).
- b. The student shall present his/her thesis to the GSC (internal members) for the purpose of the internal evaluation. This presentation shall also be considered as pre-evaluation seminar
- c. Like other examinations, the Pre-evaluation seminar may be conducted through Video-link. However, in such cases, prior approval of Vice Chancellor, on recommendation of concerned Dean, shall be mandatory.
- d. Any suggestions or corrections, if recommended by the GSC, shall be communicated to the student for compliance.

6.2 Antiplagiarism Certification

After completion of internal evaluation and compliance with the recommendations and suggestions (if any), the supervisor shall:

- a. Ensure that all suggestions/correction recommended by GSC are fully incorporated.
- b. Under no circumstances shall a dissertation based on plagiarized research be acceptable. It is the primary responsibility of both scholar (he/she) and (his/her) supervisor to prevent plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism, it is important to follow the provision outlined in this document i.e., Governing Research Supervision and Research Ethics.
- c. For plagiarism COPE guidelines. guidelines must be followed.
- d. If a MS/MPhil dissertation is found to be plagiarized, it will be dealt in accordance with the Anti-Plagiarism Policy issued by the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan , as updated from time to time.
- e. In accordance with the Academics Research Ethics described in Section 5 of Part – II by HEC GEP – 2023, a similarity test, shall be conducted by the Supervisor on the dissertation, before its submission for evaluation.
- f. Forward the soft copy (PDF format) of thesis, along with necessary information (Title, scholar's name, supervisor's name etc.) to Director QEC via email for Anti-plagiarism certificate. The Director QEC shall issue and forward the signed anti-plagiarism certificate to supervisor within seven (07) working days via email. Submission via the official email shall be treated as authentic, therefore, no handwritten or digital signature are needed.
- g. If the supervisor forwards the thesis to the QEC for plagiarism testing within the four (04) weeks of the commencement of semester, it shall be treated as a submission for previous semester.

6.3 External Evaluation

Upon successful completion of internal evaluation, incorporation of GSC's feedback, and receipt of anti-plagiarism certificate, the thesis shall be sent for external evaluation as per following procedure

- a. The supervisor shall furnish a list of three (03) relevant external evaluators.
- b. The supervisor shall seek consent of external evaluators.
- c. The supervisor shall forward the complete file in hard copy, through the concerned Chairperson/Head of Department, to the Director ASRB, and shall also send the soft copy (PDF format) of thesis to Director ASRB via email.
- d. The thesis shall be evaluated by one external evaluator, who shall serve as external examiner for the final Viva Voce.
- e. The Director ASRB shall get the approval of external examiner from Vice Chancellor in sequential order, with one designated as Principal (01) evaluator and other as standby (02) evaluator.

- f. If the evaluator fails to evaluate thesis or does not respond within thirty (30) days, a reminder shall be sent, requiring a response within next fifteen (15) days. In case the evaluator does not response even after the reminder, he/she shall be automatically dropped as the evaluator. Subsequently, the Director ASRB shall replace the evaluator with standby external examiner and forward the thesis for evaluation.

6.4 Viva Voce

- a. The Chairperson/HoD shall furnish a list of two (02) faculty members for the appointment of internal examiner(s) by the Dean.
- b. Neutral chair/observer shall be appointed by the Vice Chancellor.
- c. Director ASRB shall issue the appointment letter to the external examiner.
- d. A committee comprising Internal Examiner, External Examiner, Neutral Chair/Observer⁴ (a nominee of Vice Chancellor), and Supervisor(s) concerned shall conduct the Viva-Voce.
- e. The date and time of Viva Voce shall be finalized by mutual consent of Supervisor and external examiner. The Director ASRB shall notify the mutually agreed date accordingly.
- f. On the day of Viva Voce, the student shall be required to be present in the concerned Department for the examination and shall deliver a presentation of at-least fifteen (15) minutes.
- g. The Viva Voce shall carry a total of 100 marks with 60 passing marks.
- h. An online Viva Voce may be conducted in special circumstances, where required, subject to the approval of Vice Chancellor (through Director ASRB) if student appears online and the Dean of concerned Faculty if the external examiner wants to appear online.
- i. In case the evaluation committee suggests minor or major revision after the examination, supervisor shall ensure that all such observations are properly incorporated by the student within the specified time period, preferably not exceeding one (01) month for minor and six (06) months for major revision from the date of viva voce.
- j. The internal examiner and supervisor will issue a certificate that all revision have been properly addressed in the final thesis/dissertation.
- k. If the thesis is declared acceptable but the student fails to defend thesis, the committee may recommend/allow a Re-viva Voce examination within a maximum period of ONE MONTH.
- l. In case the student fails to defend his/her thesis to the satisfaction of Viva Voce committee in the second attempt, the student shall be deemed as FAIL.

⁴To ensure that defense was conducted fairly and in accordance with the rules and regulations.

- m. The passed student shall submit two (02) corrected hard-bound copies of the thesis, as per approved format to the Department. One (01) copy shall be deposited to the Central Library and one (01) copy will be retained by the Department.
- n. The award list and other necessary documents shall be forwarded by the Chairperson/ HoD, through the concerned Dean to the office of Controller of Examinations for final notification.
- o. Finally, the Controller of Examinations shall issue the notification, retain the file and submit the hard copy to the central library.

6.5 Reports from the Evaluators

- a. After the receipt of all reports from the examiners, the Director ASRB shall keep reports confidential until the day of viva.
- b. Corrections suggested by the external examiner shall be communicated to the student during the viva voce examination.

Part II

Regulations and Procedures for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

7. Introduction

This part of the document presents rules, regulations and procedures related to the PhD program at Abbottabad University of Science & Technology. All matters related from admission/ enrollment to graduation are covered in this part. HEC's guidelines and standards were followed while developing this document. Research Scholars and common readers must be familiar with other policy and legal documents of the University including academic/semester rules, etc., and the research scholars are also advised to visit the official website of university from time to time to get latest information in this regard.

8. Minimum Requirements For Award of Doctoral Degree (Level - 8)

This section describes the basic eligibility requirements for admission to the PhD program and preparation of merit list

8.1 Advertisement, Qualification, Admissions and Registration

Admission to a PhD program in any discipline shall be based on the availability of resources and willingness/commitment of the supervisors for the entire duration of the PhD studies of the candidate subject to the eligibility criteria of the university as below.

a. Admission Process

- i. The university shall advertise Admissions as per its approved academic calendar.
- ii. A candidate seeking admission to PhD program shall apply as per procedure stated in the admission advertisement and/or given on the official website of the University
- iii. All applications received through online system shall be scrutinized as per the admission requirements.
- iv. All documents and credentials provided by the candidates shall be scrutinized and verified by the Director Admissions. For this purpose, access to the system (LMS) shall be provided to the Director Admissions/relevant staff as per requirements.
- v. The candidate shall be required to deposit semester fee after the display of provisional admission/merit list.
- vi. The next candidate shall be admitted on merit if a candidate fails to pay semester fee within the stipulated time.
- vii. The admission section shall be responsible for timely communication of student's list (who deposited fee) to Director ASRB soon after the due date as notified in the advertisement for the confirmation of the admission.
- viii. Each enrolled PhD scholar shall be assigned a supervisor by the GSC at the time of admission based on rational distribution of scholars among the PhD faculty and the student-supervisor mutual consent and shall be submitted to the Director ASRB for confirmation by ASRB.

b. Qualification

- i. Prior to admission to a PhD program, the student shall have MS/M-Phil or equivalent degree as described in these regulations.
- ii. Upon evaluation of the Statement of Purpose, verification of other documents/formalities by the admission committee and on satisfactory report, the candidate(s) shall be enrolled provisionally. Clause 1.4 refers for details related to confirmation of admission.

c. Intra-disciplinary⁵ Qualification

Intra-disciplinary admissions may only be allowed if:

- i. The applicant has a strong interest in pursuing a PhD in a different discipline.
- ii. The applicant has passed GRE-Subject/Equivalent Test with minimum 50% marks in the discipline of admission and has taken 6-9 CHs of deficiency courses of level 7.
- iii. The GSC is satisfied that the applicant's knowledge of the primary area (level 7) has sufficiently prepared him or her to undertake the course of study of the doctoral program (or, in the opinion of the admissions committee, the preparation can be deemed satisfactory by taking a few additional courses after starting the program).

8.2 CGPA

- a. For admission in PhD Programs, a minimum CGPA of 3.0 (out of 4.0 in the semester system 7) or 60% (in annual system) in the MS/MPhil/equivalent degree being considered for admission, is required, whether such degree was obtained from Pakistani or foreign universities.
- b. If the CGPA/Percentage is not mentioned on the transcript, the candidate must produce equivalent weightage form the parent university.
- c. The students having strong demonstrated interest in obtaining PhD degree, but their CGPA is below 3.00 (out of 4.0 in the semester system) or 60% marks (in the annual system) in the most recent degree obtained, may be admitted to a PhD program after fulfilling the following requirements:
 - i. Shall study additional courses of 9-12 CH of level 7 taking a zero semester at admission awarding university/HEI/DAI and score minimum 3.00 out of 4.00 CGPA.
 - ii. The GSC is satisfied that the applicant's knowledge of primary area (level 7) has sufficiently prepared him or her to undertake the course of studies of the doctoral program.
 - iii. These requirements shall be in addition to any other requirements set in this policy for admission to a PhD program.

⁵Intra-disciplinary refers to sub-disciplines that occur within one of the ten broad disciplines defined by UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-F-2013)

8.3 Admission Test

- a. The passing of the AUGAT/NTS/HAT is mandatory.
- b. University is required to:
 - i. Conduct the test equivalent to GRE/GAT developed at the University, with the passing score of 60% following the format as below
The Test shall carry 100 Marks

Components	Weightage
Subject-specific knowledge	50
Research Methodology	30
Analytical & Critical Reasoning	20
Total	100

- ii. A centralized PhD admission test shall be prepared and conducted by Directorate of Admissions in coordination with concerned Departments
 - iii. Accept a test equivalent to GRE/GAT general, conducted by testing bodies accredited by HEC, with a passing score of 60%.
- c. In addition to requirement mentioned in clause (a -b), following shall also be fulfilled:
 - i. No objection certificate (NOC) for in-service candidate shall be mandatory from the respective employer to be attached with admission form (in original).
 - ii. Good moral character from previous educational institution is prerequisite for admission to PhD program. All those candidates, who were given major penalties by previous degree awarding institute (DAI) for indiscipline or other undesirable activities shall not be admitted to PhD program under any circumstances

8.4 Statement of Purpose

- a. As part of the application for admission to PhD programs, applicants shall be required to submit a statement of purpose, which shall form an integral part of the application. The admissions committee shall use the information provided to ascertain the preparedness and interest of the candidate in pursuing doctoral studies, and whether the Department has the requisite resource to train and supervise the doctoral candidate in the specialty in which the applicant is interested. A statement of purpose shall, at least, include the following:
 - i. Title of the potential research proposal
 - ii. Clear articulation of the current understanding of the intended field and ideas for potential research
 - iii. Explanation of the intended impact of the proposed research.
- b. The prospective candidates shall demonstrate passion and enthusiasm for the area of research

8.5 Evaluation of the Candidates and Preparing the Merit-list

After fulfilling eligibility criteria, selection of a candidate for admission to PhD program shall be made on the basis of aggregate marks as per distribution formula (previous academic record and interview) given under:

- a. **Academic – 60%**, the distribution of marks shall be
 - i. BS (4 years/equivalent)- 30% or [B.Sc. 2 years = 15% plus M.Sc. 2 years =15%].
 - ii. MS/ MPhil – 30%.
- b. Statement of Purpose 10%⁶.
- c. AUGAT/GRE-NTS/HAT – 10% of the Test's score.
- d. Interview – 20%⁷.

8.6 Role of ASRB in PhD Programs

Refer to Section 1.4 above.

8.7 Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)

The composition and function of the GSC shall remain the same as mentioned in Section 3(a. – d.) and Clause 3.1 (a. – f.), respectively.

8.8 Supervisor⁸ and Allocation of Supervisor to Student

A student shall be assigned a supervisor and co-supervisor in accordance with the general conditions/guidelines mentioned as Section 10.1 & 10.2 of these regulations.

9. General Conditions to Supervise Doctoral Research/ Criteria to be a PhD Supervisor

The following general guidelines/conditions shall, at least, be observed while allocating a PhD supervisor. At the time of supervisor allocation, the supervisor(s):

- a. Shall be a PhD degree holder from an HEC recognized National/International university/degree awarding institute (DAI)
- b. Shall be a full time/adjunct faculty member or researcher at a public or private university or DAI, or position of researcher or scientist at any R&D or public/private sector organization. However, in the case of a non-faculty PhD supervisor, who otherwise meets the criteria of being a PhD supervisor, shall be taken as an adjunct faculty member, for a period not less than the minimum time required to complete the student's PhD research, prior to assigning a PhD supervision. Such a person shall also provide an NOC from the parent organization.
- c. Must be relevant to field of research in which the student intends to conduct research.
- d. Should have no conflict of interest in personal, financial, or professional stakes.

⁶For statement of purpose read HEC GEP - 2023.

⁷GSC shall conduct the interview.

⁸See Annexure – A role of Supervisor

- e. Should have the time and availability to supervise PhD dissertation and give clear and constructive feedback.
- f. Should be capable of maintaining confidentiality and protecting the intellectual property of the dissertation.
- g. The research supervisor shall be allocated to a doctoral student from the date of enrollment.
- h. Supervisory workload of research supervisors should be determined based on the nature of the institution, availability of teaching and research facilities, and the academic standing of supervisors. However, it is mandated that the maximum supervisory load shall not exceed five PhD students at a time.
- i. Fresh PhD faculty can supervise MS/MPhil and co-supervise PhD students, while a PhD faculty member, after two years of obtaining a PhD degree, subject to fulfillment of other conditions provided in these regulations/HEC policy
 - i. can supervise one PhD student in 3rd year
 - ii. two PhD students in 4th year and
 - iii. maximum up to 05 PhD students from 5th year onward
- j. PhD research work completed under supervision is a shared intellectual property of supervisor and supervisee. All publications resulting from such research shall reflect the authorship of both parties and shall be subject to mutual consent.
- k. The supervisor (other than adjunct) shall be from the same Department (where the scholar is enrolled).
- l. The University/DAI/HEI shall allocate supervision/research space to the doctoral students.

10. Publication Requirement to Supervise Doctoral Research

In addition to fulfilling the General Requirements, a PhD supervisor must publish research articles in the HEC's recognized journals and the category specified in the HEC-Journal-Recognition-System (HJRS) for the publication year. These conditions are different for different disciplines and aim to ensure that the potential PhD supervisor is an active researcher.

S. No.	Program Specific requirement	For indigenous & foreign PhD		
		Within the last 03 years after PhD	or	Within last 05 years after PhD
a.	Science and Technology	At least one research publication in W category journal	or	At least five research publications in X category journal
b.	Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities and Business Education	At least one research publication in W category journal	or	At least five research publications in X and Y category journals

10.1 Role of Supervisor

Refer to Annexure – A of these regulations

10.2 Co-Supervisor

The Co-supervisor(s) shall be eligible to supervise (not more than 03 students at a time) dissertation/ thesis if:

- a. Have PhD or equivalent degree from HEC recognized DAIs.
- b. Have co-supervised at least two (02) MS/MPhil/Equivalent level theses along with a senior/HEC approved PhD supervisor to gain three (03) years' experience.
- c. Have already supervised three (03) MPhil theses after obtaining an MPhil degree but before obtaining PhD degree; shall be exempted from the three (03) years post PhD experience as mentioned above.

11. General Rules, Regulations and Procedures related to PhD Program

This section describes various generic rules related to the execution of the PhD degree program at Abbottabad University of Science & Technology.

11.1 Degree Completion Timeline⁹

- a. The PhD degree shall be awarded by Abbottabad University of Science & Technology not before the completion of three years or six regular semesters and not after completion of eight years or 16 regular semesters, save exceptions mentioned at clause 11.1 (d) below.
- b. The completion date of PhD degree shall be reckoned with the date of notification (by CoE office) of the award of PhD degree.
- c. The maximum duration shall be determined from the date of student enrolment until date of the completion notification of the PhD degree.
- d. In case a student is unable to secure a PhD degree within the prescribed time frame and claims for extension in duration, the concerned Dean shall refer the case to the hardship committee to determine the causes for delay. In event of force majeure i.e., delay on account of circumstance beyond the control of student, the ASRB may grant an extension in the period of award of PhD degree in accordance with the duration limiting factor(s) and shall also take corrective measures in case the delay is caused due to process or administrative reasons.

11.2 Course work and Residency Requirement

The following requirements shall be fulfilled before the award of a PhD Degree:

- a. The students shall complete the coursework of at least:
 - i. 20 credit hours.

⁹The student enrolled before the enactment of these revised regulations/HEC GEP 2023 shall also be dealt following the procedure outlined in this document/HEC policy.

- ii. The courses shall be offered through regular classes (i.e., classes taught on campus by full-time/Adjunct faculty members of the University).
 - iii. PhD degree should be based on research, not only on credit hours.
- b. A student shall be encouraged to take extra non-credit course(s) during his/her studies. However, such course(s) will not be counted towards PhD degree.

11.3 Credit Transfer, Evaluation and Grading at PhD Level

For the transfer, the policy described in Section 2.3 of MPhil regulation shall be followed.

11.4 Removal of PhD Research Scholar

The ASRB may decide to remove a PhD student from the register on the basis of one or more than one of the following reasons:

- a. In case of unethical conduct, a research scholar if proved guilty through Departmental inquiry or University Discipline Committee.
- b. In case the dues (fee) for the semester(s) have not been paid.
- c. Research scholar who did not achieve/improve the CGPA 3 out of scale 4.
- d. 'On the request of PhD scholar.
- e. When there are two consecutive adverse reports¹⁰ submitted by the Supervisor regarding the progress of the research scholar. However, a research scholar shall be given an opportunity of personal hearing by GSC, before exercising this clause.
- f. After exhausting the total allowed duration without completing PhD degree.
- g. The admission canceled by ASRB shall be restored by ASRB through hardship committee.

12. Examinations

To maintain high quality of PhD program, the University has designed three levels of examinations which are compulsory to qualify for the award of the PhD degree.

12.1 Level – I: Comprehensive Examination

- a. After completion of the course work, a research scholar shall be required to pass a comprehensive examination.
- b. The required coursework, comprehensive exam, and approval of synopsis/research proposals from ASRB should be completed within the first 03 years (i.e., first six semesters of the registration) into a PhD program.

¹⁰Six – monthly-progress report as per approved template/format is mandatory record document to be maintained by the supervisor concerned in the Supervisory file in sequential order. This report may be the periodic six-monthly report or report generated by the Supervisor related to specific failure.

- c. It shall be responsibility of Department to arrange the comprehensive Examination.
- d. If a research scholar does not pass the comprehensive exam in the first attempt, he/she shall be given another chance on the recommendation of his/her supervisor. The registration of a research scholar shall be deemed canceled if he/she does not pass the comprehensive examination in the second attempt or prescribed time (three years), only the transcript for completion of course work may be issued to such student.
- e. In an event of force majeure i.e., noncompliance on account of circumstances beyond the control of student, the university may consider the matter in accordance with the procedure prescribed at Clause 11.1 (d) above.
- f. The comprehensive examination shall be conducted by the Comprehensive Examination Committee (CEC) approved by the concerned Dean on the recommendations of the Chairperson/HoD of the Department. The committee shall comprise of the following members:
 - i. Chairperson/HoD Convener
 - ii. Two Internal Examiners from the Department Member
 - iii. Supervisor (ex-officio) Member
 - iv. PhD Coordinator Member/Secretary
- g. The Dean will appoint two (02) internal examiners on recommendations of the Chairperson/HoD concerned for the term of 03 years.
- h. In case Chairperson/HoD is supervisor, the committee shall be headed by the next senior most faculty member in the committee. The convener of the committee shall be responsible for conducting a comprehensive examination by maintaining all records.
- i. The pass percentage for comprehensive examination shall be 60%.
- j. The paper for the comprehensive examination shall be based on all coursework of the PhD program.
- k. The comprehensive examination shall be conducted in two parts:
 - i. **Part – I Written Paper:** The question paper shall be based on all core and elective courses studied by the research scholar.
 - ii. **Part – II Oral Examination:** by the committee.
 - iii. The supervisor shall only be allowed to set question paper of his/her subject only.
 - iv. The evaluation shall be on aggregate basis, expressed in term of pass fail and should not be graded.
 - v. Other parts of the question paper shall be composed by other faculty members who taught the subject in the Department.
- l. In case the research scholar is still not satisfied with the result of the comprehensive examination, he/she shall have the right to appeal to the GSC for re-checking of the examination papers.

m. In case a research scholar is still not satisfied with the outcome of his/her appeal, he/she can appeal to the **University Appellate Committee (UAC)** for the purpose. **The decision of UAC shall be the final.**

12.2 Level – II: Research Synopsis Defense

After passing/clearing the comprehensive examination, the student shall submit a synopsis on a research topic in the Department for onward processing by the GSC and ASRB. A research scholar shall be considered admitted to the candidacy once he/she passes the comprehensive examination and gets approved/defends his/her synopsis within 03 years of enrollment (first 06 semesters). The following procedure will be adopted for this purpose:

- a. The research scholar shall follow the ASRB approved format for the synopsis.
- b. The research scholar shall present and defend his/her synopsis before GSC.
- c. Upon successful defense of the synopsis before GSC, the GSC shall recommend the synopsis for approval by ASRB through the Director ASRB.
- d. The Director ASRB shall notify the decision of ASRB.

12.3 Change of Topic or Supervisor

A PhD student shall be discouraged to make any change(s) to discipline, title of research synopsis or supervisor/co-supervisor once admitted to a program. However, under unavoidable circumstances, the following regulations shall be applicable.

- a. A student admitted to a PhD program once and in a specialization thereof, whichever applicable, shall not be allowed to change the program or specialization of study after one (01) month of admission/registration.
- b. On the request of PhD student, the ASRB, on the recommendations of Chairperson concerned, may change the supervisor or co-supervisor, within a period of one year after registration.
- c. If supervisor or co-supervisor is to be reassigned to PhD scholar, the comments of existing supervisor or co-supervisor are mandatory to be obtained before assigning the new supervisor.
- d. In case of conflict between supervisor and the student for genuine recorded reason(s) in writing, the supervisor or co-supervisor may be changed by the ASRB on the recommendations of GSC. The GSC will formally hear both the parties (supervisor and student) and forward its specific recommendations to the ASRB for final decision.
- e. In case the supervisor or co-supervisor resigns or permanently leave the University, the ASRB shall assign a new supervisor or co-supervisor on the recommendations of GSC.
- f. Any changes(s) in the research synopsis including the title shall be approved by the ASRB on the recommendations of GSC concerned.

12.4 Level – III Dissertation Evaluation and Examination

- a. Each PhD researcher shall write a doctoral dissertation reflecting relevance, credibility, effectiveness, and legitimacy of the research. The dissertation must be an original and innovative contribution to knowledge that contributes to solving socioeconomic problems.
- b. The research scholar shall undertake his/her research work with utmost honesty/integrity and with optimal utilization of available resources under the guidance of the supervisor(s).
- c. The authenticity and genuineness of the research work shall be joint responsibility of both the research scholar and the supervisor(s). [See Annex-B, Advice for PhD Students]
- d. A research scholar shall report his research work in formally compiled form as per the Abbottabad University of Science & Technology format.
- e. The dissertation shall be submitted to the Chairperson/HoD concerned through his/her supervisor with a certificate from the supervisor about the authenticity and quality of the dissertation.
- f. The GSC may recommend the dissertation for further process or may suggest required lab/practical/research work to complete the objectives of approved synopsis.

12.5 Approval of Dissertation

- a. The Supervisor(s) shall thoroughly scrutinize the PhD dissertation and submit it to the Chairperson/HoD with a certificate that the dissertation is in line with the approved format of the University and meets the minimum standards/requirements laid down for the purpose, including the surety that it is in accordance with the synopsis approved earlier by ASRB.
- b. The Chairperson/HoD shall forward the dissertation to GSC.
- c. The Chairperson/HoD shall call a meeting of the GSC within two weeks after receiving the thesis from the Supervisor(s) by providing soft and/or hard copies of the dissertation to each member.
- d. The GSC shall thoroughly check the dissertation according to criteria to be given by Director ASRB. The GSC shall decide by majority vote and in clear terms whether to approve (with major or minor changes) or refer back the dissertation (in exceptional circumstances), with recorded justifications within one week after the meeting.
- e. The pre-evaluation seminar shall be conducted before the internal members of the GSC within 15 days after the successful GSC evaluation.

12.6 Evaluation of the PhD Dissertation

The Director ASRB shall be responsible for the processing of PhD dissertation for evaluation according to prescribed requirements and may complete the evaluation process within three (03) months.

12.7 Plagiarism and Similarity Test

- a. Under no circumstances shall a dissertation based on plagiarized research be acceptable. It is the primary responsibility of both PhD researcher (he/she) and (his/her) supervisor to prevent plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism, it is important to follow the provision outlined in this document i.e., Governing Research Supervision and Research Ethics.
- b. For plagiarism COPE¹¹ guidelines must be followed.
- c. If a PhD dissertation is found to be plagiarized, it will be dealt in accordance with the Anti-Plagiarism Policy issued by the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan¹², as updated from time to time.
- d. In accordance with the Academics Research Ethics described in Section 5 of Part – II by HEC GEP – 2023, a similarity test, shall be conducted by the Supervisor on the dissertation, before its submission for evaluation.
- e. The research scholar shall be required to submit one (1) spiral/taped bound copy of the dissertations and e-copy (PDF) along with GSC certificate to the Chairperson/HoD through supervisor.
- f. The Chairman shall forward the internally approved thesis to Director QEC. For similarity report procedure refer to the Section 6.2 Clause f.

13. Appointment of Examiner/ Evaluator¹³

The PhD dissertation must be evaluated by:

- a. At least two external experts who shall be:
 - i. A foreign PhD faculty member from the world top 500 universities ranked by the Times Higher Education or QS World Ranking in the year corresponding to dissertation evaluation year.
 - ii. In addition to a(i), one Pakistan-based Distinguished National Professors/Associate Professor from any Pakistani University having a minimum H-Index 30 for sciences, 15 for Social Sciences or 8 for Art & Humanities as determined by Web of Science
OR
 - iii. Pakistan-based Distinguished National Professors, Meritorious Professors from any national university; or Professors from top universities ranked by HEC; or Professors from any Pakistani University having a minimum H-Index 30 for Sciences, 15 for Social Sciences or 8 for Art & Humanities as determined by Web of Science

OR
- b. At least one external experts qualifying any one of the conditions i.e., a (i) & (ii) above if the PhD candidate publishes dissertation research in a peer-reviewed journal that is classified by the HEC in category W for Sciences and X or above for Social Sciences.

¹¹COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) guidelines.

¹²Refers HEC Anti-Plagiarism Policy (Version 2.0) for details.

¹³The students enrolled before the enactment of this policy shall also be dealt following the procedure outlined in this document.

13.1 Selection of External Evaluators

- a. The following general guidelines shall, at least, be observed while selecting external evaluator:
 - i. **Relevance of Expertise:** In the same or related fields as in the dissertation.
 - ii. **No Conflict of Interest:** In personal, financial, or professional stakes in a particular decision or outcome.
 - iii. **Objectivity:** capable of making unbiased evaluations.
 - iv. **Diversity:** in terms of geography, culture, professional background etc.
 - v. **Reputation:** must be good in the field, with track record of fair and through evaluations
 - vi. **Availability:** should have the time and availability to review the dissertation.
 - vii. **Professionalism:** capable of conducting themselves in a professional and respectful manner throughout the evaluation and defense process (if applicable).
 - viii. **Communication:** capable of providing clear and constructive feedback on the dissertation.
 - ix. **Confidentiality:** capable of maintaining confidentiality and protecting the intellectual property of the dissertation.
 - x. **Compatibility:** well-versed with the research methodology, approach, and theories used in the dissertation.
- b. The supervisor shall furnish a list of five (05) relevant external evaluators.
- c. The Supervisor shall get consent form the examiners and after getting consent, the Supervisor shall forward a panel of evaluators through Chairman/Dean to the Director ASRB within a week time.
- d. The foreign examiners/evaluators must not be from the same University.
- e. The Director ASRB shall get the approval of 02/03 external examiners from Vice Chancellor in sequential order, with three designated as Principal (1-3) evaluators or two (1-2) and other as standby (02) evaluators in sequential order. This should be read in conjunction with 13 (a-b).
- f. The Director ASRB shall send the e-copy to the evaluators. Only the official email of in-service evaluator shall be acceptable for the dissertation's evaluation.
- g. If the evaluator fails to evaluate the thesis Or does not respond within 30 days, the evaluator shall be sent a reminder to respond within a further 15 days. In case the evaluator does not respond even after the reminder, he /she shall be automatically dropped as evaluator. Subsequently, Director ASRB shall replace this evaluator with the standby external examiner and will send the thesis for evaluation.

13.2 Reports from the Evaluators

- a. After the receipt of all reports from the examiners, the Director ASRB shall keep reports confidential until the day of viva.
- b. Corrections suggested by the external examiner shall be communicated to the student during the viva voce examination.

13.3 Research Publication

For award of PhD degree, a PhD researcher shall be required to publish¹⁴ research articles meeting the following criteria:

- a. At least:
 - i. One research article in W category¹⁵ journal or two research articles in X category journals, for Science disciplines.
 - ii. One research article in X category journal or two research articles in Y category journals, for Social Science disciplines.
- b. The PhD researcher shall be the first author of these publications.
- c. The research article shall be relevant to the PhD research work of the PhD researcher.
- d. The article shall be published after approval of the research synopsis.
- e. The article shall be published in a relevant research journal.
- f. The supervisor and co-supervisor shall be a co-author with the research scholar in the research paper.
- g. The research paper/article published in the Abbottabad University's own journal(s) shall not be accepted for the award of PhD degree.
- h. The publication certificate shall be provided by Director ORIC as per approved format and procedure of the University.

14. Viva Voce/Public Defense

Public Defense: An open defense of the dissertation is required after positive evaluation of the dissertation by evaluators. In general, the following minimum principles and guidelines shall be ensured:

- a. The Chairperson/HoD shall furnish a list two (02) senior relevant faculty members for the appointment of internal examiner(s) by the Dean.
- b. The Director ASRB shall send the provisional letter to the Chairperson/HoD for confirmation of the final date of public defense in consultation with the supervisor(s), external examiners, and research scholar.
- c. The viva voce examination shall be conducted by a Defense Committee (DC) forwarded through Director ASRB and approved by the Vice Chancellor.

¹⁴A research article appearing online with valid DOI on website of an HEC's recognized research journal shall be considered published w.e.f. the date it appeared online with DOI.

¹⁵As categorized in HJRS at the time of acceptance of the research article.

- d. The DC shall consist of the following members:
- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| i. Neutral Chair | Vice Chancellor's Nominee |
| ii. Supervisor | Member |
| iii. One external examiners (approved by the Vice Chancellor from the evaluators) | Member |
| iv. Internal Examiner | Member |
- e. After public defense the Defense Committee shall conduct a VIVA VOCE of PhD scholar and record the result.
- f. **Public Announcement:** The Director ASRB shall make an announcement of public defense at least two weeks before the date of public defense. The announcement shall be circulated through various forms of communication, so that anyone interested can participate.
- g. **Neutral Chair:** To ensure that defense was conducted fairly and in accordance with the rules and regulations. Neutral chair/observer shall be appointed by the Vice Chancellor.
- h. For the purpose of public defense, the research scholar shall be required to present in person at the place on the date(s) and time in the University premises.
- i. If the research scholar cannot attend the public defense in person due to any hardship/genuine problem, the viva voce/public defense can also be done by Skype/Zoom or any other video conferencing software. The online Viva Voce shall be approved by the Vice Chancellor on the recommendations of the Director ASRB. In such case the research scholar shall submit sufficient genuine evidence (s) for the conduct of online Viva Voce/public defense.
- j. **Final Decision:** The DC shall evaluate the following parameters of the public defense.
- k. **Presentation:** Twenty five (20-30) minutes presentation of the dissertation by the PhD researcher.
- l. **Question and Answer Session:** To provide a basis for defense evaluation.
- m. **Objective Evaluation:** based on the quality of the research and researcher's ability to defend.
- n. Final verdict regarding the dissertation shall be made after the mutual consent of the examiners only and will be expressed in the following terms:
- | | |
|---|--|
| i. Passed | |
| OR | |
| ii. Passed with minor amendments | |
| OR | |
| iii. Deferred for resubmission and re-defense (one time only) within 06 months | |
| OR | |
| iv. Failed (in exceptional circumstances and for reasons to be recorded by the defense committee) | |
- o. If any of the evaluators suggested modifications/revision (both major and minor) of the dissertation, the research scholar shall be required to submit a revised version of the dissertation, duly certified by the supervisor, GSC and Dean of the Faculty concerned within three months to the Director ASRB.

- p. If the thesis is declared acceptable but the student fails to defend thesis, the committee may recommend/allow a Re-viva Voce examination within a maximum period of ONE MONTH.
- q. Any amendments/suggestions/comments proposed during the Viva Voce shall be recorded and communicated to the research scholar by the Chairperson-/HoD **within one week from the date of public defense** for incorporation for suggestion/comments.

15. Completion and Award of PhD degree

The following steps shall be followed after successful defense by the research scholar.

- a. The supervisor and internal examiner shall clarify the incorporation of amendments proposed in the Public Defense.
- b. The research scholar shall submit three hardbound copies of the dissertation to the Chairperson/HoD of the Department for further processing
- c. The Chairperson/HoD shall forward the file to Director ASRB who shall send it to Controller of Examinations within one week from date of conduct of Public defense.
- d. The Controller of Examinations shall issue FINAL NOTIFICATION within one week.
- e. Finally, the Controller of Examinations shall retain the file and submit the hard copy to the central library.

16. Foreign Research Scholars and PhD Program

- a. Foreign research scholars shall be entertained as per HEC policy/ guidelines/ SOP protocol.
- b. A foreign research scholar needs to qualify TOEFL or IELTS (IELTS=5.5 or its equivalent in TOEFL) or internal test conducted by English Department to prove ability of English language.
- c. The foreign research scholar needs to pass GRE subject test/AUGAT, and the result card be submitted with the application form.
- d. The concerned Department shall send a provisional admission letter to the Registrar along with HEC proforma for clearance/vetting after fulfillment of the admission requirements.
- e. The foreign research scholar shall be allowed to attend the classes subject to a valid Pakistani visa.

17. Compliance and Violation

These regulations along with the other Graduate policies/rules of the University and of the HEC GEP-2023 need to be compiled with true spirit. In case of violation, HEC has given the retributive/reprisal actions which is re-produced as Annexure – C to these Regulations, in ditto, for information of all.

18. Entry into PhD Country Directory (PCD)

For inclusion in PCD, a graduate and the Controller of Examinations of Abbottabad University shall be required to submit an online application following the prescribed

procedure in order to enter the name of the PhD-graduate in the PCD. The Chair-person with the help of the Supervisor and the pass out scholar, will be responsible for provision of authentic data/information to the CE office, who in turn will submit it to HEC concern quarter as per prescribed procedure as early as possible after issuance of the PhD qualification notification/degree issuance.

19. Graduate Grading System

Graduate Program Grading System					
Marks (%)	Grade Points	Letter Grade	Marks (%)	Grade Points	Letter Grade
90 & Above	4.00	A+	74	3.20	B
89	3.95		73	3.15	
88	3.90		72	3.10	
87	3.85		71	3.05	
86	3.80		70	3.00	
85	3.75	A	69	2.95	C
84	3.70		68	2.90	
83	3.65		67	2.85	
82	3.60		66	2.80	
81	3.55		65	2.75	
80	3.50	B	64	2.70	C
79	3.45		63	2.65	
78	3.40		62	2.60	
77	3.35		61	2.55	
76	3.30		60	2.50	
75	3.25		59 & Below	0.00	F

Explanatory Notes:

- The following explanations are to assist the reader with the interpretation of the transcript.
- The Academic year normally comprises two regular semesters i.e. (16 weeks each).
- English is the medium of instruction.

Cr: Credit of Courses
 GP: Grade Point
 LG: Letter Grade
 CGPA: Cumulative Grade Point Average

4. **Legend**
- WD: Withdrawal
 *IP: In Progress
 *: Awarded in the first semester (generally of split semester course) and/or subsequent semesters if the performance of the student was satisfactory. Has no grading and/or credit value for result calculation purpose.

5. **Credit Value Definition** A course of one credit represents one hour of lecture three hours laboratory work per week, per semester.

6. **Discounted Credit Hours:** In case of course is repeated due to failure or improvement, its credit hours are counted only once, hence the term “discounted credit hours”.
7. **Marks**
- a. Each course carries 100 marks of which 50% are reserved for mid term, quizzes, assignments, practicals & 50% marks for the terminal examinations.
 - b. Minimum pass marks in each course are 60%.
8. **Aggregate Weighted Percentage:** Aggregate Weighted Percentage marks are calculated on the basis of Aggregate Total Marks obtained, and are calculated as follows:

$$\text{Aggregate Weighted\%} = \frac{\text{Net Aggregate Total Marks}}{\text{Total Credit Hours Registered} - \text{Discounted Credit Hours}}$$

Note: The credit hours allocated to the thesis are not counted in the calculation of the CGPA for the PhD program.

Annexure – A

To Section 10.1 of Abbottabad University of Science & Technology Regulations

Revised 2026

Role of Supervisor

The role of PhD Supervisor(s) is crucial not only in providing academic/research assistance to the research scholar but also to help his/her balanced development as part of the society. A supervisor is expected to play different roles including the following:

1. A supervisor is expected to make sure that all the procedure laid down in this and other documents are implemented in true spirit.
2. The supervisor shall guide the research scholar to produce a high-quality dissertation.
3. A supervisor must ensure that the research scholar attends university/laboratory regularly and is maintaining full-time status.
4. A supervisor shall be responsible for ensuring the timely completion of the scholar's PhD within the allowed time.
5. A supervisor shall make a study plan with research scholar(s), to complete the dissertation in the given timeline.
6. A supervisor shall be responsible for guiding the research scholar on matters of moral, patience self-confidence, and civic responsibility.
7. A supervisor shall submit a detailed biannual progress report on the prescribed proforma to the ASRB with its intimation to GSC.
8. A supervisor shall act as a member of the GSC and examination committee for his or her student(s).
9. A supervisor shall intimate the Chairperson/HoD to initiate appropriate action in case the student's progress is not satisfactory.
10. A supervisor shall also report if a student does not attend the research group monthly meeting and remains absent from the university without any reason.
11. The honorarium to the supervisor and co-supervisor shall be paid as per HEC/University policy, in vogue for time to time.
12. A supervisor shall maintain all the records in the Supervisor-File as per check list approved by the University/HEC.
13. The supervisor shall submit the final documentation on the Supervisory-file duly complete in all respects, to the Director ASRB
14. The supervisor shall be responsible for producing, through the Chairperson-/HoD, duly updated-supervisor-file (of each scholar under his/her supervision) to HEC/Self-Graduate Review or Institutional performance evaluation panel.

Annexure – B

To Section 12.4 of Abbottabad University of Science & Technology Regulations

Revised 2026

Advice for PhD Students

Abbottabad University Considers PhD thesis an ultimate research document produced by any student and therefore strongly advise PhD students to keep in view the following directions while writing thesis:

1. It shall not include research work (except reference) for which a degree has already been conferred by this or any other university of the world and it shall be certified that there is no plagiarism in the research work as per HEC policy.
2. The student shall be required to give a declaration that the research work he/she is submitting has not been submitted before, nor shall it be used in future for obtaining a similar degree.
3. Dissertation shall be written in English, except in case of a research program in Urdu language or literature, and presentation must be satisfactory for publication.
4. Any part of thesis published before its submission may be appended at the end of the thesis.
5. For dissertation, the approved format of the University shall be followed.
6. All rights of publication of complete dissertation in book form are reserved with Abbottabad University of Science & Technology/Supervisor/Student and will be published after written permission from Vice Chancellor through supervisor and student. Any violation to this effect shall be charged under the Copyright Act., Abbottabad University of Science & Technology Graduate Programs Rules, Regulations and Procedures Amended 2025
7. If the title, topic, research material is provided by the supervisor then it shall be the intellectual property right of supervisor and shall not be published without permission of the supervisor. In such case any change in supervisor by ASRB shall debar the student from using the same for his/her dissertation without permission from the previous supervisor.

Annexure – C

To Section 17 of Abbottabad University of Science & Technology Regulations Revised 2026

The following¹⁶ retributive actions shall also be application in case the rules and regulations mentioned in this policy are violated.

S. No.	Quality Parameter	Nature of Violation¹⁷	Proposed Action(s) if Existing Policy is Violated
i.	Admission Criteria	Violation of admission criteria.	i. Admission shall be cancelled. ii. University shall return three times the amount received from students. iii. Disciplinary action shall be taken against the responsible staff.
ii.	Illegal Admission	Admission of students without NOC from HEC.	
iii.	Course Work	Degree awarded without fulfilling the minimum credit hours requirement.	i. The degree shall be considered equivalent to the MS/MPhil/Equivalent degree. ii. Disciplinary action against Department Chair and relevant staff.
iv.	Comprehensive Examination	Failure to pass Comprehensive Examination within the prescribed number of attempts.	i. Termination of PhD candidature/registration of student.
v.	Supervision of dissertation	Supervision of a PhD dissertation by a person who does not fulfil the minimum criteria for PhD supervisor.	i. Disciplinary action against the Department Chair.
vi.	Maximum number of Supervisee	A supervisor, supervising PhD students beyond the maximum number specified by the HEC.	i. The supervisor shall be banned from supervising new PhD researcher for a maximum of five (5) years. ii. Disciplinary action against the Department Chair.

¹⁶Apart from the above-mentioned details, any other violation may also be dealt in accordance with its nature and significance through University's statutory process.

¹⁷These are the minimum examples and shall include all such other cases that may be identified from time to time.

Graduate Academic Rules, Regulations and Procedures

vii.	External Evaluation of PhD dissertation	The external evaluation of a thesis is not in accordance with the prescribed criteria of HEC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. One additional paper shall be published by the student from his/her dissertation before degree attestation ii. Disciplinary action against Department Chair and officer(s) responsible for sending dissertation external evaluation
viii.	External Evaluation of PhD dissertation	Unjustified delay in sending dissertation for external evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Officer(s) responsible for sending dissertation for external evaluation shall be warned.
ix.	Relevance	The dissertation has no relevancy to the Title and Scope of the degree.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Supervisor shall be banned from supervising new PhD researchers for a maximum of five (05) years.
x.	Research Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. No research papers were published but a degree was awarded. ii. Papers published but not in HEC's recognized journal. iii. Papers published but not in the required category of journals. iv. Paper published after the award of a PhD degree. v. Degree awarded based on a paper published before the approval of the PhD research synopsis. vi. Degree awarded based on a paper that has no relevance to the dissertation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Paper to be published in the required category of the HEC recognized journal before attestation of degree. ii. Supervisor be banned from supervising the new PhD researchers for maximum 05 years. iii. Disciplinary action against the Department Chair and the relevant staff of the Controller of Examinations.

Graduate Academic Rules, Regulations and Procedures

xi.	Plagiarism	Degree awarded, and major or minor plagiarism found in the thesis at any stage in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The PhD researcher/degree holder and his supervisor will be penalized as per the provisions of the Anti-Plagiarism Policy of the HEC.
xii.	Degree issued in violation of University's own Rules/Law	Degree issued in violation of the University's PhD Policy/rules in addition to HEC guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Supervisor be banned from supervising the new PhD for a maximum of five (05) years. ii. Disciplinary action against the Department Chair and the Controller of Examination.
xiii.	Poor Governance System of the Doctoral Research	Absence of the systems elaborated in Part – II of this policy i.e., Governing the systems of Doctoral Research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. In addition to the actions mentioned in clause "Cancellation of NOC and/ or demotion to the lower category" disciplinary action shall be taken against the relevant officers/Heads of the Directorate of Advanced Studies and Research/Equivalent Body, Quality Assurance/Equivalent Body, Controller of Examinations etc., if applicable.

Graduate Academic Rules, Regulations and Procedures

The undersigned committee formulated the revised Academic Rules, Regulations and Procedures in accordance with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Graduate Education Policy (GEP)–2023 and submitted the same to the Academic Council for approval.

S. No.	Name	Designation	Status	Signature
1	Dr. Sardar Fawad Saleem	Director Academics	Convener	
2	Dr. Saifullah Khan	Director QEC	Member	
3	Mr. Abdul Aleem Awan	Controller of Examinations	Member	
4	Dr. Khalid Mehmood	Chairman, Department of Pharmacy	Member	
5	Dr. Muhammad Naeem	Chairman, Department of Computer Science	Member	
6	Dr. Bin Amin	Chairman, Department of Physics	Member	
7	Dr. Mudassir Khan	Chairman, Department of Management Sciences	Member	
8	Dr. Azam Hayat	Chairman, Department of MLT	Member	
9	Dr. Muhammad Arshad	Additional Director Academics	Member	
10	Dr. Akhtar Iqbal	Additional Registrar Academics	Secretary	

Vice Chancellor