



Research Degrees Framework (RDF)

Royal University of Bhutan

Published by

Royal University of Bhutan
© RUB, Bhutan

First Edition 2015

Second Edition 2022

Third Edition 2026

Acknowledgments

The Office of the Vice Chancellor (OVC), Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), extends earnest gratitude to all individuals involved in the initial drafting and subsequent revision of the Research Degrees Framework (RDF).

Third Edition Review Team

Dr Rinchen Dorji (PhD), PVC, DeARS, OVC
Mr Tobgay, Chief, CAIPEX, former Chief, HDRD, OVC
Associate Professor Sonam Tashi (PhD), DRIL, CNR
Professor D.B. Gurung (PhD), CNR
Dr Yonten Dorji (PhD), CNR
Mr Karma Wangchuk, CNR
Assistant Professor Karma Jigyel (PhD), PCE
Assistant Professor Kinzang Lhendup, PCE
Assistant Professor Sangey Pasang (PhD), DRIL, CST
Mr Tsheten Dorji, CST
Assistant Professor Karma Utha (PhD), SCE
Assistant Professor Dr Kinzang Dorji (PhD), SCE

No part of this book will be reproduced in any form without the prior written permission of the RUB, except for educational purposes.

ISBN: 100001387

Preface

The Research Degrees Framework (RDF) of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) constitutes a coherent and comprehensive guide for the governance, management, and quality assurance of Higher Degree Research (HDR) programmes across the University. It sets out the principles, structures, processes, and expectations that underpin research degrees, ensuring alignment with national priorities, institutional mandates, and international standards of academic excellence.

As Bhutan advances its knowledge economy and strengthens its research culture, the need for a robust and transparent framework for postgraduate research has become increasingly critical. The RDF reflects the RUB's commitment to fostering rigorous scholarship, ethical research practices, and meaningful contributions to national development. It establishes clear roles and responsibilities for candidates, supervisors, and relevant committees, thereby promoting accountability, consistency, and fairness while ensuring academic quality throughout the research journey.

This Framework is designed to support candidates from admission to completion, outlining procedures related to candidature, supervision, progress monitoring, examination, and academic integrity. It also reinforces the importance of research ethics, quality supervision, professional development, and timely completion. In doing so, it seeks to create an enabling environment in which research candidates can thrive intellectually, professionally, and personally.

The RDF is not merely a regulatory document; it is a strategic instrument to enhance research capacity, strengthen institutional systems, and elevate the quality and impact of research outputs at the RUB. It will be periodically reviewed to ensure responsiveness to emerging trends, regulatory requirements, and the evolving needs of researchers and society.

Through this Framework, the Royal University of Bhutan reaffirms its dedication to nurturing competent, ethical, and globally engaged researchers who contribute meaningfully to Bhutan and beyond.

Table of Contents

Preface.....	ii
Abbreviations	5
Chapter 1: Introduction	6
Chapter 2: Administration of Research Degrees	8
Chapter 3: Awards and Programme Structure.....	12
Chapter 4: Admission and Enrolment.....	18
Chapter 5: Confirmation of Candidature	24
Chapter 6: Supervision and Supervisory Roles	28
Chapter 7: Matters Related to Candidate	34
Chapter 8: Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct	38
Chapter 9: Thesis Preparation, Submission, Examination, and Publication.....	41
Chapter 10: Student Support, Grievances and Appeals.....	50
Chapter 11: Tuition, Scholarships, and Funding.....	53
Chapter 12: Programme Planning and Approval	55
Chapter 13: Programme Monitoring.....	64
Annexures.....	73
Glossary.....	134

Abbreviations

AAC	: Academic Appeals Committee
AB	: Academic Board
APMR	: Annual Programme Monitoring Report
APRC	: Academic Planning and Resource Committee
BQPCA	: Bhutan Qualifications and Professional Certification Authority
CAC	: College Academic Committee
CoC	: Confirmation of Candidature
CRC	: College Research Committee
DAA	: Dean of Academic Affairs
DeARS	: Department of Academic and Research Services
DPD	: Definitive Programme Document
DRIL	: Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages
DSA	: Dean of Student Affairs
EE	: External Examiner
HDR	: Higher Degree Research
HDRD	: Higher Degree Research Division
HoD	: Head of Department
OVC	: Office of the Vice Chancellor
PC	: Programmes Committee
PL	: Programme Leader
PQC	: Programmes and Quality Committee
PVC	: Pro Vice Chancellor
QA&E	: Quality Assurance and Enhancement
RDC	: Research Degrees Committee
RDF	: Research Degrees Framework
RIC	: Research and Innovation Committee
RO	: Research Officer
RUB	: Royal University of Bhutan
SRO	: Student Record Officer
TEC	: Thesis Examination Committee
UC	: University Council
VLE	: Virtual Learning Environment
WAL	: Wheel of Academic Law

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This chapter establishes the foundational mandates, purpose, scope, and alignment of the Research Degrees Framework (RDF) of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). It draws from the Royal Charter of the University, its regulations, and relevant national policies to define the structure and governance of research-based postgraduate studies. The RDF ensures quality, consistency, and clarity in administering Higher Degree Research (HDR) programmes across the University, aligned with Bhutan's vision of becoming a knowledge-based society.

1.2 Mandates

- 1.2.1 In accordance with Article 2 of the Royal Charter of the RUB, one of the University's objectives shall be "to promote and conduct research, to contribute to the creation of knowledge in an international context, and to promote the transfer of knowledge relevant to Bhutan."
- 1.2.2 Pursuant to the Terms of Reference of the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), as approved by the 27th Academic Board (AB) of the University, one of the functions of the RDC shall be to conduct periodic reviews of the Research Development Framework (RDF) to ensure its continued currency and relevance.

Purpose

- 1.2.2 The framework:
- 1.2.2.1 details the processes of development, implementation, and monitoring of all research-based postgraduate studies in the University;
 - 1.2.2.2 defines the roles and responsibilities of administrators, faculty, and students with respect to the policies, procedures, and structures governing all aspects of research degrees; and
 - 1.2.2.3 incorporates or refers to the provisions of the Wheel of Academic Law (WAL) and *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines to clarify sections relevant to research degrees.

1.3 Scope

- 1.3.1 The Research Degrees Framework (RDF) shall apply to all Higher Degree Research (HDR) programmes—PhD and Master's by Research, offered by the University and its constituent and affiliated Colleges.
- 1.3.2 The RDF shall govern the design, approval, implementation, monitoring, and review of research-based postgraduate programmes to ensure quality, consistency, and alignment with national and University mandates.

- 1.3.3 The provisions of the RDF shall apply to the:
- 1.3.3.1 students enrolled in PhD and Master's by Research programmes;
 - 1.3.3.2 staff involved in the delivery, supervision, assessment, and management of research degrees; and
 - 1.3.3.3 University governance bodies, committees, and offices responsible for policy, oversight, and quality assurance of research degrees.
- 1.3.4 The RDF shall not apply to taught Master's degrees, postgraduate diplomas, or other non-research-based programmes, which remain governed by the WAL and other relevant University policies and research modules offered in taught programmes.
- 1.4 Alignment with other policies, rules, and regulations**
- 1.4.1 This policy shall not supersede any existing policies set by the Royal Government of Bhutan, the University Council (UC), or the Academic Board, unless explicitly stated.
- 1.4.2 As agreed, at the 27th Academic Board meeting held in January 2013, the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) shall assume responsibility for all aspects of programmes leading to the award of research degrees, thereby replacing the functions previously carried out by the Programmes and Quality Committee (PQC). Consequently, Sections B8 (The Postgraduate Modular Framework), E (Planning Process), and F (Approval and Review of Programmes) of the *Wheel of Academic Law*, including their respective subsections, shall not apply to research degrees. Accordingly, provisions relating the planning, approval, functioning, management, and monitoring of taught academic programmes are superseded, in respect of the research degrees, by the corresponding sections of this Framework. The Programmes and Quality Committee (PQC) shall therefore not administer research degree programmes.

Chapter 2: Administration of Research Degrees

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 This chapter establishes the administrative framework, roles, and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in managing research degree programmes at the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). It provides clear guidance on the governance structures, institutional responsibilities, and procedural steps to ensure the quality, consistency, and efficiency of Higher Degree Research (HDR) programmes across the University. By standardising administrative practices and aligning them with national and international quality standards, this chapter aims to strengthen the support system for research candidates and foster a vibrant research degrees programme within the University.

2.2 At the University Level

- 2.2.1 University Council (UC): The UC, as the apex governing body of the University, formulates policies and provides strategic directions and support for the efficient functioning of the University, and approves its work plans and budgets.
- 2.2.2 Academic Board (AB): The AB is the primary academic authority of the University responsible for academic affairs, including academic standards, research, scholarship, teaching, and academic programmes. The AB appoints members to various committees related to research degrees, including the Academic Planning and Resources Committee, the Research and Innovation Committee, the Research Degrees Committee, and the Academic Appeals Committee.
- 2.2.3 Academic Planning and Resources Committee (APRC): The APRC reviews and approves academic programmes based on the readiness of Colleges in terms of planning, faculty capacity, and supporting resources.
- 2.2.4 Research and Innovation Committee (RIC): The RIC is the standing committee responsible for promoting research and innovation within the University.
- 2.2.5 Research Degrees Committee (RDC): The committee ensures the standards and quality of the registration, progress, and examination of students enrolled in research programmes. Similar to the role of the Programmes and Quality Committee (PQC) in taught programmes, the RDC is responsible for the development and implementation of all academic quality assurance systems governing their registration, monitoring, and assessment.
- 2.2.6 Academic Appeals Committee (AAC): The AAC serves as an independent body to address academic grievances concerning research degree programmes that are not resolved at the College and RDC levels. This time-bound committee, appointed by the

Chair of the AB, shall be chaired by an appropriate authority deemed appropriate in accordance with the gravity of the grievances.

2.3 Office of the Vice Chancellor (OVC)

- 2.3.1 Vice Chancellor (VC): The VC provides strategic direction to the University and supports the development of a vibrant research environment. The VC also explores new avenues for the enhancement of research at the University and supports the establishment of external research linkages.
- 2.3.2 Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC), Planning and Resources: The PVC supports the enhancement of research activities in the University through the mobilisation and management of resources.
- 2.3.3 Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC), Academic and Research: The PVC guides the University's research and academic mission and supports the enhancement of research and academic activities. The PVC supports the VC in overseeing research and academic activities.
- 2.3.4 Department of Academic and Research Services (DeARS): The DeARS coordinates and consolidates research activities by identifying research needs and developing effective strategies. The department collaborates with research committees, centres, and researchers to develop and implement research policies, guidelines, procedures, and infrastructure. It drives and supports research across the University, overseeing the function of the College Research Committee (CRC), research centres, and research degree programmes. Additionally, the DeARS maintains centralised records of all University academic and research activities.
- 2.3.5 Higher Degree Research Division (HDRD): The HDRD functions as the central coordinating body for regulating and monitoring the overall quality of the research degree programmes and procedures through the development and implementation of policies. It also serves as the Secretariat to the RDC.

2.4 Colleges

- 2.4.1 College Academic Committee (CAC): The CAC ensures the academic standards concerning the design, delivery, development, and promotion of best practices in curricula, programmes, and general education. It is responsible for the implementation of the University's academic quality assurance policies and procedures.
- 2.4.2 College Research Committee (CRC): The CRC serves as the principal body at the College level for promoting, approving, and monitoring all aspects of research, including research degree programmes. It actively fosters research and innovation, aligning the Colleges' activities with the research goals and objectives of the University and the Royal Government of Bhutan.

- 2.4.3 President: The President is the key promoter of research activities at the College, ensuring the efficient functioning of its research structures and bodies, and plays a crucial role in mobilising resources to enhance, strengthen and sustain the College's research environment and academic programmes.
- 2.4.4 Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages (DRIL): The DRIL is the focal person for research administration at the College, with responsibilities including quality assurance, monitoring, and reporting. The role includes overseeing the College Research Committee (CRC), the coordination of research centres, the management of higher degree research programmes, and research activities.
- 2.4.5 Programme Committee (PC): The PC is responsible for the effective planning and development of the programme, including its conduct, organisation, and resource management. It serves as the main point of contact for all matters related to research degree students, involving admission and enrolment, candidature, progress monitoring, and examination. The committee is chaired by the Programme Leader.
- 2.4.6 Programme Leader (PL): The PL plays a major role in appointing appropriate supervisors and examiners for theses. They are responsible for appointing appropriate supervisors and examiners and for facilitating connections between students seeking guidance in selecting thesis topics and staff members with relevant expertise and research interests. They approve the commencement of the supervised thesis period once the proposal has been formally approved. They monitor and update progress reports submitted by candidates and approve. In addition, the PL also plays an important role in HDR student admission, which includes shortlisting applicants, coordinating the admission process, and delivering the results.
- 2.4.7 Supervisor(s): The supervisors include the Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisor(s). The Principal Supervisor bears primary responsibility for overseeing the student's research progress, academic development, and timely completion of the thesis. Co-supervisor(s) provide additional expertise, support interdisciplinary perspectives, and contribute to various aspects of the research. Together, they form a supervisory team that academic support through consistent mentoring and providing constructive feedback, throughout the student's research journey.
- 2.4.8 Confirmation Panel: The panel assesses the HDR students' readiness to progress as a candidate based on the results of their research proposal defence, through the Confirmation of Candidature process.
- 2.4.9 Thesis Examination Committee (TEC): The Committee assesses and evaluates the candidate's final thesis through both a written thesis and an oral defence.
- 2.4.10 External Examiners: These individuals, drawn from academia, industry, business and the professions, are appointed to assist the University in ensuring the quality and

standard of its programmes. External examiners provide assurance that the assessment process is properly designed and applied, conducted fairly and equitably for all students, and supports the achievement of learning outcomes. They also offer informed and relevant external reference points for comparing academic standards, provide independent, objective and impartial advice on various programme-related matters and contribute professional expertise through findings and reports.

- 2.4.11 The Module Coordinator: The Module Coordinator advises the HoD/PL on the staffing and other resources needed for the module to ensure that the teaching and assessment of the module comply with the approved module descriptor. The coordinator also maintains the currency of the curriculum content, besides providing students with the curriculum, reading lists and assessment schedules.
- 2.4.12 Module Tutor: The module tutors are responsible for ensuring the quality delivery of modules as defined in the Definitive Programme Document (DPD).
- 2.4.13 Admission Committee: Chaired by the DRIL, the committee coordinates the selection and admission of students into the programme. The committee members include the DAA, DSA, HoD, PL, SRO, and one relevant faculty member.
- 2.4.14 Research Officer (RO): The RO assists the DRIL in the coordination and management of research and research degree programmes. The RO also serves as the member secretary of the CRC.

Chapter 3: Awards and Programme Structure

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 This chapter outlines the awards and programme structure of the Higher Degree Research programmes. The HDR programmes at the University include the PhD and Master's by research degrees, both of which have significant research components. The taught and research components of the programmes shall all be weighed and assessed in proportion to their relative significance within the programme and the amount of the candidate's effort required for each component. This involves organising the programme, comprising coursework and research modules, with appropriate credit weightings and assessment schemes as described herein. The structure of a programme shall follow the prescribed guidelines and shall be managed by the PC under the authority of the DRIL.

3.2 Categories of Research Awards

- 3.2.1 A research degree programme shall lead to the award of:
- 3.2.1.1 PhD–Doctor of Philosophy; and
 - 3.2.1.2 Master's by Research
- 3.2.2 The full award shall include the title of the award and the subject name, e.g., Master of Arts (MA) in English by Research, Master of Science (MSc) in Computer Science by Research, or Doctor of Philosophy in Climate Studies.
- 3.2.3 Candidates who complete modules but do not meet the requirements for an award shall be issued academic transcripts recording their performance in the modules undertaken.
- 3.2.4 The award of the University shall be classified as High Distinction, Distinction, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory, and Failed; determined based on the Levels for Academic Award (*Annexure 3.1*).

3.3 Degree Requirements and Academic Credit Structure

- 3.3.1 All PhD and Master's by Research awarded by the University shall be research degrees.
- 3.3.2 Master's by Research programmes shall be assigned a minimum of 240 credits, requiring full-time effort, while PhD programmes shall be assigned a minimum of 360 credits, also requiring full-time effort.
- 3.3.3 Depending on the requirements of different research degree programmes approved at the University, credit totals exceeding 240 for Master's and 360 credits for PhD may be permitted.
- 3.3.4 Within the PhD degree, at minimum of 300 credits shall be accrued from the research component, and 60 credits from the taught component.

- 3.3.5 Within the Master's by Research degree, a minimum of 180 credits shall be accrued from the research component, and 60 credits from the taught component.
- 3.3.6 Credits shall be assigned to each semester according to the specific requirements of the respective research degree programmes. However, only the coursework component undertaken in the first semester and the thesis examination shall be credited in the overall assessment.
- 3.3.7 The final grade for the HDR programme shall be weighted as follows:
 - 3.3.7.1 Marks accrued from the first semester: 20%
 - 3.3.7.2 Marks accrued from thesis and oral defence: 80%
- 3.3.8 The University's provisions on credit transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) shall be applied to transfer or waive credits as applicable, for PhD and Master's by Research programmes.
- 3.3.9 The candidate may transfer or waive credits, in whole or in part, for the taught component of the HDR programme. However, the minimum credits required by the course shall be reflected in the academic transcript of the conferred degree.
- 3.3.10 The credit transfer or waiver shall be required to meet the following conditions:
 - 3.3.10.1 Must have secured at least 60% or above.
 - 3.3.10.2 The course must have been completed in the last five years.
- 3.3.11 The credits shall be awarded based on the amount of time and effort a candidate invests in carrying out the activities and in demonstrating understanding, application, and creation of knowledge.
- 3.3.12 Each module shall carry 15 credits for the postgraduate level of study.
- 3.3.13 Ten hours of notional student learning time shall be valued as one credit.

3.4 Modular Structure of Programmes

- 3.4.1 The HDR programme shall comprise two fundamental components – a taught component and a research component, both of which must be completed by any student undertaking the HDR programme at the University, except as provided in Clause 3.3.8.
- 3.4.2 Students enrolled in HDR programmes shall be required to write a research proposal, defend it to confirm their candidature, conduct research on the accepted research topic, write a thesis, and defend the thesis accordingly.
- 3.4.3 As partial fulfilment of the degree requirements, the candidate must publish a minimum of two papers for a PhD and one paper for a Master's by Research in peer-reviewed journals. For the PhD, one paper must be published and the second in press before the oral defence. For the Master's by Research, the paper must be either published or in press prior to the oral defence.

- 3.4.4 HDR candidates shall be required to present their research progress in the form of a seminar in all semesters, except the first and last semesters, which shall be allocated for proposal and thesis defence, respectively.
- 3.4.5 Modules shall be coded in accordance with the University's postgraduate numbering convention, as follows:
- 3.4.5.1 600-level modules assigned to Master's by Research programmes.
 - 3.4.5.2 700-level modules assigned to PhD programmes.
- 3.4.6 Module codes shall be sequentially structured to reflect the progression of study and credit accumulation.
- 3.4.7 The modules shall be numbered sequentially from 1 to 99. For example, the first 15 credit module that a Master's by Research and PhD candidate enrolls in shall be RES601 and RES701, respectively.
- 3.4.8 While programmes will provide a standard pathway of progression through taught and research components, the actual enrolment sequence of candidates may vary depending on individual circumstances. Such circumstances may include approved inter-semester breaks, suspension of candidature, or extension of candidature. Consequently, candidates are not expected to progress in strict synchrony with their cohorts.
- 3.4.9 Detailed specifications of taught modules, such as titles, learning outcomes, assessment requirements, and credit allocations, shall be provided in the respective Definitive Programme Documents (DPDs). Research modules shall likewise be described in DPDs, with flexibility to accommodate the individualised and diverse nature of research activities.
- 3.4.10 The modular structure shall ensure that:
- 3.4.10.1 candidates progressively acquire research competencies;
 - 3.4.10.2 taught modules directly support the research trajectory; and
 - 3.4.10.3 credits awarded reflect both workload and learning outcomes consistent with international standards for research degrees.
- 3.4.11 Taught Components**
- 3.4.11.1 The taught components of the programme comprise modules designed to provide candidates with advanced disciplinary knowledge, research methods, and transferable skills. Each taught module shall follow the Module Descriptor structure specified in the WAL.
 - 3.4.11.2 Each module shall be assigned to a specific Programme/Department within the College, which shall bear the ultimate responsibility for its effective delivery and management.

- 3.4.11.3 The Programme/Department shall be responsible for the quality of the teaching of those modules and the provision of resources.
- 3.4.11.4 A module may contribute to more than one programme. For example, a College may offer an advanced Research Methods module or a Research Ethics/Responsible Conduct Module that is common to all research degree programmes.
- 3.4.11.5 A research degree module may maintain flexibility to allow for reduced contact teaching hours and increased independent effort.
- 3.4.11.6 Full-time taught modules in a semester shall typically carry 60 credits, with a standard taught module comprising 15 credits or multiples thereof.

3.4.12 Research Components

- 3.4.12.1 The research component of the programme shall comprise structured research activities intended to develop candidates' ability to design, conduct, and present original, independent research under appropriate academic supervision.
- 3.4.12.2 Research component shall be carried out independently by the candidate under the guidance of supervisors within the guidelines of the programme.
- 3.4.12.3 The research components worth 300 or 180 credits for PhD and Master's by Research, respectively, shall be assessed based on the evaluation of the written thesis and oral defence.
- 3.4.12.4 The credits shall be distributed across the semester and audited to track the candidate's progress.
- 3.4.12.5 Candidates shall be required to report their progress each semester through a seminar or report submission, with satisfactory progress as a condition for continued candidature.
- 3.4.12.6 The marks distribution for the assessment of PhD and Master's by Research shall be calculated as detailed below:
 - a. Thesis: 75%
 - b. Oral defence: 25%
 - c. 80% of 'a' plus 'b' and 20% from taught component shall be considered for the final grade.
- 3.4.12.7 Accumulation of credits shall cease upon completion of the oral defence.

3.5 Modes of Study

- 3.5.1 The University shall offer HDR programmes in both full-time and part-time modes, providing flexibility to accommodate the diverse academic, professional, and personal circumstances of candidates.

- 3.5.2 The specific expectations, duration, and workload requirements for each mode of study shall be defined in accordance with the provisions of this framework and the relevant University policies.

3.6 Research Proposal

- 3.6.1 Research degree students shall be required to develop a Research Proposal in the first semester of the programme in compliance with the Research Proposal Guidelines (*Annexure 3.2*).
- 3.6.2 The research proposal aims to:
- 3.6.2.1 develop research planning skills, including independent inquiry;
 - 3.6.2.2 produce a coherent and logically argued piece of writing that demonstrates competence in research, planning and design, and the ability to work independently;
 - 3.6.2.3 address issues of research design, methodology, ethics, and theoretical arguments;
 - 3.6.2.4 provide a framework for students to prepare for specialisation in an area of study; and
 - 3.6.2.5 ensure that a student has a research question at a level commensurate with the degree programme enrolled in, and a methodology appropriate to the research question.
- 3.1.1 The student shall submit the written research proposal, together with a duly completed ethical clearance form, through the PL, in accordance with *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines, to the CRC for appropriate action.

3.7 Assessment, Progression, and Awards

- 3.7.1 Student performance in a module shall be assessed through continuous coursework, a formal examination, or both.
- 3.7.2 The relative weighting of assessment components may vary from module to module and shall be set out in the module descriptors to reflect the nature and aims of the module.
- 3.7.3 Students shall be informed in writing at the beginning of a module of the assessment structure, its components, and submission deadlines.
- 3.7.4 The marks and descriptors for the marks shall follow the University's general assessment regulations as set out in the Wheel of Academic Law.
- 3.7.5 To pass a module, a student shall have registered for the module within the registration period, and must have obtained an overall mark of at least 60%, with no less than 50% in each of the prescribed assessment components, or must have fulfilled the course requirement set for the semester.

- 3.7.6 If a student fails a module, a reassessment opportunity for the module may be offered.
- 3.7.7 If a candidate fails to demonstrate satisfactory progress of research work in the semester-end seminars, the candidate shall be required to present the work again to fulfil the standard required to progress to the next semester.
- 3.7.8 Progression to the next semester shall not be permitted if a student fails more than one coursework module in any given semester.
- 3.7.9 The maximum period of registration for both full-time and part-time students shall not exceed more than two years beyond the normal duration of the programme. Students may be granted an additional year for extenuating circumstances, subject to approval by the CRC and endorsement by the RDC.
- 3.7.10 A student may cease to be registered for a research degree award if he or she:
 - 3.7.10.1 accumulates two or more failures on any taught components;
 - 3.7.10.2 fails to register on any module in two successive semesters without prior approval; and
 - 3.7.10.3 fails to have the thesis proposal approved.

Chapter 4: Admission and Enrolment

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 This chapter outlines the policies and procedures governing admission and enrolment of students into the University's Higher Degree Research (HDR) programmes. It specifies the eligibility criteria, programme-specific requirements, and key steps from application to enrolment, including alternative pathways such as transfers, upgrades, and the Doctoral Foundation Year. The chapter also addresses competency standards, requirements for international students, probationary periods, and exit pathways. Overall, it ensures that admissions are fair, consistent, and based on academic merit and research readiness, thereby upholding the quality and integrity of the University's research programmes.

4.2 General Admission Requirements

- 4.2.1 Any applicant for admission to candidature for an HDR programme shall be a graduate of the University or of another institution recognised by the University or the Bhutan Qualifications and Professionals Certification Authority (BQPCA).
- 4.2.2 Admission to HDR programmes shall be based on academic merit, evidence of research preparedness, and the applicant's potential to undertake advanced, independent research.
- 4.2.3 Applicants must meet the following minimum requirements in addition to programme-specific admission criteria:
- 4.2.3.1 Hold a degree relevant to the proposed research that demonstrates adequate preparation for advanced research.
 - 4.2.3.2 Must provide evidence of research capability (e.g., prior thesis, publications, or equivalent professional outputs).
 - 4.2.3.3 Applicants must pass the English language proficiency test administered by the University.
 - 4.2.3.4 Submit a preliminary research proposal or statement of research interest aligned with the University's research priorities to enable supervisory matching.
 - 4.2.3.5 Must provide academic or professional references attesting to their research potential.
 - 4.2.3.6 Must meet relevant University requirements, including ethical standards, admission regulations, and programme-specific criteria.
 - 4.2.3.7 Must initiate early contact with members of the relevant PC and/or potential supervisors to discuss research interests, and determine the suitability and feasibility of proposed research topics, and ensure that their proposal aligns with the programme's research priorities and supervisory expertise.

- 4.2.3.8 Applicants must have received confirmation of a Principal Supervisor at the time of application submission.
- 4.2.3.9 The decision for admission of applicants to the HDR programme shall be made by the Admission Committee.

4.3 Programme-Specific Admission Criteria

4.3.1 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

- 4.3.1.1 Applicants must either hold a Master's by Research, or a Master's degree by coursework with at least one research publication as a principal author.

4.3.2 Master's by Research

- 4.3.2.1 Applicants must hold a Bachelor's degree with Honours in a relevant field, or a Bachelor's degree with additional qualifications, or a postgraduate certificate/diploma with demonstrated research ability, or equivalent professional or research experience recognised by the University.

4.3.3 Applicants must provide:

- i. academic transcripts and evidence of research capacity;
- ii. a research proposal aligned with University priorities;
- iii. source of funding; and
- iv. a medical fitness certificate (where applicable).

4.4 Application

4.4.1 Components of the Research Degree Programme Application

- 4.4.1.1 To be considered for graduate study at the University, an applicant must provide:

- i. a completed application (*Annexure 4.1*);
- ii. a statement of purpose describing the applicant's reasons for applying and selecting the particular degree programme;
- iii. a preliminary research proposal;
- iv. two references (preferably academic and a professional) attesting to research potential;
- v. an academic transcript of each post-secondary institution attended by the applicant. Copies of these transcripts must be submitted with the application, and originals provided at the time of admission; and
- vi. additional application documents (e.g., writing samples, portfolios, etc.) as required by the programme.

- 4.4.1.2 The University reserves the right to investigate the authenticity, accuracy, and authorship of materials submitted, information provided, and assertions made in connection with the application.

- 4.4.1.3 Application materials, once submitted as part of the application, become the property of the University. Copies will not be returned to the applicant or forwarded outside the University.
- 4.4.2 Preliminary Research Proposal
 - 4.4.2.1 Every application should include a preliminary research proposal.
 - 4.4.2.2 The preliminary research proposal shall be used to assist the University in finding potential supervisors who have research interests related to the topic.
 - 4.4.2.3 Precise guidelines for a preliminary research proposal must be provided by each Programme according to its specifications. Generally, the proposed research should be:
 - i. of personal and/or professional interest to the applicant;
 - ii. within the applicant's competence;
 - iii. feasible and manageable;
 - iv. sufficiently specific and delimited; and
 - v. creative and has the potential to contribute to knowledge or practice in an appropriate field.
- 4.4.3 Minimum Competency Standards
 - 4.4.3.1 The University requires that all applicants for research degrees demonstrate competency in English, research methods and analytical reasoning.
 - 4.4.3.2 The format for assessing competencies and the minimum competency standards shall be specified in the DPD.
 - 4.4.3.3 Programme-specific minimum standards must meet or exceed the University-wide minimum standards. For programmes in which the thesis is written in Dzongkha, applicants must demonstrate competency in Dzongkha.
- 4.4.4 Application Processing
 - 4.4.4.1 A prospective student shall apply for admission directly to the relevant College.
 - 4.4.4.2 The PL shall review the applications and submit them to the Admission Committee.
 - 4.4.4.3 Admission is subject to the fulfilment of the University admission requirements as specified for each programme.
 - 4.4.4.4 The Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages (DRIL) will issue a Letter of Conditional Offer of Admission (CoA) to the successful applicant (*Annexure 4.2*).

- 4.4.4.5 The successful applicant must formally confirm the CoA by submitting the Admission Acceptance Form (*Annexure 4.3*).
- 4.4.4.6 If an admitted student declines an offer of admission, the PL shall immediately inform the CRC so that any implications for an available slot or scholarship can be addressed.
- 4.4.4.7 If an admitted student does not arrive on campus and register for the first semester of the programme on time, without providing any prior notice, the PL shall inform the CRC and cancel the student's enrolment.
- 4.4.4.8 Once an admission cycle is completed, the PL, through the DRIL, shall submit a report of the admissions to the HDRD, to update the University Register.
- 4.4.5 **International Students**
 - 4.4.5.1 To register as students, individuals who are not Bhutanese citizens or registered permanent residents must obtain and maintain an appropriate and valid visa status for their stay in the country.
 - 4.4.5.2 The DRIL shall issue a letter of Conditional Offer of Admission (*Annexure 4.2*) to a student to apply for a student visa with the Department of Immigration, Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - 4.4.5.3 International students shall be required to obtain health and travel insurance coverage.
 - 4.4.5.4 The student's enrolment will be on hold until the student arrives at the campus and completes the international student orientation.
- 4.5 Probationary Period**
 - 4.5.1 Upon granting Confirmation of Enrolment to the HDR programme, students will be placed on probation not exceeding 12 months for full-time (24 months for part-time students), within which the Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) must be achieved.
 - 4.5.2 Before the end of the probationary period, the PC through PL must seek a CoC report from the Confirmation Panel. This report will determine whether the candidature is confirmed, extended or terminated.
- 4.6 Alternative Admission Pathways**
 - 4.6.1 **Transfer from another institution**
 - 4.6.1.1 An applicant who has previously been a candidate for an HDR programme at another institution may be admitted to the HDR programme at this University.
 - 4.6.1.2 The CRC, based on the PC's recommendation, will decide the portion of candidature completed at another institution that may be credited towards

the University's HDR programme, provided that it does not exceed half of the maximum candidature period.

4.6.2 Upgrade from Master's by Research

- 4.6.2.1 A candidate undertaking a Master's by Research who, in the assessment of the Principal Supervisor, is approaching PhD standard may apply to be upgraded to the PhD programme. If upgraded, the candidate must fulfil all requirements for the PhD, except for the Confirmation of Candidature.
- 4.6.2.2 In such cases, the Principal Supervisor must forward a request for upgrade, together with any supporting evidence, to the RDC through the relevant PC, with endorsement from the CRC.
- 4.6.2.3 The PC shall vet the candidates' evidence of refereed research publications or reviews of at least two thesis chapters before considering a request to upgrade from a Master's by Research to a PhD.
- 4.6.2.4 The reviews shall be carried out by two reviewers, one of whom must be external to the University. Each reviewer must hold a doctoral degree or an equivalent qualification.
- 4.6.2.5 Any application for an upgrade, with supporting evidence attached, must be endorsed by the Principal Supervisor and the PC before being forwarded to the CRC for onward submission to the RDC for approval.
- 4.6.2.6 If the upgrade is approved, the CRC, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor, shall determine the appropriate period of PhD candidature, provided it does not exceed the maximum duration of the PhD.

4.6.3 Doctoral Foundation Year (Four-Year PhD Programme)

- 4.6.3.1 The Four-Year PhD Programme may be available for specific programmes as specified in the respective DPD.
- 4.6.3.2 The CRC may, based on the recommendation of the relevant PC, admit an applicant to candidature for the Four-Year PhD Programme if the applicant:
 - i. holds a degree recognised by the University or the BQPCA as equivalent to an Honours Bachelor's degree from the University, or any Master's degree and meets the University's minimum competencies criteria;
 - ii. requires additional research training and experience to be fully prepared to undertake the research work and/or requires additional training in disciplines other than those studied in their previous degrees, before commencing the thesis research component; and
 - iii. needs to complete a Doctoral Foundation year as specified in the relevant DPD, before being permitted to progress into the three-year PhD programme.

4.7 Enrolment

- 4.7.1 Once all the requirements for enrolment are fulfilled, the DRIL shall issue a Confirmation of Enrolment (*Annexure 4.4*) to the applicant.
- 4.7.2 Official enrolment records of research degree students shall be maintained by each College in accordance with its established norms.
- 4.7.3 Students shall be required to maintain a current and valid enrolment status throughout their candidature; failure to do so may result in the revocation of candidature.

4.8 Exit Pathways and Early Completion

- 4.8.1 A candidate shall be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree upon successful completion of all the requirements specified in the DPD.
- 4.8.2 A candidate shall be awarded a Master's by Research degree upon successful completion of all the requirements specified in the DPD.
- 4.8.3 A PhD candidate may be allowed to downgrade their candidature to a Master's by Research based on the approval of the CRC.
- 4.8.4 A candidate may be conferred a Master's by Research if the written thesis fails to meet the requirements of a PhD, but meets the standard of Master's by Research as determined by TEC and endorsed by CRC and RDC.
- 4.8.5 A Master's by Research candidate, based on the approval of CRC and endorsement of RDC, shall be conferred:
 - 4.8.5.1 a Postgraduate Diploma, if the candidate fails in the oral defence; or
 - 4.8.5.2 a Postgraduate Certificate, if the candidate fails in the written thesis.
- 4.8.6 The following conditions shall apply to the Doctoral Foundation Year if a candidate does not fulfil the programme requirements:
 - 4.8.6.1 Postgraduate Diploma, if the student completes 120 credits and the Confirmation of Candidature; or
 - 4.8.6.2 Postgraduate Certificate, if the student completes only 120 credits.
- 4.8.7 If a candidate's Principal Supervisor or the relevant PC submits a report of unsatisfactory progress to the CRC, or if the candidate fails to complete prescribed coursework satisfactorily, the CRC will invite the candidate to "show cause" why their candidature should not be terminated.
- 4.8.8 If the candidate does not respond to the invitation by the stated date, or the candidate's response is deemed unsatisfactory by the CRC, the CRC shall terminate the candidature and inform the RDC of its decision.

Chapter 5: Confirmation of Candidature

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 This chapter outlines the aims and processes related to the Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) for HDR students. The CoC marks the completion of the probationary phase of an HDR programme and formally admits the student as a candidate for the award. It is a rigorous and supportive checkpoint designed to ensure that the research project is viable, ethical, and aligned with the research plan; the candidate demonstrates the capacity, motivation, and preparedness to complete the programme; the challenges and the provision of targeted support are identified early on; and ensure quality assurance in supervision, resources, and candidate progression. The CoC, therefore, shall be both an academic milestone and a quality assurance mechanism, providing timely feedback, ensuring research integrity, and improving completion outcomes.

5.2 Aims of Confirmation

- 5.2.1 The CoC process aims to:
- 5.2.1.1 assess the students' progress and readiness for advanced independent research;
 - 5.2.1.2 provide an opportunity to demonstrate written, oral, and methodological competence at the HDR level;
 - 5.2.1.3 ensure compliance with required training, ethics, and programme-specific prerequisites;
 - 5.2.1.4 confirm the feasibility of the research plan within the timeframe and available resources; and
 - 5.2.1.5 establish a clear plan and supervisory framework for successful completion.

5.3 General Rule

- 5.3.1 For PhD and Master's by Research programmes, the CoC shall be conducted at the end of the first semester for full-time students, and at the end of the second semester for part-time students.
- 5.3.2 For students requiring a Doctoral Foundation Year, the CoC shall be conducted at the end of the second semester for the full-time students, and at the end of the third semester for part-time students.
- 5.3.3 The following tasks or milestones must be met by the student to proceed to the CoC process:
- 5.3.3.1 submitted a detailed research proposal for formal approval;

- 5.3.3.2 completed an annotated bibliography or literature review, if not already included in the proposal;
- 5.3.3.3 applied for ethics approval;
- 5.3.3.4 completed safety courses where required;
- 5.3.3.5 completed any required coursework units; and
- 5.3.3.6 fulfilled specific programme requirements.
- 5.3.4 A Confirmation Panel shall be set up for each student to ensure fairness and rigour of the assessment process during the Confirmation of Candidature.
- 5.3.5 The candidature must be confirmed within 12 months for full-time (24 months for part-time and foundational year) from the date of Confirmation of Enrolment. Failure to do so shall result in termination of the candidature.
- 5.3.6 The PL, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor, must announce the date, time and venue of the CoC to invite relevant audiences from within the College.
- 5.3.7 The written research proposal must be sent to the confirmation panel members, through the PL, at least 15 days in advance of the proposal defence.
- 5.3.8 The slide decks for the proposal defence must be submitted to the confirmation panel, through the PL, at least three days before the defence.
- 5.3.9 Confirmation Panel Members
 - 5.3.9.1 The Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisors, after consulting the student, through the PC, shall propose members for the Confirmation Panel to the CRC for endorsement.
 - 5.3.9.2 The CRC will review the proposed member composition and may appoint additional members to meet the expertise required.
 - 5.3.9.3 The Confirmation Panel will consist of three faculty members from within the College, excluding the student's supervisors.
 - 5.3.9.4 The PL, in consultation with the DRIL, shall appoint the Chair from the three panel members who have substantial research supervision experience and no direct involvement in the student's research.
 - 5.3.9.5 The financial entitlement for the panel members shall be paid as per the Expert Fee Policy of the University.
- 5.3.10 Functions of Panel Members
 - 5.3.10.1 Assess and evaluate the student's research proposal through a Thesis Proposal Defence Evaluation Form (*Annexure 5.1*).
 - 5.3.10.2 Confirm the candidature based on the outcome of the research proposal defence.
 - 5.3.10.3 Provide clear direction for the next course of action.
 - 5.3.10.4 The Confirmation Panel shall recommend one of the following:

- i. Candidature is confirmed using the CoC Form (*Annexure 5.2*), and the student becomes a candidate for the research degree programme; and
 - ii. Candidature is not confirmed as the student's progress is deemed unsatisfactory.
- 5.3.11 The supervisors, in consultation with the PL, shall fix a date for the next proposal defence if the candidature is not confirmed.
- 5.3.12 The student shall progress to the next stage of their research only when candidature is formally confirmed.
- 5.4 Confirmation of Candidature (CoC)**
 - 5.4.1 Confirmation of candidature shall mark the formal completion of the probationary phase of an HDR student's candidature.
 - 5.4.2 The confirmation process shall formally assess the student's progress during the early period of their candidature and determine whether their candidature should be extended.
 - 5.4.3 The student shall submit the application form approved by the Principal Supervisor for the research proposal defence to the PL (*Annexure 5.3*).
 - 5.4.4 The PL, based on the approved application, shall schedule the date of the defence and inform the confirmation panel members, the Principal Supervisor and the student accordingly.
 - 5.4.5 The oral defence of the research proposal must be attended by the supervisors and may be open for other interested individuals.
 - 5.4.6 The oral defence shall be for a maximum of one hour for Master's by Research students and one-and-a-half hours for PhD students, including the question-and-answer session.
 - 5.4.7 After the presentation to the general audience, the panel members will meet with the student and the supervisors to seek further clarifications and convey the final outcome.
 - 5.4.8 Upon successful defence, the DRIL shall issue a CoC using Form (*Annexure 5.2*) to admit the student as an HDR candidate.
 - 5.4.9 If the research proposal defence is unsuccessful, the student shall be allowed to appeal to the PC through the Principal Supervisor within five working days.
 - 5.4.10 The PC shall review the appeal and notify the candidate of the Committee's decision within five working days.
 - 5.4.11 Students who fail to participate in their CoC will be considered unsuccessful. However, exceptions may be granted under extenuating circumstances, and the defence may be rescheduled.

5.5 Conditions of Candidature

- 5.5.1.1 At the end of each semester, full-time equivalent, from the date of admission to candidature, the candidate and the Principal Supervisor shall submit the Progress Report Form (*Annexure 5.4*) to the PC through the PL.
- 5.5.1.2 A seminar presentation must be done at the end of each semester to track the progress of the candidate's research work for progression into the next semester.
- 5.5.1.3 The candidate shall be required to submit the thesis for examination and other coursework requirements as specified in the DPD.
- 5.5.1.4 In special cases, the candidate may be granted a leave of absence from the course of study and research by the PC, on the advice of the Principal Supervisor. The period of leave shall not be counted as part of the prescribed term of candidature.
- 5.5.1.5 On the recommendation of the PC, the CRC may permit a candidate to pursue the course away from the University if the committee is satisfied that:
- i. the candidate has access to the required facilities;
 - ii. arrangements can be made for regular consultation with the Supervisor(s);
 - or
 - iii. a Co-supervisor located in the same locality as the student can be appointed by the CRC upon recommendation of the PC.
- 5.5.1.6 Each candidate shall consult their supervisor regularly, either in person or through virtual means, based on a mutually agreed schedule established by the supervisor and candidate.
- 5.5.1.7 A candidate shall be required to attend lectures, seminars, conferences, and perform practical work to a satisfactory standard in subjects advised by the supervisors or as required by the DPD.
- 5.5.1.8 No candidate shall enrol in any unit or units without the consent of the Principal Supervisor.
- 5.5.1.9 The candidate shall not be permitted to enrol in another programme concurrently with enrolment in the HDR programme.

5.6 Doctoral Foundation Year for PhD Candidature

- 5.6.1 The Doctoral Foundation Year shall be completed within 12 months of full-time study, with 120 credits offered as per the DPD.
- 5.6.2 The student shall be required to successfully complete the Doctoral Foundation Year to transition into a three-year PhD programme.

Chapter 6: Supervision and Supervisory Roles

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 This chapter outlines the supervision framework governing all research degree programmes of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). It defines the principles, procedures, and standards for appointment, registration, and management of supervisors, and clarifies their respective roles and responsibilities in supporting candidates throughout the research process. The chapter further specifies the mechanisms for monitoring the quality of supervision, managing changes in supervisory arrangements, and ensuring that all supervision practices align with the University's commitment to excellence, integrity, and accountability in higher degree research supervision.

6.2 Supervision

- 6.2.1 All research degree programmes at the University shall be supervised, and each student must be assigned at least two supervisors to guide the research process and thesis preparation.

6.3 Registration of Supervisors

- 6.3.1 All supervisors must be listed on the University's Register of Research Degree Supervisors, maintained by the HDRD, to be eligible for supervision, with exceptions only in extenuating circumstances.
- 6.3.2 All supervisors shall be listed on both the College and the University websites and must include a brief biography, a passport-size photograph, and a contact email address.
- 6.3.3 To be eligible for appointment as a Principal Supervisor, an individual must:
- 6.3.3.1.1 be a faculty of the University;
 - 6.3.3.1.2 demonstrate active research engagement evidenced by publications (including substantive research reports/creative works/IP) in the last three years;
 - 6.3.3.1.3 have successful prior co-supervisory experience (at least one HDR student to completion);
 - 6.3.3.1.4 hold a Master's by Research or PhD to supervise a Master's by Research candidate, and a PhD to supervise a PhD candidate, or demonstrate equivalent competency as determined by the PC and endorsed by the CRC;
 - 6.3.3.1.5 should not have the record of academic misconduct; and
 - 6.3.3.1.6 agree to supervise in accordance with the provisions of the RDF.
- 6.3.4 To be eligible for appointment as a Co-supervisor, an individual must:

- 6.3.4.1.1 be a member of the academic staff (including adjunct and emeritus) or as approved by the PC and the CRC on a case-by-case basis;
- 6.3.4.1.2 demonstrate active engagement in research, as evidenced by publications (including substantive research reports/creative works/IP) in the last three years; and
- 6.3.4.1.3 agree to supervise in accordance with the RDF.

6.4 Registration Process

- 6.4.1 Academic staff seeking registration as supervisors must complete the supervisor registration form (*Annexure 6.1*), obtain CRC endorsement, and submit it to the RDC for formal appointment.
- 6.4.2 The PL, in consultation with the DRIL, shall identify potential supervisors from outside the University and submit their names, along with curriculum vitae, to the CRC for endorsement and subsequent submission to the HDRD.
- 6.4.3 Academic staff members without prior supervision experience may register as Co-supervisors, provided they demonstrate active engagement in research. They must be assigned to a supervision team that includes experienced supervisors.
- 6.4.4 The PL and the DRIL shall provide mentorship and oversight to Co-supervisors without prior supervision experience.
- 6.4.5 Upon successful graduation of a Candidate co-supervised by them, Co-supervisors shall be eligible to apply for registration as Principal Supervisors.

6.5 Review Process

- 6.5.1 The CRC shall review the continuation of academic staff on the Register as part of the annual performance review, and update the HDRD accordingly.

6.6 De-registration

- 6.6.1 The PC or the CRC may recommend deregistration of a supervisor for reasons including:
 - 6.6.1.1 leaving the University or ceasing honorary appointments;
 - 6.6.1.2 persistent non-compliance with research supervision responsibilities;
 - 6.6.1.3 academic misconduct at the University or another institution; and
 - 6.6.1.4 failing to meet registration criteria.

6.7 Appointment of Supervisors

- 6.7.1 The Principal Supervisor shall be a current faculty of the College and must have agreed in principle to supervise the prospective candidate prior to the commencement of the application process.
- 6.7.2 The CRC shall confirm the appointment of the Principal Supervisor at the time of Confirmation of Enrolment.

- 6.7.3 Where a Candidate is required to undertake research at a different campus or institution, a Co-supervisor must be appointed at the visiting institution.
- 6.7.4 Supervisor nominations and appointments must specify the estimated percentage allocation of responsibilities for each member of the supervisory team.
- 6.7.5 If a University supervisor is not available, the PC and the CRC shall appoint a qualified Emeritus Professor or Adjunct, who must sign a Principal Supervisor/Co-supervisor Agreement Form (*Annexure 6.2*) and inform the HDRD accordingly.
- 6.7.6 In the event that a Principal Supervisor superannuates or leaves the University before the graduation of the candidate, the relevant College:
 - 6.7.6.1 shall seek the continuation of the supervisor's service and, where appropriate, provide an honorarium if the candidate has less than one semester remaining before completion; or
 - 6.7.6.2 one of the Co-supervisors who meets the majority of the eligibility criteria for Principal Supervisor may be appointed as the new Principal Supervisor; or
 - 6.7.6.3 a qualified external Principal Supervisor may be appointed if the College is unable to make an internal arrangement.
- 6.7.7 An academic may supervise five active research degree candidates at any time: two candidates as Principal Supervisor and three candidates as Co-supervisor at any time.
- 6.7.8 The workload equivalency shall be as per the provisions outlined in the HR Manual.
- 6.7.9 External Co-supervisors may be appointed in an adjunct capacity upon verification by the programme committee. While students can suggest supervisors, the PC has the final responsibility for the appointment.

6.8 Change of Supervision Arrangements

- 6.8.1 Supervision changes may occur due to a supervisor's resignation, retirement, extended leave, or other reasons.
- 6.8.2 A candidate shall have the right to request a change of Principal or Co-supervisor due to an unsatisfactory relationship or progress.
- 6.8.3 The PC shall review the request after consulting the supervisory team and submit it to the CRC for a decision.
- 6.8.4 Supervisors shall have the right to discontinue their supervisory role if the candidate consistently demonstrates unsatisfactory progress or commitment.
- 6.8.5 A supervisor shall relinquish their supervisory role if an absence exceeding three months impedes the provision of supervisory support.

- 6.8.6 The candidate requiring a change of supervisor shall submit a Change of Supervisor Form (*Annexure 6.3*) to the PL for discussion and approval by the PC and CRC. If the change is made, HDRD shall be informed.

6.9 General Responsibilities of Supervisors

- 6.9.1 Monitor progress against approved milestones, provide timely, constructive, and consolidated feedback (normally within three weeks).
- 6.9.2 Guide and support the Candidate in developing, conducting, and completing their research, ensuring academic rigour, adherence to the approved research plan, and compliance with ethical standards and research integrity requirements as set out in the *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines.
- 6.9.3 Ensure that a fair, transparent, and mutually agreed arrangement on authorship, intellectual contribution, and acknowledgements is established and maintained in accordance with the *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines.
- 6.9.4 Provide academic mentoring and professional guidance to support the Candidate's development as an independent researcher, including advice on scholarly writing, publication, and research dissemination, where appropriate.
- 6.9.5 Assist the Programme Leader (PL) in the nomination of Thesis Examination Committee (TEC) members.
- 6.9.6 Maintain professional, regular, and documented communication with the Candidate, promptly addressing academic or supervisory concerns and, where necessary, referring matters to the PL or relevant University authorities in accordance with the provisions of the RDF.

6.10 Supervisory Roles and Responsibilities

- 6.10.1 Principal Supervisors shall:
- 6.10.1.1 act as the lead academic mentor for the candidate, assuming responsibility for the overall supervision and quality assurance of the candidate's research journey, and ensuring that the candidate receives appropriate academic, professional, and administrative support throughout the candidature.
 - 6.10.1.2 contribute more than 70% of the supervision, except in unavoidable circumstances.
 - 6.10.1.3 verify the Progress Report Form (*Annexure 5.2*) submitted by the Candidate every six months and submit to PL.
 - 6.10.1.4 In particular, the Principal Supervisor shall:
 - i. provide intellectual leadership and expert guidance in the research field;
 - ii. assist the Candidate in refining and narrowing the research question or hypothesis;

- iii. ensure the research is original, rigorous, and achievable within the timeframe and available resources;
- iv. review and provide timely constructive feedback on the Candidate's written work, including thesis drafts;
- v. coordinate the formation of the supervisory team and clearly define their roles and responsibilities;
- vi. help the Candidate develop a feasible research plan and timeline;
- vii. support the preparation and approval of the research proposal;
- viii. oversee and ensure completion of major milestones such as CoC, progress report, publication, seminars, and final thesis examination;
- ix. maintain regular meetings and ensure ongoing communication with the candidate;
- x. identify issues early and recommend corrective action where necessary;
- xi. ensure compliance with university regulations and reporting requirements;
- xii. complete and submit supervisory reports, ethics applications, and risk assessments on time;
- xiii. guide the student through institutional processes for examination and thesis submission;
- xiv. keep accurate records of meetings, progress, and correspondence related to supervision;
- xv. support the candidate in developing professional and transferable skills.
- xvi. facilitate access to necessary resources such as laboratory space, data, funding, or field sites;
- xvii. encourage and support opportunities for publishing, presenting at conferences, and networking;
- xviii. monitor Candidates well-being, provide guidance and refer to appropriate support services where needed;
- xix. advise on career development and academic progression, including postdoctoral opportunities;
- xx. ensure the research meets academic, ethical, and professional standards;
- xxi. provide guidance on thesis structure, referencing, and academic writing;
- xxii. prepare the Candidate for thesis examination and defence;
- xxiii. coordinate with Co-supervisors to ensure a cohesive and collaborative supervision team;
- xxiv. ensure that the Candidate's interdisciplinary or collaborative work (if any) is well supported;

- xxv. act as a liaison between the Candidate and university administration, funding agencies, or external stakeholders;
- xxvi. undertake supervisor training and professional development as required by the institution;
- xxvii. maintain high standards of academic integrity and supervisory ethics;
- xxviii. respect boundaries, promotes equity and inclusiveness, and fosters a positive and safe research culture;
- xxix. provide detailed periodic reports to the PL, PC and the CRC to assess progress and likelihood of timely completion; and
- xxx. ensure induction and orientation of the Candidates to the research environment, facilities, and institutional policies.

6.10.2 The Co-supervisor(s) shall:

- 6.10.2.1 assist the Principal Supervisor in effective supervision of the Candidate's research work;
- 6.10.2.2 provide specific technical or subject expert services to the candidate;
- 6.10.2.3 support the Candidate with regular feedback, reading drafts, and attending meetings;
- 6.10.2.4 bridge academic and applied perspectives, especially for practice-based or interdisciplinary research;
- 6.10.2.5 serve as an alternate point of contact if the Principal Supervisor is unavailable; and
- 6.10.2.6 assume the role of Principal Supervisor if the incumbent Principal Supervisor takes extended leave, resigns, or otherwise departs, and oversee the appointment of a new Co-supervisor in consultation with the Candidate, submitting the proposed change to the CRC for approval.

Chapter 7: Matters Related to Candidate

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 This chapter outlines all matters related to a research degree student from enrolment to completion for a maximum learning experience. It details the responsibilities of candidates besides guidance on additional coursework, change of study mode, fieldwork and overseas research. The chapter also highlights the variations to candidature, including extension, suspension, withdrawal, and dismissal procedures, as well as appeal mechanisms, to ensure fairness, transparency, and academic rigour.

7.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the Candidate

- 7.2.1 The research degree candidate must:
- 7.2.1.1 initiate contact with their Principal Supervisor, after formally accepting the offer of admission, to arrange a mutually convenient time to discuss the formal induction process.
 - 7.2.1.2 agree on contact arrangements and maintain regular communication with supervisors for the entire duration of the candidature.
 - 7.2.1.3 fulfil all programme requirements as defined in the DPD, and seek support or clarification from supervisors as necessary.
 - 7.2.1.4 undertake a formal CoC process.
 - 7.2.1.5 be responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the policies and procedures outlined in the RDF and *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines.
 - 7.2.1.6 ensure that they are familiar with the professional guidelines governing research conduct within their field.
 - 7.2.1.7 ensure that all administrative requirements are met, including re-enrolling each year, submitting progress reports (Annexure 5.2) at the end of each semester, and complying with procedures for variations to the conditions of candidature.
 - 7.2.1.8 submit a “show cause” statement to the Supervisor and the PC, stating the reason(s) why their candidature should not be terminated if progress is deemed inadequate.
 - 7.2.1.9 adhere to the provisions of the RUB Student Code of Conduct and the College Handbook.
 - 7.2.1.10 take responsibility to maintain regular contact with the University and their supervisors.

7.3 Enrolment in Additional Coursework Modules

- 7.3.1 With the approval of the Principal Supervisor, Candidates may audit supplementary module(s) offered by the College for academic enrichment purposes.
- 7.3.2 The additional modules undertaken by the Candidate shall appear in the final academic transcript without credit and shall not count towards the formal degree requirement.

7.4 Change of Mode/Status of Study

- 7.4.1 During candidature, a Candidate may be allowed to change their mode of study from full-time to part-time, or vice versa, subject to the approval of the CRC.
- 7.4.2 All scholarship Candidates shall be required to adhere to the conditions of their scholarship.

7.5 Fieldwork and Research Overseas

- 7.5.1 The Candidate, through the Principal Supervisor, shall seek the approval of the PC and the CRC for any overseas study opportunity related to their research work.
- 7.5.2 Master's by Research candidates may undertake fieldwork or overseas study for a maximum of six months, and PhD candidates for a maximum of 12 months. Exceptions may be granted under special circumstances.
- 7.5.3 Travel and health insurance, as well as travel-risk requirements, must be satisfied before a Candidate is permitted to undertake overseas study. Candidates should consult their Principal Supervisor to ensure that all procedures are correctly followed.

7.6 Variations in Candidature

- 7.6.1 The candidature may be extended, suspended or withdrawn by the CRC based on the situation and/or appeal from the candidate through the Principal Supervisor.
- 7.6.2 Extension of Candidature
 - 7.6.2.1 Extensions of candidature are generally discouraged, but may be granted on a case-by-case basis.
 - 7.6.2.2 Applications for an extension must be submitted to the CRC at least six months prior to the thesis submission deadline. The CRC shall notify the applicant of its decision within 10 working days of receiving the application.
 - 7.6.2.3 Extensions shall be granted in three-month blocks for up to two years, with tuition fees for the extended period applied on a pro-rata basis in accordance with the University Tuition Fee Policy.
 - 7.6.2.4 Applications for extension of candidature must include:
 - i. a strong case that is endorsed by the Principal Supervisor and the PC;
 - ii. a statement from the Principal Supervisor, which includes an evaluation of the candidate's progress to date and the expected outcome of the extension, if granted; and

- iii. a time schedule detailing activities from the start of the extension to the final thesis submission.
- 7.6.3 Suspension of Candidature
 - 7.6.3.1 The Candidate shall apply for the suspension of candidature through the Principal Supervisor to the CRC under extenuating circumstances.
 - 7.6.3.2 The minimum period of suspension of candidature shall be 30 days, and the maximum period shall be 12 months. Suspension during a coursework module and the Doctoral Foundation Year shall result in deferral of the entire course.
 - 7.6.3.3 Retrospective suspension requests shall not be approved except for compelling reasons, such as involvement in a serious accident, illness, bereavement of a close family member, or unanticipated employer demands, for which appropriate documentary evidence must be provided.
 - 7.6.3.4 In order to return from a suspension of candidature, Candidates must reactivate their candidature in the programme in which they are enrolled.
 - 7.6.3.5 For international Candidates, once the suspension is granted, the Candidate must depart Bhutan as per the prevailing immigration rules.
- 7.6.4 Withdrawal of candidature
 - 7.6.4.1 The Candidate shall be required to submit an application for the withdrawal of candidature, through the Principal Supervisor, to the PC.
 - 7.6.4.2 Withdrawal shall not be applied retrospectively, i.e., it cannot be backdated beyond the current teaching period.
 - 7.6.4.3 Refund of tuition fees for withdrawal of candidature shall be applied as per the payment and refund mechanism of the University's Tuition Fee Policy.
- 7.6.5 Dismissal of Candidature
 - 7.6.5.1 A Candidate failing to meet the minimum requirements may lead to dismissal after adhering to the following formal procedures:
 - i. alert the Candidate in writing, in advance to any deficiencies, clearly explaining the reasons and potential consequences; and
 - ii. the Programme Committee's recommendation for dismissal on academic grounds shall be reviewed by the CRC for final decision. If the CRC recommends dismissal, the Candidate shall be terminated, and the HDRD shall be informed.
 - 7.6.5.2 A candidate may also be dismissed on disciplinary issues under the provisions of the RUB Student Code of Conduct and/or the College Handbook.

- 7.6.5.3 Candidates shall have the right to appeal against the decision of the CRC to the RDC.
- 7.6.5.4 If the Candidate is dissatisfied with the decision of the RDC, they may submit a written appeal within 10 days to the Chair of the AB. The Chair may then refer the matter to the Academic Appeals Committee (AAC) of the University for further action.

Chapter 8: Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 This chapter establishes that academic integrity is fundamental to the values of the Royal University of Bhutan and is essential to maintaining the credibility and quality of its Higher Degree Research programmes. It defines the University's position on plagiarism and academic misconduct, outlines the procedures for addressing such cases, specifies the applicable penalties, and tolerance levels. All HDR students/candidates are expected to uphold the highest standards of honesty, transparency, and accountability in their academic and research practices.

8.2 Academic and Research Misconduct

- 8.2.1 Academic and research misconduct encompasses a wide range of unethical practices that compromise the integrity of scholarship. These include, but are not limited to, the following:
- 8.2.1.1 Plagiarism: The act of presenting another's work, ideas, data, or words as one's own without proper acknowledgement. This includes direct copying, paraphrasing without acknowledgement, and using images or data without citation.
 - 8.2.1.2 Fabrication: The invention or falsification of data, results, or citations in any academic or research activity.
 - 8.2.1.3 Falsification: Manipulation of research materials, equipment, processes, or data to misrepresent results.
 - 8.2.1.4 Collusion: Unauthorised collaboration between student or with others to produce work that is submitted as individual effort.
 - 8.2.1.5 Cheating: Using unauthorised materials or help during an academic task or examination.
 - 8.2.1.6 Ghostwriting: Engaging another individual to write or complete academic work on one's behalf.
 - 8.2.1.7 Salami Publication: Production of multiple research publications from the same data sets and study design, with overlapping content, distorting the value of the research.

8.3 Procedures to Deal with Misconduct

- 8.3.1 Misconduct may be reported by supervisors, examiners, staff, or students. All reports must be submitted in writing to the PC.
- 8.3.2 The PC shall conduct a preliminary assessment to determine whether a *prima facie* case exists. Where such a case is identified, the candidate will be formally notified

and provided with an opportunity to submit a written response within a specified timeframe.

8.3.3 If warranted, the PC shall put up the case to the PBE for discussion. The candidate may be invited to a hearing to present the case.

8.3.4 The PBE may conduct further inquiry, and investigation if necessary, and shall deliver a decision within 10 working days.

8.3.5 The PBE shall follow one of the three courses of action based on inquiry:

8.3.5.1 conclude that the plagiarism or academic misconduct did not occur, and dismiss the case;

8.3.5.2 conclude that minor academic misconduct occurred; or

8.3.5.3 conclude that major academic misconduct occurred.

8.3.6 The decision shall be communicated to the candidate in writing and shared with the relevant committees/bodies as appropriate.

8.4 Penalty for Misconduct

8.4.1 Penalties for academic and research misconduct shall be determined based on the severity and intent of the violation. Misconduct is classified into minor and major categories.

8.4.2 Minor Misconduct

8.4.2.1 Minor misconduct typically involves unintentional actions or first-time offences that arise due to a lack of awareness or academic inexperience. Examples include:

- i. Minor instances of plagiarism (e.g., improper paraphrasing or missing citations) that affect less than 15% of the submitted work of a PhD, and less than 20% in the case of a Master's by Research.
- ii. Inadvertent breaches of research protocols or procedures without significant consequence.
- iii. Unauthorised but non-malicious collaboration with peers.
- iv. Submitting the same work in multiple courses without proper disclosure (self-plagiarism), where it is not a repeated or serious offence.

8.4.2.2 Penalties for minor misconduct may include:

- i. Formal warning or written caution.
- ii. Requirement to attend the academic integrity session.
- iii. Opportunity to revise and resubmit the work with or without a grade penalty.
- iv. Reduced marks for the affected assignment or component.

8.4.3 Major Misconduct

- 8.4.3.1 Major misconduct involves deliberate, repeated, or severe breaches of academic and research integrity that compromise the integrity of the work or the reputation of the University. Examples include:
- i. Extensive plagiarism, defined as affecting more than 15% of the submitted work for PhD and more than 20% in the case of a Master's by Research, particularly where sources are not cited and there is evidence of intent to deceive.
 - ii. Fabrication or falsification of research data or findings.
 - iii. Submitting work completed by another person (ghostwriting).
 - iv. Repeated instances of minor misconduct.
 - v. Collusion to gain an unfair academic advantage.
 - vi. Misuse or manipulation of research tools, processes, or ethics approval.
 - vii. Breach of confidentiality or falsification of authorship in collaborative research.
 - viii. Engaging in cheating during examinations or assessments.
- 8.4.3.2 Penalties for major misconduct may include:
- i. Failing the assignment or module.
 - ii. Suspension from the research programme for a defined period.
 - iii. Cancellation of candidature or termination from the programme.
 - iv. Withholding or revocation of academic awards or degrees (if discovered post-award).

8.5 Tolerance Level

- 8.5.1 The RUB shall maintain a zero-tolerance policy toward major academic and research misconduct, particularly in HDR programmes. While minor, unintentional plagiarism may be addressed through academic counselling and resubmission, any deliberate or repeated misconduct will be treated with utmost seriousness.
- 8.5.2 Candidates shall seek guidance from their supervisors, use plagiarism detection tools, and participate in academic writing workshops to ensure compliance with the RUB's integrity standards.
- 8.5.3 The following degree of similarity index, exclusive of quotes and references, shall be adhered to:
- i. Masters: 20%
 - ii. PhD: 15%
- 8.5.4 Candidates may use generative AI (GenAI) tools for drafting or editing research work, provided all AI-assisted content is disclosed, appropriately cited, and critically reviewed, with the Candidate remaining responsible for its accuracy, originality, and integrity.

Chapter 9: Thesis Preparation, Submission, Examination, and Publication

9.1 Overview

- 9.1.1 This chapter sets out the standards and procedures governing the preparation, submission, examination, and publication of the thesis. As the thesis represents the culmination of a research degree programme, candidates are required to demonstrate originality, uphold the highest academic and disciplinary standards, and produce work that constitutes a significant and enduring contribution to knowledge within their field. Consequently, a well-defined and systematically applied process, as set out in this chapter, is essential to ensure the integrity, quality, and academic rigour of the University's research degree programmes.

9.2 General Rules

- 9.2.1 Candidature must be valid and active at the time of thesis examination, including both the written submission and the oral defence.
- 9.2.2 All HDR Candidates shall prepare a thesis that demonstrates original research, critical thinking, and scholarly rigour, in accordance with the University's formatting and referencing requirements (*Annexure 9.1*).
- 9.2.3 The Candidate shall submit the thesis within the timeline prescribed by the University. This submission must include all necessary declarations, approvals, and supporting documentation in accordance with the University's research regulations, following a successful oral defence of the thesis.
- 9.2.4 The written thesis shall be evaluated by the Thesis Examination Committee using the Thesis Evaluation Form (*Annexure 9.3*).
- 9.2.5 The Candidate shall be eligible to undertake the oral examination to defend the thesis only after the written thesis has been accepted by the TEC and formally endorsed by the PC.
- 9.2.6 Following the successful completion of the written thesis examination, the Candidate shall prepare the final version of the thesis for submission to the PL, provided that the outcome of the defence is successful.
- 9.2.7 Candidate shall submit two copies of the bound thesis along with electronic formats of the final version of the thesis for official archiving in the College/University's repository within the timeline set by the PL.
- 9.2.8 The DRIL shall send a bound and an e-copy of the thesis, signed by the supervisors, together with a brief report, to the HDRD for reporting to the RDC and for official archiving.

9.3 Thesis Expectations

- 9.3.1 In addition to each Programme's specific requirements, all University theses shall be evaluated based on the following criteria:
- 9.3.1.1 A significant and original contribution to the field through new knowledge, insights, or interpretation.
 - 9.3.1.2 Evidence of rigorous, systematic, and ethical research methodology appropriate to the discipline.
 - 9.3.1.3 Ability to critically engage with literature, theoretical concepts, and data to construct logical arguments and conclusions.
 - 9.3.1.4 Clear, coherent, and scholarly writing, characterised by appropriate structure, formatting, referencing, and a consistent academic tone, reflecting independent research and original thinking throughout.
 - 9.3.1.5 Content suitable for publication in peer-reviewed journals, demonstrating academic merit and relevance.
 - 9.3.1.6 A comprehensive understanding of the research area, demonstrating depth in focus and awareness of the broader disciplinary context.
 - 9.3.1.7 Compliance with institutional formatting requirements, ethical guidelines, and quality benchmarks for submission.

9.4 **General Guidelines for Thesis Preparation**

- 9.4.1 The thesis may be prepared as a monograph or a publication-based format following the University guidelines (*Annexure 9.1*).
- 9.4.2 For theses in the monograph format, the word count for PhD theses in non-science disciplines shall be between 80,000 and 100,000 words, while those in science disciplines shall be between 60,000 and 80,000 words, exclusive of references and appendices.
- 9.4.3 For theses in the monograph format, the word count for Master's by Research theses shall be between 60,000 to 80,000 words for non-science subjects, and 50,000 to 70,000 words for science subjects, exclusive of references and appendices.
- 9.4.4 The thesis must be written in English. Exceptions permitting submission in Dzongkha shall be allowed only if explicitly stated in the DPD. In general, approval to write in Dzongkha shall be granted only when the subject of study is the Dzongkha language or Dzongkha literature.
- 9.4.5 Theses written in Dzongkha must include both an abstract and an executive summary in English.
- 9.4.6 The difference between a Master's by Research and a PhD thesis shall be primarily determined by the depth and scope of the contribution to original knowledge.

9.5 **Change in Thesis Focus and Approach**

- 9.5.1 Any minor change/modification in the direction of research shall require the approval of both the Supervisors and the PC.
- 9.5.2 Any major change in the direction of research, including new ethics approval, shall require final approval from the CRC before the changes are made.
- 9.5.3 A major change in the title of the thesis after the CoC shall require the approval of the CRC.
- 9.5.4 A change in the title of the thesis shall not be allowed once the written thesis is submitted for examination. However, the changes may be allowed if the TEC recommends it and is endorsed by the CRC.

9.6 Processes

- 9.6.1 The Candidate, in consultation with the supervisors, shall finalise a schedule for different milestones of the thesis.
- 9.6.2 The PL shall notify the candidate and the Principal Supervisor, requesting an update on progress and readiness for the final submission of the thesis.
- 9.6.3 The Principal Supervisor and the candidate shall confirm the submission date of the written thesis at least two months in advance to allow sufficient time for preparation for the Thesis Examination.
- 9.6.4 The Supervisors, in consultation with DRIL and the PL, shall constitute the Thesis Examination Committee (TEC) at least two months in advance of the thesis examination.

9.7 Formation of Thesis Examination Committee

9.7.1 Members

- 9.7.1.1 At least three relevant members– two members external to the College and one from within the College.
- 9.7.1.2 One of the external members shall be appointed as the TEC Chair in advance.
- 9.7.1.3 The TEC shall be constituted after reviewing the curriculum vitae of each potential member.
- 9.7.1.4 The DRIL, following the CRC's endorsement, shall issue an appointment letter to the TEC Chair and the members, with a copy to the HDRD.
- 9.7.1.5 The financial entitlement for the panel members shall be paid according to the Expert Fee Policy of the University.

9.7.2 Functions

- 9.7.2.1 Evaluate the thesis within the given time frame using the Thesis Evaluation Form (*Annexure 9.3*)
- 9.7.2.2 Provide constructive and critical feedback with recommendations for further improvement.

- 9.7.2.3 Maintain confidentiality of all thesis materials and examination proceedings, and submit a formal report with their recommendations on the thesis outcome.
- 9.7.2.4 Certify the completion by signing the Thesis Evaluation Form (Annexure 9.3) and the Thesis Oral Defence Evaluation Form (Annexure 9.4)
- 9.7.2.5 Adhere to the guidelines and functions of the thesis examination process.

9.8 Thesis Submission for Examination

- 9.8.1 The Candidate shall submit the final copy of the thesis to the Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisor.
- 9.8.2 The Principal Supervisor, after consulting the Co-supervisors, shall submit the final electronic copy of the thesis to the PL for external examination.
- 9.8.3 The PL, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor, shall coordinate the thesis examination by the TEC following a double-blind examination process.
- 9.8.4 The PL shall identify a date and time for the examination based on the agreement of the Candidate and the Supervisors.
- 9.8.5 The PL, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor, shall prepare all necessary paperwork for the TEC Chair and other examiners.
- 9.8.6 The PL shall ensure that the examination of the thesis is initiated within 10 working days of the receipt of the final e-copy of the thesis.
- 9.8.7 The PL shall notify the Principal Supervisor of the outcome of the examination, ensure the incorporation of the feedback, and grant final approval for preparation of the oral defence.
- 9.8.8 The PL, in consultation with supervisors, shall coordinate the oral defence with prior approval of the TEC, contingent upon the satisfactory incorporation of the feedback.

9.9 Thesis Examination

- 9.9.1 The thesis examination shall comprise two parts: a written thesis followed by an oral defence.
- 9.9.2 The TEC shall assess both the written thesis and the oral defence.
- 9.9.3 Assessment of the Thesis
 - 9.9.3.1 Each examiner shall assess the written thesis independently and provide a written examination report using the template (*Annexure 9.3*).
 - 9.9.3.2 The thesis examination must be completed within two months of submission of the thesis.
 - 9.9.3.3 The PL shall send a reminder after one month of sending the thesis for examination.
 - 9.9.3.4 The outcome of the examination shall be one of the following:

- i. accepted in its current form.
 - ii. accepted with minor revision.
 - iii. requires major revision.
 - iv. fail.
- 9.9.3.5 A thesis receiving a “major revision” or “fail” outcome shall be sent to the original examiners for re-examination after the necessary improvements have been made. Minor revisions shall be verified by the Principal Supervisor.
- 9.9.3.6 All required major revisions must be completed within three months of notification of the examination outcome.
- 9.9.3.7 The written thesis examination shall be graded out of 100 marks, and the average of the examiners’ scores shall be used to determine the final grade.
- 9.9.3.8 The TEC shall award and release marks only upon acceptance of the final written thesis. Accordingly, the candidate shall be required to incorporate all the comments or, where appropriate, provide a written response (rebuttal) to the examiners’ comments.
- 9.9.4 Oral Defence**
- 9.9.4.1 The Candidate shall be allowed to proceed to oral defence only upon successful completion of the written thesis examination.
- 9.9.4.2 The Candidate shall be required to defend the thesis based on the approved format of the University.
- 9.9.4.3 The oral defence shall be open to members of the College and the general public. Members of the audience may pose questions following the Candidate’s presentation. Upon conclusion of the public discussion, the defence examination shall continue with TEC members.
- 9.9.4.4 The duration for the oral defence, including the Candidate’s presentation, questions from the audience, deliberation and questioning by the TEC members, shall be as follows:
- i. Two to two and a half hours for a PhD, including 30-45 minutes for the presentation.
 - ii. One and a half to two hours for Masters, including 30-45 minutes for the presentation.
- 9.9.4.5 If the Candidate fails the oral defence, the PL, in consultation with the Supervisors, shall fix the date for the next oral defence.
- 9.9.4.6 A Candidate shall be allowed a maximum of two attempts to defend the thesis.

- 9.9.4.7 Following successful completion of the oral defence, the TEC members shall sign the Thesis Oral Defence Evaluation Form (Annexure 9.4)
- 9.9.4.8 The TEC Chair shall:
- iii. serve as an impartial representative of the academic standards of the University.
 - iv. ensure that the examination is conducted within the University and Programme guidelines, keeping examiners informed of the rules.
 - v. ensure that the Candidate is asked challenging yet fair questions, and may also participate in questioning.
 - vi. confirm that the Candidate receives adequate feedback from committee members after the examination.
 - vii. report the examination results promptly to the PL concerned.
 - viii. make the final decision should any disagreement arise in the finalisation of the result.
- 9.9.4.9 The TEC members shall:
- i. sign Conflict of Interest Declaration form (*Annexure 9.2*).
 - ii. participate actively in the assessment of the Candidate by posing fair, relevant, and rigorous questions.
 - iii. provide constructive, evidence-based evaluation and feedback to the Candidate following the examination.
 - iv. collaborate with the TEC Chair to uphold academic standards and examination protocols.

9.9.5 Scheduling Oral Defence

- 9.9.5.1 The examination shall be scheduled on the date agreed upon by the Principal Supervisor, Candidate and the TEC members.
- 9.9.5.2 The PL, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor and Candidate, shall publicly announce the oral defence at least five working days prior to the scheduled date.
- 9.9.5.3 The TEC members, including the Chair, shall not be changed once endorsed by the CRC, except in extenuating circumstances.
- 9.9.5.4 Scheduling the examination shall specify the:
- i. Date, time, and location of the examination.
 - ii. Title of the thesis.
- 9.9.5.5 The defence shall be rescheduled if any of the TEC members are absent.
- 9.9.5.6 In case a Candidate fails to attend the scheduled oral defence due to extenuating circumstances, the defence shall be rescheduled.

- 9.9.5.7 Only one external TEC member may be allowed to participate via video conferencing, provided that the examination's standards and protocols are fully maintained. In the event of technical glitches, the oral defence shall proceed as scheduled.

9.10 Oral Defence and Result Declaration

- 9.10.1 After the oral defence, the TEC members shall discuss and finalise the result in the presence of the Principal Supervisor.
- 9.10.2 The Chair of the TEC shall convey the final result of the oral defence to the Candidate, immediately upon the committee's decision, in the presence of the Supervisors, PL, and DRIL.

9.11 Overall thesis outcome

- 9.11.1 The final report of the oral defence shall be sent to the CRC for the record.
- 9.11.2 Upon successful defence of the thesis, a provisional degree shall be considered as awarded.
- 9.11.3 The formal degree shall be conferred according to normal conferral schedules.
- 9.11.4 In the event of a Candidate's failure, the Chair shall submit a written report on the Candidate's performance to the candidate, the PL, and the CRC within three working days of the oral defence.

9.12 Certificate of Final Reading

- 9.12.1 The Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisors shall review the final thesis in detail and sign the certification page to indicate that the thesis meets the Programme and University specifications described below:
- 9.12.1.1 All suggested changes have been accounted for and/or incorporated in the thesis where appropriate.
- 9.12.1.2 Format complies with the University requirements.
- 9.12.1.3 Publication sources are indicated, and written permission has been obtained for copyrighted materials.
- 9.12.1.4 The thesis is ready for printing, binding and archiving.
- 9.12.2 The DRIL office shall verify the formatting of the thesis and grant approval only if it fully complies with the University's requirements.

9.13 Final Submission

- 9.13.1 Once the award of a degree is recommended, the Candidate must submit the final, approved, and bound version of the thesis for retention with the College/University repository.
- 9.13.2 Two copies of the original, final, approved, and bound thesis, conforming to the University specifications and bearing the original signatures or e-signature of the supervisors, shall be retained by the College.

- 9.13.3 An original copy of the thesis shall be retained by the College library.
- 9.13.4 An electronic copy of the thesis shall be submitted to the HDRD for digital archiving. The digital copy must be identical to the final printed version, with scanned signature pages placed in their respective positions.
- 9.13.5 The certification page shall include signed statements confirming the final reading and approval of the thesis, indicating that it has been read, is complete, and has been approved by the TEC.
- 9.13.6 The thesis shall be considered finally approved once the Thesis Approval Form is signed by the TEC members, Supervisors, PL, and DRIL (*Annexure 9.6*) prior to oral defence.

9.14 Publication Agreement and License

- 9.14.1 The author must sign the University Thesis Publication License (*Annexure 9.5*) upon final submission. By accepting the terms of this agreement, the author grants the University a nonexclusive, worldwide, perpetual, irrevocable right to reproduce, distribute, display, and transmit the thesis. The agreement remains with the HDRD and is not replicated within the thesis.
- 9.14.2 The University shall make the full thesis available online, as well as through third-party search engines and distributors.
- 9.14.3 The author shall retain the copyright of the work and is encouraged to apply a Creative Commons license to specify reuse permissions clearly, and include it in the thesis appendix.

9.15 Printing and digital specifications

- 9.15.1 The final printed thesis must be on high-quality, acid-free paper and hard-bound in accordance with University style (*Annexure 9.1*).
- 9.16 The bound thesis book shall have the following specifications:
- 9.16.1 PhD: Hard-bound in maroon colour (#754B63) with gold letters.
- 9.16.2 Master's by Research: Hard-bound in black colour (#6C6F77) with gold letters.
- 9.16.3 The thesis title and year should be written on the spine of the book.

9.17 Delayed release (embargo)

- 9.17.1 The author shall have the option to delay the release of a thesis online, outside of the University library and networks. The available release delay options shall be six months, one year, or two years.
- 9.17.2 Under an embargo, the thesis shall be available to the University's authorised library users, but not to readers outside the University.
- 9.17.3 The embargo option may be appropriate for the Candidate who has an IP application in process or wants to delay access to the thesis for a limited amount of time in order to pursue commercial interests or other publications.

9.17.4 The embargo may be lifted early at the request of the author.

9.18 **Publishing**

9.18.1 If a Candidate publishes work based on research done while the Candidate was a University candidate, during or subsequent to completion of their research at the University, they should adhere to the *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines. These publications must indicate affiliation with the College and the University.

9.18.2 The Principal Supervisor shall discuss with the Candidate about the publications and authorship based on the provisions of the *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines.

9.18.3 Any publication arising from the thesis work should be authored only by the Candidate and Supervisors as appropriate.

9.18.4 The University staff and Candidates shall attribute the contribution of all participants in accordance with the provisions of the *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines.

9.18.5 Attribution or assignment of principal authorship shall be as per the *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines.

9.18.6 It shall be the responsibility of all researchers to ensure the authorship hierarchy is in accord with the contributions made and as specified in the *Zhib 'Tshol*: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines under Publications.

9.18.7 Permission to publish research results where there is joint Intellectual Property ownership shall require the consent of all parties to the IP Agreement.

9.18.8 Where a dispute arises, it may be discussed in the CRC and forwarded to the RDC if the issue is not resolved.

Chapter 10: Student Support, Grievances and Appeals

10.1 Overview

- 10.1.1 This chapter outlines the institutional framework for supporting research degree students and for the management of grievances and appeals within the University. Robust student support and transparent grievance and appeals processes are integral to safeguarding student wellbeing, ensuring procedural fairness, and upholding the integrity and accountability of research programmes. Accordingly, this chapter specifies provisions relating to minimum facilities, student resources, orientation programmes, and established mechanisms for the submission and resolution of grievances.

10.2 Facilities

- 10.2.1 Facilities shall include adequate workspace, ICT facilities, and library access, as specified in the DPD.
- 10.2.2 Programmes that are unable to fully comply with minimum standards must document the gaps and actions taken to address them annually and report this information to the RDC.
- 10.2.3 Where additional resources are available, students shall be provided with written information on policies governing access and allocation of the resources.
- 10.2.4 The facilities provided and the conduct of the programme activities must comply with the University's occupational health and safety policies and applicable regulatory requirements.

10.3 Student Resources and Induction

- 10.3.1 Colleges shall organise mandatory orientation/awareness programmes for all new research degree students within the first month of enrolment.
- 10.3.2 Orientation shall include information on:
- 10.3.2.1 University and programme-level policies, practices, and procedures;
 - 10.3.2.2 Relevant policy provisions of the RDF;
 - 10.3.2.3 Research ethics, integrity, and safety;
 - 10.3.2.4 Available support services (academic, psychological, health, financial, etc.); and
 - 10.3.2.5 Grievance and appeals procedures.
- 10.3.3 Provision shall be made for the representation of Postgraduate students on relevant College committees.
- 10.3.4 Upon enrolment, Students shall be provided with the Student Handbook and any other relevant documents, including the University's research policies.

10.4 Disputes between Students and Supervisors

- 10.4.1 The University shall recognise the student–supervisor relationship as central to successful completion of the candidature.
- 10.4.2 Where disputes arise, students and supervisors shall first resolve issues informally through discussion.
- 10.4.3 If unresolved, the student may seek assistance from the PL, followed by the DRIL. Should both the PL and DRIL be involved, the case may be reported to the PC, and subsequently to the CRC.
- 10.4.4 Disputes relating to academic misconduct or research integrity shall be dealt with in accordance to the University’s Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct provisions, and the *Zhib ‘Tshol: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines*.

10.5 Grievance and Appeals Procedures

- 10.5.1 The University shall raise awareness of the grievance procedures to prevent disputes that may affect the successful completion of the course.
- 10.5.2 A grievance may be raised by:
 - 10.5.2.1 A candidate;
 - 10.5.2.2 Supervisor(s);
 - 10.5.2.3 College leadership (President, Deans, Programme Leaders, HoDs);
 - 10.5.2.4 Fellow students or relevant staff;
 - 10.5.2.5 Thesis Examination Committee; and/or
 - 10.5.2.6 Affected research participants or community members.
- 10.5.3 Process
 - 10.5.3.1 The complainant should communicate with the other parties, clearly describing the cause(s) for dissatisfaction, and seek an informal resolution.
 - 10.5.3.2 Failing to resolve the issue informally, the complainant should notify the other parties in writing, with a copy to the President, who may seek independent mediation. If any form of misconduct is alleged, it must be investigated by the DRIL.
 - 10.5.3.3 All parties should agree to arrangements for mediation, and the mediation may be accompanied by a representative from a staff or student association as appropriate.
 - 10.5.3.4 The outcome of mediation shall be notified in writing to all affected parties.
 - 10.5.3.5 In the event that mediation is unsuccessful, the affected parties shall proceed with the appeal process, first submitting to the PC, followed by the CRC and the RDC.
 - 10.5.3.6 The parties shall have the right of appeal to the AAC if not satisfied with the decision of the RDC.

- 10.5.3.7 Any form of appeal shall be submitted within 10 working days of receiving the decision.
- 10.5.4 Appeals shall be permitted on procedural grounds only. This includes:
- i. procedural irregularities in the examination or confirmation process; and
 - ii. documentary evidence of prejudice or bias by examiners or panel members.
- 10.5.5 Appeals shall not be entertained for matters concerning academic judgment, the adequacy and quality of supervision, or issues that ought to have been raised earlier in the course of candidature.
- 10.5.6 Members of the Appeals Committee who have participated in earlier recommendations on the same matter shall recuse themselves from deliberations.
- 10.5.7 The decision of the AAC shall be final and binding within the University.

Chapter 11: Tuition, Scholarships, and Funding

11.1 Overview

11.1.1 This chapter outlines the University's tuition policies for HDR programmes and provides guidance on available scholarships, assistantships, and external funding opportunities to support tuition fees, living expenses, research activities, and professional development. It also specifies provisions regarding employment while holding a scholarship, as well as procedures for extensions, or suspension of funding. This information is essential to ensure HDR candidates understand their financial responsibilities and opportunities, enabling them to plan and manage their studies and research effectively

11.2 Tuition and Funding

11.2.1 All research degree programmes require tuition to be paid directly to the College. The tuition fee shall be based on the prevailing RUB Tuition Fee Policy.

11.2.2 Tuition fee will be charged on a semester-by-semester basis for each regular semester of enrolment, and on a pro-rata basis for any approved extension of candidature.

11.2.3 The primary responsibility for securing tuition and research funding shall rest with the student.

11.2.4 Research degree programmes may be funded from a variety of sources, including private (self), University, government, industry, organisational, or individual sources. Available funding may cover tuition fees, living expenses, conference attendance, short-term attachment to another organisation, and research support, including materials and travel.

11.2.5 The University may provide financial support in the form of fellowships, research assistantships, and teaching assistantships, primarily to HDR students/candidates, based on the recommendations of the PC.

11.3 Employment Whilst on Scholarship

11.3.1 Scholarship recipients shall be permitted to undertake a limited amount of paid employment. However, the employment must not interfere with their study and progress.

11.3.2 The Candidate shall be required to inform the Principal Supervisor and the PC of any paid and/or unpaid work commitments.

11.3.3 For any programme in the full-time mode of study, extra-curricular activities and work commitments should not normally exceed 24 hours per week during normal business hours (excluding annual leave).

11.3.4 The Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisor are required to notify the Candidate of any concerns related to the extent of the candidate's extra-curricular activities or work commitments that may affect their progress or performance.

11.3.5 The Candidate shall be required to discontinue paid or unpaid extra-curricular activities if the research progress is found unsatisfactory.

11.4 Extensions of Scholarships

11.4.1 Scholarship extensions shall be based on the agreed terms and conditions of the funding agency, including the University.

11.4.2 The recommendation for scholarship extension must be made by the Principal Supervisor only under extenuating circumstances and requires approval by the PC.

11.4.3 The scholarship extension application must be accompanied by a work plan with a timeline for completion of the study endorsed by the supervisors.

11.5 Suspension of Scholarship

11.5.1 The scholarship suspension shall be based on the suspension period approved by the University or as allowed by the funding agency.

11.5.2 During a period of approved suspension, the scholarship holder is not entitled to receive any benefits from the funding agency.

Chapter 12: Programme Planning and Approval

12.1 Overview

12.1.1 This chapter outlines the procedures and criteria for initiating, reviewing, and approving research degree programmes. Although these procedures are generally similar to those for taught programmes, they come under the purview of the RDC. The chapter addresses the planning and approval of new programmes, as well as the review of existing programmes, ensuring alignment with the University's overall goals. Although the content of this chapter draws largely from the *Wheel of Academic Law*, it has been modified and adapted as necessary to meet the specific context/requirements of the HDR programmes.

12.2 Design of Research Degree Programmes

12.2.1 A programme of study can be designed to achieve one or more of the following:

- 12.2.1.1 develop areas of study relevant to the professions, employment/industrial sector, or academic discipline;
- 12.2.1.2 update or reorient knowledge and skills in evolving fields or new areas beyond the scope of the student's first-degree;
- 12.2.1.3 promote interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research practices for complex national and global challenges;
- 12.2.1.4 leverage digital transformation and emerging technologies in diverse disciplines;
- 12.2.1.5 promote global citizenship and cross-cultural research collaboration;
- 12.2.1.6 build the capacity to enhance intellectual, research, innovation, entrepreneurship, and the use of new knowledge; and
- 12.2.1.7 develop a culture of inquiry, investigation, and lifelong learning to adapt to rapidly evolving and uncertain global futures.

12.3 Planning Approval for a New Programme

12.3.1 Introduction

- 12.3.1.1 Proposals for new programmes are normally initiated by the member Colleges. The APRC may also propose new programmes for consideration if they are deemed necessary and relevant to the University's overall objectives.
- 12.3.1.2 Before a new programme can enrol students, it must receive both planning approval through the planning process of the APRC and academic approval through the programme validation that is endorsed by the AB.
- 12.3.1.3 The criteria for the approval of a new programme are as follows:
 - i. the need for the programme;

- ii. the demand for the programme;
- iii. the University's overall strategy; and
- iv. ability to mobilise the required resources.

12.3.1.4 The intended outcomes of the APRC's consideration of the planning proposal are to:

- i. approve the incorporation of the proposed programmes in the University's long-term strategic plan;
- ii. approve the proposed student numbers;
- iii. approve the further development of the proposal to the stage where it can be submitted to the RDC; and
- iv. agree to the incorporation of the resource requests in the University's budget proposals.

12.3.2 Overall APRC procedures and timeframe for approval

12.3.2.1 The APRC should receive for consideration and approval proposals for planning a new programme, at least one year in advance of the intended date of commencement of the programme, to ensure that a programme is launched with adequate preparation (resources and logistics).

12.3.2.2 The University's validation of a programme shall be a rigorous process to assure quality, academic standards, and relevance. Any inadequacies identified shall be reported by the panel as conditions to be met before the start of the programme or as recommendations for improvement. The College must satisfy all conditions and consider the recommendations to ensure readiness for commencement.

12.3.2.3 A minimum gap of one full semester must be maintained between the validation of a programme and its commencement. During this period, the College must ensure that all necessary resources, both material and teaching staff, are adequately put in place at the commencement of the programme.

12.3.2.4 Upon accepting a programme into the University Plan, the APRC shall inform the College of any resource constraints, and establish a tentative understanding of the University's capacity to meet those needs at the time of implementation.

12.3.2.5 The programme approved by the APRC shall be submitted to the AB for endorsement. Following this, the College shall prepare the programme document and submit it to the RDC at least three months in advance, to allow scheduling of an on-site validation.

12.3.3 Proposal Documentation

12.3.3.1 The documentation shall be prepared as per the Guidelines for Initiating a New Academic Programme (Annexure 12.1).

12.4 Adoption of Existing Programme

12.4.1 For the adoption of existing programmes, the Colleges/Institutes shall submit an executive summary indicating the resources already acquired and those still required. The APRC shall review the executive summary and advise HDRD for an on-site resource check.

12.4.2 The report shall be submitted to the RDC for approval and subsequently forwarded to the AB. The report shall be submitted to the RDC for approval and subsequently forwarded to the AB.

12.5 Programme Validation and Periodic Review

12.5.1 The validation/periodic review of the programmes shall be conducted to ensure quality, relevance, and currency of the programmes offered by the University.

12.5.2 The HDRD shall coordinate the validation of new programmes and the periodic review of existing programmes.

12.5.3 The HDRD shall serve as the secretariat to the validation/periodic review panel and shall be guided by the terms reflected in The Role of the Panel Secretary (Annexure 12.2).

12.5.4 The validation/periodic review shall be carried out by the panel members selected as per the terms reflected in Criteria for Selection of Chairs and Validation Panel Members (Annexure 12.3).

12.5.5 The validation/periodic review shall recommend that the programme be:

12.5.5.1 approved without conditions, with a review planned to take place within the normal duration for the periodic review of a programme.

12.5.5.2 approved without conditions, with a review planned to take place in a period less than the normal duration for the periodic review of a programme.

12.5.5.3 approved upon meeting specified conditions.

12.5.5.4 not approved, and the College be invited to reapply, taking into account all the feedback provided by the panel

12.5.6 The validation/periodic review report shall be prepared as per the Template for Validation Report (*Annexure 12.4*).

12.5.7 If the validation/periodic review panel recommends the programme for approval, the programme team will work towards fulfilling the conditions and recommendations set out in the report.

12.5.8 The HDRD shall present the validation/review report to the RDC for approval and for onward submission to AB for endorsement.

- 12.5.9 The PL shall submit the validated/revised programme document electronic form to the HDRD.
- 12.5.10 The DPD shall be used for implementing the programme and will form the basis for future changes to the programme.
- 12.5.11 The start date of a new programme shall be governed by regulation E8.
- 12.5.12 Any change effected on a programme, whether minor or major, should be endorsed by the relevant body and amendments incorporated in the DPD. The revised version should be sent to the HDRD, and a copy retained at the College.

12.6 Validation

12.6.1 Introduction

- 12.6.1.1 This section focuses on systems that ensure programme quality. Additionally, the University maintains policies and procedures in areas such as staff recruitment and development, student services, resource allocation, and research, each contributing to the overall quality and standards of its programmes.

12.6.2 Aims of Validation

- 12.6.2.1 The overall aim of the validation process shall be to establish quality, standards and relevance of the programme that fulfils the University's mission and is consistent with the programme's own claims.
- 12.6.2.2 The process will examine and clarify the academic rationale for new programmes, review the requirements for students to achieve the intended learning outcomes, and ensure that the resources are adequate to deliver the programme to standards acceptable to the University.
- 12.6.2.3 The process is also intended to:
- i. Challenge and stimulate faculty by questioning aspects of the proposed programme.
 - ii. Encourage faculty to explore new curriculum areas, adopt innovative teaching methods, and engage in scholarly activities that contribute to the enhancement and continuous improvement of the programme.
 - iii. Inform and advise faculty of good practice elsewhere regarding new developments in curriculum, research, learning and teaching approaches.

12.6.3 The validation process shall address the:

- 12.6.3.1 rationale and coherence of the admission requirements;
- 12.6.3.2 aims and learning outcomes;
- 12.6.3.3 programme structure;
- 12.6.3.4 subject matter;
- 12.6.3.5 learning and teaching approaches;

- 12.6.3.6 assessment approaches;
- 12.6.3.7 regulations;
- 12.6.3.8 extent to which the aims of the programme seek to address the demand of employers and students for the programme;
- 12.6.3.9 adequacy of resources (staff and materials), and any resource implications for the College and the University for the effective delivery of the programme;
- 12.6.3.10 the quality and experience of staff who will teach the programme, together with plans for staff development and new recruitment; and
- 12.6.3.11 relationship with the University's policies and regulations, and with any published principles, regulations and guidelines of any professional or licensing body.

12.6.4 The Process

- 12.6.4.1 The validation process shall have five main steps after planning approval is applied for and granted by the APRC:
 - i. After planning approval is granted the Programme Committee at the College should proceed to develop the programme.
 - ii. The complete proposal, along with a list of panel members, shall be reviewed by the CRC and submitted to HDRD at least three months prior to the onsite validation or periodic review.
 - iii. The HDRD shall verify the documents for submission of the relevant section of the document to the RDC and to prepare for onsite validation.
 - iv. On-site validation shall be conducted only following endorsement of the programme's Need and Justification Section by the RDC.
 - v. The College shall be required to incorporate the recommendations of the RDC, if any, before the onsite validation/periodic review.

12.6.5 **Documentation needed for the Validation of a Programme**

- 12.6.5.1 The documentation for validation should be set out in two parts, the Programme Specification and the Module Descriptors as per the template (Annexure 12.5).

12.7 **Periodic Review**

12.7.1 Introduction

- 12.7.1.1 To maintain academic standards and assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities, the University implements effective, regular, and systematic processes for monitoring and review of programmes. Periodic

programme review is a key activity within the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QA&E) framework.

12.7.1.1 The periodic review of a programme is a formal process that provides an opportunity for in-depth scrutiny and quality enhancement of all aspects of a programme at the University. The review systematically considers the perspectives of students, external examiners, employers, collaborative partners (for adopted programmes) and the programme team.

12.7.2 Aims

12.7.2.1 The periodic review should treat the programme as a living entity, assessing its academic health and engagement with the community. It enables the review panel and programme team to reflect on staff experience and to identify future developments that enhance the programme's aims, respond to community needs, and maintain academic standards.

12.7.2.2 The purpose of the periodic review is to:

- i. ascertain the achievement of intended aims and standards
- ii. evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the curriculum and assessment in relation to the achievement of learning outcomes
- iii. Consider the continuing relevance of a programme for prospective students, taking into account enrolment trends and anticipated future demand for the programme
- iv. ensure that a programme remains current in the light of:
 - a. developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application
 - b. changes in students' demand, employer expectations and employment opportunities.
- v. review feedback from students, staff, external examiners, professional bodies and other external stakeholders
- vi. improve the programme structure and curriculum
- vii. assess the College's implementation of learning and teaching approaches to ensure currency, coherence, and alignment with the University's strategy
- viii. ascertain the extent to which the College has created an environment in which the programme can flourish, including the effectiveness and efficiency in staff and resource use
- ix. ascertain how the programme has been implemented, administered, and managed
- x. ascertain progress and changes in the programme since its validation or last review

- xi. identify areas for improvement or enhancement and ensure appropriate actions are taken in response to perceived weaknesses
- xii. review the academic validity of proposed changes to the programme and assess the associated resource requirements
- xiii. identify aspects of the provision that are particularly innovative or represent good practice
- xiv. ensure that recommendations for appropriate actions are followed up to remedy any identified shortcomings
- xv. recommend, for approval, any modifications and update the programme

12.7.3 The Process

12.7.3.1 Once a programme is due for review based on the period of approval stated in the validation/review report, the programme team should proceed to develop the review proposal as set out in Annexure 12.6.

12.7.3.2 Changes proposed to the programme should be informed by evidence from multiple sources, including tracer studies of graduates, student performance data, feedback from external examiners and stakeholders, feedback from students, the experiences of the programme tutors and recent developments within the field of study.

12.7.3.3 The complete proposal for the programme review shall be considered by the CRC before its submission to HDRD.

12.7.3.4 The RDC, after reviewing the section preceding the programme specification in the programme document, shall determine whether there is an acceptable basis to proceed with the review of the proposed programme, based on the following conditions:

- i. whether the programme team has fully considered all the issues arising from the programme implementation that have affected the quality of provision, such as the inadequacy of resources.
- ii. the need for additional input and further consideration in developing the documented proposal.
- iii. whether the document provides a sufficient basis to proceed with the review. Accordingly, the RDC may request additional supporting information, or require a complete resubmission.
- iv. the primary issues the RDC wishes to have addressed during the review.

12.7.3.5 based on the RDC's approval, the HDRD, shall arrange an on-site review at the College.

12.7.4 Timing of the Review

- 12.7.4.1 The periodic review of programmes shall be conducted as follows:
- i. programmes of 1 year duration will be reviewed after 3 years
 - ii. programmes of 2 or 3-year duration will be reviewed after 4 years
 - iii. programmes longer than 3 years will be reviewed one year after the completion of the implementation cycle
 - iv. As determined in the validation or the most recent review

12.7.5 Documentation needed for Periodic Review of a Programme

- 12.7.5.1 The documentation for the periodic review of a programme shall be prepared as per the template (*Annexure 12.6*).

12.8 Discontinuation of a Programme

- 12.8.1 A decision to discontinue a programme normally means that no further enrolments will be accepted; however, students currently enrolled may complete the programme within their period of registration.

- 12.8.2 The regulation ensures that:

- 12.8.2.1 students in the programme proposed for discontinuation shall be given every opportunity to complete their studies without compromising the quality of their learning experience or the academic standard of their award.
- 12.8.2.2 the long-term consequences of discontinuing a programme, including its potential impact on other provisions (such as student enrolments, tuition fee revenue, and staff redundancy), shall be fully considered.
- 12.8.2.3 the appropriate re-allocation of student enrolments and strategic development of the College and the University shall be taken into account.
- 12.8.2.4 information related to the programme discontinuation and its potential impacts are updated accordingly across the University.

12.8.3 Rationale for Discontinuation

- 12.8.3.1 Discontinuation of a programme in operation may arise for reasons relating to one or more of the following:
- i. Low applicant numbers, resulting in the continued delivery of the programme becoming financially non-viable.
 - ii. Changes in the College's or University's strategic direction resulting in adjustment of portfolio of educational provision.
 - iii. Long-term difficulties in maintaining a suitable staffing or resource base for the continued delivery of the programme.
 - iv. Loss of approval or accreditation or affiliation by a governmental agency or professional body.

- v. Decision of the AB based on the recommendation of RDC.
- vi. Persistent problems in programme delivery are compromising its quality.
- vii. Programmes that have remained dormant for three or more years.

12.8.4 **Process**

- 12.8.4.1 Following approval by the CRC, the College submits an application to APRC for discontinuation of a programme using the form (*Annexure 12.7*).
- 12.8.4.2 The application for discontinuation of a programme shall be considered by the APRC. The committee shall:
 - i. Recommend the programme for discontinuation to the AB if the proposal and associated actions do not align with the strategic direction of the College and the University, and support the enhancement of quality provision; or
 - ii. Reject the proposal to discontinue the programme if it is not justified in terms of the strategic development of the College and the University;
 - iii. The approval for discontinuation of a programme should be sought at least one semester before the selection of a new student cohort. Once approval is granted, no new students will be admitted to the programme.

i.

Chapter 13: Programme Monitoring

13.1 Overview

13.1.1 This chapter outlines the mechanisms established to ensure the quality, relevance, and continuous improvement of academic programmes. It addresses annual programme monitoring through student consultative meetings, semester-end feedback, module reports, and inputs from external examiners. The chapter specifies the requirements for preparation of the Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR) and defines the relevant quality criteria, including staffing and learning resources, assessment practices, and the review of candidates' work. It further outlines the framework for periodic programme review, critical self-appraisal evaluation, and the procedures governing the approval and implementation of programme changes.

13.2 Introduction

13.2.1 The Annual Monitoring of programmes is a crucial part of the University's quality assurance mechanisms. It provides an opportunity and structure for:

13.2.1.1 the PC to conduct a critical review of the programme's operation and enhance its effectiveness based on available evidence;

13.2.1.2 the CRC to maintain oversight of the programmes for which it is responsible, to evaluate their overall health, and to ensure that good practice is shared and that remedial action is taken where necessary;

13.2.1.3 the RDC, acting on behalf of the Academic Board, to assure that each programme operates satisfactorily, by reviewing and evaluating the monitoring, assessment, and reporting processes implemented by the Colleges; and

13.2.1.4 the RDC to assist the improvement of standards across the University by identifying and disseminating examples of good practice.

13.2.2 The annual monitoring of the programme shall be conducted through a structured process that includes the review of student feedback, External Examiner reports, student consultation meetings with relevant stakeholders, and Module Proforma.

13.2.3 The outcomes of these processes shall be consolidated into an Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR), which will be used to evaluate programme performance, identify areas for improvement, and inform ongoing quality enhancement.

13.3 Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR)

13.3.1 The APMR for each programme, submitted by the PC, shall be endorsed by the CRC for subsequent submission to the RDC.

13.3.2 The evaluation of the APMR shall concentrate on three main areas:

13.3.2.1 Academic currency, relevance, and performance

This includes examining the currency and validity of programmes in light of developments in the relevant discipline(s) and professional practice; identifying issues affecting programme performance that require attention; and contributing to the periodic review of programmes through the systematic collection of performance information and the implementation of associated improvement actions.

13.3.2.2 Effectiveness of delivery and assessment

This involves appraising how effectively programme delivery and assessment strategies enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes, while ensuring alignment with the approved learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and academic standards.

13.3.2.3 Quality enhancement and good practice

This focuses on identifying, documenting, and disseminating good practices in learning, teaching, and assessment, with the aim of strengthening overall programme quality and supporting continuous improvement across the institution.

13.3.3 Schedule

Month	Activity
February/July	HDRD writes to Chairs CRC at the Colleges.
March/August	APMR submitted to CAC/HDRDA report on each programme is submitted to the Chair of the Institute Academic Committee for review and consideration.
March/September	Submitted to RDC for evaluation and endorsement.

13.3.4 Content of Annual Report

13.3.4.1 The content and format of the Annual Report shall be as per the format prescribed in the APMR Handbook.

13.4 Quality Criteria

13.4.1 The purpose of the quality criteria is to:

13.4.1.1 Enable the effective and efficient monitoring of academic standards and the quality of the student experience, aligning with both internal imperatives and

external requirements, including those mandated by professional, statutory and regulatory accrediting bodies;

13.4.1.2 Ensure consistency whilst enabling and acknowledging diverse programme/college practices; and

13.4.1.3 Provide a mechanism for critical review and, in doing so, highlight and promote good practice across the institution.

13.4.2 2. The primary themes to be addressed in any consideration of any programme, whether for validation, or adoption, periodic review, or annual reporting, are as follows:

13.4.2.1 Aims and Curricula

- i. The curriculum aims and learning outcomes are clearly defined and communicated to both faculty and students.
- ii. The aims and learning outcomes of a programme should be aligned with its nature and level, address student, societal, and economic needs, and reflect the general educational goals outlined in (A1), while clearly specifying programme-specific objectives.
- iii. Specialist aims and learning outcomes are consistent with institutional vision and mission.
- iv. Curricula accurately reflect declared aims and learning outcomes and the needs identified.
- v. Curricula provide an appropriate balance of specialist content, general conceptual skills and personal transferable skills.
- vi. Curricula are up-to-date in terms of specialist developments.

13.4.2.2 Curriculum Design and Review

- i. The programme is designed to meet the diverse needs of intended students, considering factors such as programme length, duration, mode of study, location, structure, sequence, and available options.
- ii. The design of the curriculum has taken full account of recent developments in the subject matter and in the teaching of the subject matter by reference, amongst others, to:
 - a. professional body requirements (e.g., Councils under BQPCA for Higher Education in Bhutan, in engineering the IEEE in USA, the Engineering Council in the UK; in accountancy and business studies the ACCA)
 - b. the curriculum of reputable universities that offer programmes in the area
 - c. accreditation bodies (e.g., BQPCA, AACSB, ASIIN, ABET, APACC, and CAEP)

- d. curriculum support and development bodies [e.g., the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) in the UK]
- iii. The curriculum design fully considers the needs of business, industry, commerce, and other end-users, and maintains regular engagement with them.
- iv. Appropriate provision is made for alternative curricular pathways, including accreditation of prior learning, and the accumulation and transfer of credits.
- v. The programme design seeks to facilitate accessibility for students with special needs.

13.4.2.3 Staff Resources

- i. The staff form the backbone of an organisation, more so in an academic environment. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the staff are highly motivated, proactive and committed.
- ii. The faculty establishment is sufficient to deliver the curriculum, taking account of all staff responsibilities, including teaching, programme development, preparation of instructional materials, assessment and feedback to students, scholarly activities and contribution to the overall functioning of the College.
- iii. There exists a stable group of staff with the responsibility for the development and delivery of the programmes.
- iv. There is an appropriate balance of staff experience and expertise, both in the discipline or profession forming the basis of the programme and in the teaching approaches appropriate to their assigned programme.
- v. The faculty and academic support staff possess academic qualifications appropriate to the programme, with faculty qualification being at least one level higher than the programme(s) they teach.
- vi. A well-structured HRD plan exists to enhance staff qualifications, experience, and skills aligning them with their expected academic responsibilities.
- vii. Faculty teaching modules that include components of professional practice should possess relevant employment experience in the profession or field they teach.
- viii. The programme makes provision for students to interact with practising professionals in their subject or profession.
- ix. The faculty team as a whole engages in research and scholarly activities, and these are actively encouraged and supported.

- x. The faculty has actively engaged in professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing pedagogical approaches and teaching effectiveness.
- xi. The faculty's research and scholarly activities are consistent with their level of their teaching.
- xii. Adequate staff support is provided in the library, technical services, administration, and student support areas.
- xiii. Staff resources are effectively deployed, with duties assigned according to qualifications, experience, and aptitude. Mechanisms exist for regular review, consultation, and, where necessary, redeployment.
- xiv. Career progression for staff is clearly defined, with transparent, relevant and measurable criteria for promotion.
- xv. Mechanisms for staff management are well-established and effective, comprising appointment, induction, deployment, professional development, reward and discipline.
- xvi. Staff development needs are systematically identified, taking into account individual aspirations, curricular requirements, and institutional priorities.
- xvii. All staff, both academic and support, regularly engage in relevant professional development aligned with their roles and institutional objectives.

13.4.2.4 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- i. Learning, teaching and assessment shall be constructively aligned with, and clearly support, the stated aims of the curriculum.
- ii. Teaching approaches shall be appropriately varied, aligned with the specified learning outcomes, and make effective use of available facilities, equipment and instructional resources.
- iii. Teaching shall promote independent and deep learning, as reflected in the curriculum design and the teaching and assessment approaches.
- iv. Teaching is well planned, prepared and delivered effectively, taking into account the needs of all students.
- v. Learning integrates cross-curricular connections, current research, business and industrial applications, and the development of generic transferable skills such as communication and teamwork.
- vi. A variety of assessment approaches is employed to support diagnostic, formative and summative purposes.
- vii. The scope and weighting of assessment schemes are clearly defined and communicated to all.
- viii. Standards within assessment schemes are explicit and applied consistently across the curriculum.

- ix. Procedures are consistently implemented to ensure that assessment schemes are valid, reliable, and trustworthy.
- x. Student progress is systematically recorded, monitored, and communicated to students.

13.4.2.5 Students' Work

- i. Continuous assessment is regularly set and assessed at an appropriate level.
- ii. Continuous assessment reflects the depth and breadth of curricular aims and includes the development of generic skills.
- iii. Students' performance and attitudes reflect a positive and successful learning experience.
- iv. Students' work provides evidence of in-depth rather than superficial learning.

13.4.2.6 Facilities and Learning Resources

- i. There are adequate facilities, including practical and experimental resources. Laboratory spaces meets tertiary education standards and are comparable to general educational standards elsewhere, particularly in accordance with the University's resource norms.
- ii. There are sufficient physical resources, including classrooms, equipment, materials and information technology.
- iii. The equipment is up-to-date, readily available, well-maintained, and effectively utilised.
- iv. Library, audio-visual, computer, and other academic services are adequate for the programme, and provide access to relevant journals.
- v. Ancillary facilities, staff work space, storage areas, preparation rooms, and amenity accommodation, are adequate.
- vi. The physical environment is well maintained in terms of decor, cleanliness, repairs, and safety.
- vii. Accommodation is effectively allocated and utilised as evidenced by appropriate plans, schedules, timetables, and regulatory systems.

13.4.2.7 Programme Organisation

- i. There is a clearly defined group of staff responsible for teaching and for the overall delivery of all aspects of the programme.
- ii. The programme is well managed.
- iii. The programme is periodically reviewed to assess its suitability, and adjustments are made as necessary.
- iv. There is an effective mechanism within the College to implement remedial measures when improvements in the programme are deemed necessary.

- v. All assessments are systematically scheduled and co-ordinated to ensure that students' workloads are evenly balanced and distributed throughout the semester.
- vi. Feedback is regularly obtained from students, employers, and is analysed and acted upon as appropriate.
- vii. Teaching programmes are clearly defined, communicated to students, and regularly monitored.

13.4.2.8 Student Support

- i. The need of all students for guidance and support are recognised, and provision is made for advice and assistance across curricular, vocational, and personal domains.
- ii. There are clearly defined provisions for students seeking remedial academic support, particularly for those repeating modules.
- iii. Counselling services are available for students to obtain advice on career choices, academic matters, and personal wellbeing.
- iv. There is a general attitude of concern for students' wellbeing amongst staff.

13.4.2.9 Standards

- i. For programmes leading to the award of a degree
 - a. The programme has clearly identified external standards and benchmarks against which its delivery can be measured. These standards relate to a reputable university or to a recognised professional body. The relationship is such that the identified university or the professional body is willing to relate the output standards of the RUB programme to its own. The University acknowledges its particular responsibility to foster and maintain these external relationships and liaisons.
 - b. Provision is made, at the stage of the programme validation and/or review for some comparison with programmes outside Bhutan.

13.5 Changes to Programmes

13.5.1 Introduction - The successful approval of a programme based on detailed documentation does not imply that the programme must be operated exactly as defined in those documents indefinitely. Programme approval carries with it the responsibility to develop and adapt the programme over time in response to the developments in the subject or recognised practice, to the experience of the programme team in its operation, and to the views of students and employers regarding its effectiveness. The primary purpose of annual monitoring and periodic review is the continuous improvement of the programme.

13.5.2 General Principles - The principles governing change are:

- 13.5.2.1 All changes must be justified.
- 13.5.2.2 All changes must be shown to be academically valid.
- 13.5.2.3 Consequential resource changes should be addressed.
- 13.5.2.4 All parties affected by the change should have an opportunity to comment.
- 13.5.2.5 The University must hold an accurate record of the programme in its approved form.

13.5.3 Minor Changes

- 13.5.3.1 Minor changes to programmes are modifications to modules (as set out in the module descriptors), such as changes to the module title, content, teaching practices, modes of delivery, and assessment. These changes may be approved within the College, provided that an up-to-date record of the changes is maintained and of the cohorts of students affected by those changes.
- 13.5.3.2 All such changes should be reported in the annual monitoring report.
- 13.5.3.3 The CRC shall monitor these changes. They may be referred back if the culminative effect of repeated changes constitutes a major change, or if the relevant parties have not been consulted, or if there are significant resource implications.

13.5.4 Major Changes

- 13.5.4.1 Major changes are those that affect the title of the programme, its awards, its philosophy, its aims and objectives, management, regulations, or its structure (including a change in the relative weights of the research and coursework components, the assessment of research, or the addition or removal of modules).
- 13.5.4.2 Any proposed major changes should be submitted to the Chair of the RDC. The Chair may refer the proposals to the RDC, establish a panel to discuss them with the programme team, approve them and seek retrospective approval from the RDC, or determine that the changes are major and may therefore be implemented without University level approval.
- 13.5.4.3 For all programmes, changes to regulations or structures that do not comply with the University general regulations and policy must be referred to the RDC.
- 13.5.4.4 Major changes to programmes that affect students already enrolled shall be discussed with those students, and their views and consensus sought before changes are introduced.

13.5.4.5 Documentation submitted for approval of major changes shall include the existing version of the relevant section of the programme document together with the revised version, clearly indicating the proposed changes and the rationale for them. Where the changes affect other parts of the programme, full documentation may be required.

13.5.5 Approval of Individual Programmes of Study

13.5.5.1 Research degree programmes are expected to incorporate built-in flexibility to enable students to pursue customised programmes of study suited to their particular needs, especially concerning the direction of their research. However, significant alterations to an individual's programme of study, such as undertaking a unique set of modules for the coursework component, shall require case-by-case consideration and approval by the RDC, in accordance with the applicable procedures and depending on the circumstances.

13.5.5.2 Where a proposed programme of study closely aligns with an existing degree programme, shares its aims, and leads to the same award, the proposal for the variation shall be submitted by the student in consultation with the Programme Leader prior to commencing study on the proposed variant programme. The responsibility for endorsing the individualised programme of study rests with the CRC, which shall make a recommendation to the RDC for final authorisation.

13.5.5.3 Any such proposal must:

- i. Indicate the level and the specific title of the award proposed.
- ii. Demonstrate that it fulfils the aims for the approved programme of which it is a variant.
- iii. Include a statement of learning and career objectives.
- iv. Demonstrate the rationale for the combination of modules in relation to learning and/or career objectives.

Annexure 3.1

Annexures

Levels for Academic Award

The following levels of performance shall be used to determine the final award.

Judgement of performance	Mark
High Distinction	90%-100%
Distinction	80-89.9%
Very Good	70-79.9%
Good	60-69.9%
Satisfactory	50-59.9%
Fail	Less than 50%

The overall mark at the end of the course shall be determined as follows:

Overall mark = Sum of (module mark X credit value)/sum of the credit value of all the modules

As an example, a student secures 50% in Module A (credit value 2) and 80% in Module B (credit value 1). His overall mark will be calculated as: $\frac{(2 \times 50 + 1 \times 80)}{(2+1)} = 60\%$. This method of calculation is similar to the Grade Point Average system but avoids the inherent statistical inaccuracies in that system.

Descriptors

High Distinction (90–100%)

Demonstrates exceptional and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Work shows outstanding critical analysis, originality, and synthesis of ideas, supported by authoritative evidence. Arguments are coherent, insightful, and clearly articulated, fully meeting and exceeding all assessment criteria and learning outcomes.

Distinction (80–89.9%)

Demonstrates a high level of understanding and critical engagement with the subject. Work is well-structured and analytical, with strong use of evidence and clear reasoning. All assessment criteria are met to a high standard, with minor limitations in depth or originality.

Very Good (70–79.9%)

Demonstrates sound understanding and competent analysis of key concepts. Arguments are generally clear and supported by relevant evidence. Assessment criteria are met effectively, though critical depth, integration of ideas, or clarity may be uneven in parts.

Good (60–69.9%)

Demonstrates adequate understanding of fundamental concepts and skills. Work addresses the assessment requirements but relies more on description than analysis. Arguments are mostly coherent, though evidence, structure, or clarity may be limited or inconsistently applied.

Satisfactory (50–59.9%)

Demonstrates basic understanding of the subject matter and meets minimum assessment requirements. Work shows limited analysis and superficial engagement with concepts. Evidence and structure are weak or inconsistent, but sufficient to demonstrate partial achievement of learning outcomes.

Fail (Less than 50%)

Annexure 3.1

Demonstrates insufficient understanding of key concepts and fails to meet minimum assessment criteria. Work is incomplete, inaccurate, poorly structured, or lacks relevant evidence. Learning outcomes are not achieved, and significant improvement is required.

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Research Proposal Guidelines

1. Title Page

- i. Title of the Thesis :.....
- ii. Name :.....
- iii. Programme (Master's/PhD):.....
- iv. Department :.....
- v. Semester :.....
- vi. Year :.....
- vii. Date of proposal submission:.....
- viii. Name of Supervisor(s):.....

2. Introduction (Approx. 800–1000 words)

2.1 Background of the Study (200–250 words)

- Brief overview of the topic and context
- Relevance to national/global or academic concerns

2.2 Problem Statement (150-200 words)

- Clear articulation of the research problem or gap
- Why it matters and for whom

2.3 Rationale and Significance (150–200 words)

- Justify the need for the study
- How the study contributes to knowledge or practice

2.4 Research Objectives/Research Questions (100–150 words)

- Main and specific objectives
- Hypotheses (for quantitative studies): Optional

3. Literature Review (Approx. 1000–1200 words)

- Overview of key theoretical and empirical works
- Current debates and consensus in the field
- Identification of knowledge gaps your research will address
- Conceptual or theoretical framework (if applicable)

4. Materials & Methods (Approx. 1000–1200 words)

4.1 Research Design (200–250 words)

- Qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approach
- Justification of chosen design

4.2 Study site and Sampling (200–250 words)

- Study site, sample size, and sampling method

4.3 Data Collection Methods (250–300 words)

- Tools, techniques, instruments, procedures

4.4 Data Analysis Plan (200–250 words)

- Methods/software to be used for analysis

4.5 Ethical Considerations (100–150 words)

- Consent, confidentiality, research approval process

5. Expected Outcomes and Contributions (Approx. 150–250 words)

6. Work Plan and Timeline (Approx. 150–250 words)

7. Budget

8. References in the 7th edition of APA.

9. Appendices (If applicable)

Total Word Count Guide:

- Master's Proposal: 3500–4500 words, excluding title page(s), references and appendices.
- PhD Proposal: 5000–6000 words, excluding title page(s), references and appendices.

ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF BHUTAN
[Insert Name of the College]
Application Form

Section A: Applicant Information

Full Name (as per academic records)

CID/Passport No.

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yy)

Nationality

Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

Marital Status ☐ Married ☐ Unmarried

Current Address

Email

Contact Number

Section B: Programme Details

Applying for ☐ PhD ☐ Master's by Research

Proposed Field of Study

Preferred College/Institute

Mode of Study ☐ Full-time ☐ Part-time

Proposed Start Date

Section C: Academic Qualifications

Degree	Institution	Year of Completion	Major/Discipline	Result/Grade

(Attach certified copies of academic transcripts and certificates.)

Section D: Employment History (if applicable)

Organisation	Position	Duration	Responsibilities	Remarks

Section E: Proposed Research Information

Tentative Research Title

Research Area/Theme

Brief Description of Proposed Research (200–300 words)

Section F: Supervision Preference (if known)

Proposed Supervisor (if any)

Department/College

Email/Contact (if known)

Section G: Referees

Name	Designation	Institution	Email/Phone
1.			
2.			

Section H: Declaration by Applicant

Annexure 4.1

I hereby declare that the information provided above is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any false information may result in the rejection of my application or cancellation of admission.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

Section I: Recommendation by Principal Supervisor / Department (if applicable)
I recommend the above applicant for consideration for admission to the HDR Programme based on the merit of the proposal and the applicant's qualifications.

Signature of Proposed Supervisor (if applicable): _____ Date: _____
Head of Department: _____ Date: _____

Section J: Office Use Only

Application Received Date

Application ID

Decision ☐ Shortlisted ☐ Not Shortlisted

Signature (PL) Date:.....

Comments:

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Conditional Offer of Admission (CoA)

Ref:....

Date:.....

The *[name of the College]* is pleased to offer a Conditional Offer of Admission to*[Name of the applicant]*.....bearing CID/Passport number.....from*[country]* as a Master's by Research/PhD student in the programme.....*[title of the programme]* for the Academic Year

(Please confirm your acceptance of the CoA within 10 days of the date of the issuance of this offer letter by submitting the duly filled Admission Acceptance Form attached)

The letter of Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) will be issued upon fulfilling the following conditions:

- i. Submission of all academic transcripts and certificates verifying previous qualifications.
- ii. Completion of any prerequisite courses or exams as specified by the programme.
- iii. Submission of a valid student visa for the duration of the programme.
- iv. Evidence of health insurance coverage for the duration of the programme.
- v. Payment of the initial tuition fee deposit as specified in the offer letter.
- vi. Evidence of financial support to cover tuition fees and living expenses

Additional Conditions (if any):

Name and Signature of DRIL

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Admission Acceptance Form

I,.....[Applicant's Name]....., accept the Conditional Offer of Admission to the[HDR Name]..... programme at the[Name of the College]..... commencing from (Year of the course commencement)..... I understand and agree to meet all specified conditions by the given deadlines.

Signature:

Date:

Please return this signed acceptance form through email to the Programme Leader (provide an email id) with a copy to the Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages...(provide an email id) by....[mention date, month and year].

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Confirmation of Enrolment Form

Ref.:.....

Date:.....

This is to certify that the following student has been formally enrolled in a higher-degree research programme at.....(*College Name*)....., Royal University of Bhutan.

Section A: Student Information

- Name:
- Gender:
- Date of Birth:
- Nationality:
- Passport/CID Number:
- Student ID:
- Email Address:

Section B: Programme Information

- Programme Name:
- Level of Study (Master's by Research/PhD):
- Mode of Study (Full-Time/Part-Time):
- Date of Admission:
- Expected Completion Date:
- Thesis/Research Title:

Section C: Purpose of this Confirmation

This confirmation is issued to facilitate the student's application for a student visa with the Department of Immigration, Ministry of Home Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan.

Issued by DRIL:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Official Seal

ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF BHUTAN
[Insert College Name]
Thesis Proposal Defence Evaluation Form

1. Candidate Details

Name of the Candidate :

Student ID Number :

Programme/Degree : ☐ PhD ☐ Master's by Research.....

Title of the Thesis :

Date of Oral Defence :

Evaluation Criteria

Sl.	Criteria	Weight	Score
I	Introduction	25	
a)	Provides clear background and context of the study	5	
b)	States research problem, aims, objectives, and questions precisely	5	
c)	Clearly explains the research gap to establish the need and significance of the study	5	
d)	Explains the theoretical or conceptual framework of the study	5	
e)	Provides a brief outline of the structure and organisation of the thesis	5	
II	Literature Review	25	
a)	Shows depth, breadth, and knowledge of relevant and current literature	15	
b)	Identifies gaps, contradictions, and critically evaluates existing literature	10	
III	Methodology and Design	35	
a)	Clear explanation of research methodology and design with appropriate justifications	9	
b)	Explains the data collection procedures, instruments, and sampling methods	9	
c)	Demonstrates understanding of methodological choices and their implications on validity, reliability, and trustworthiness	7	
d)	Sound knowledge of the analytical/statistical methods used for data analysis	7	
e)	Ethical issues related to the research are explained clearly	3	
IV	Expected Outcome and Workplan	5	
a)	Expected outcomes are clearly stated	3	
b)	Workplan is comprehensive, realistic and achievable with potential challenges identified	2	
V	Presentation Skills	8	
a)	Presentation is clear, coherent, and logically structured with seamless flow of ideas	1	
b)	Speaks confidently, fluently, and presents with authority and mastery of the research proposal	2	

c)	Engages and interacts effectively with examiners/audience through eye contact	0.5	
d)	Comprehends the questions from the examiners/audience and responds accurately and appropriately	4	
e)	Manages time efficiently and transitions smoothly from one section to another	0.5	
VI	Quality of Preparation	2	
a)	Slide decks are well-organised, clear, and not text-heavy	1	
b)	Visual aids (graphs, tables, images, etc.) clearly illustrate results/discussions for ease of understanding	1	
TOTAL		100	

Final Result

Please tick the most appropriate recommendation:

☐ **Defence Successful** (Candidature Confirmed)☐ **Defence Unsuccessful** (Candidature not Confirmed)**VIII. Examiner's Summary Report**

Please provide an overall evaluation of the thesis oral defence, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and any specific recommendations for improvement.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Examined by:

1) Examiner's Name &

Signature:.....Date:.....

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Confirmation of Candidature Form

The[name of the College]... is pleased to confirm the candidature of the student, whose details are provided below, upon successful defence of the proposal, evaluated by the Confirmation Panel on.....[Date/Month/Year] at the[Venue].

1. Student Name: _____
2. Student ID. : _____
3. Department: _____
4. Programme : _____
5. Thesis Title : _____
6. Email : _____
7. Mobile No. : _____

For Office Use:

1. Presented a detailed research proposal : ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Ethics approval obtained : ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
3. Completed coursework units successfully : ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. All progress completed as per the time schedule : ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signatures:

Name and Signature of Chair:

Name and Signature of Member 1:

Name and Signature of Member 2:

Name and Signature of Principal Supervisor
Supervisor(s)

Name and Signature of Co-

Name and Signature of PL

Name, Signature and Seal of DRIL

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Research Proposal Defence Application Form

Section A: Candidate Information

Name of Student :
Student ID :
Programme/Degree : ☐ PhD ☐ Master's by Research
Title of Research Proposal :
Date of Initial Registration :

Section B: Supervision Details

Name of Principal Supervisor :
Department/College :
Co-Supervisors :
Date of Proposal Submission to Supervisor :

Section C: Certification by Principal Supervisor

I have reviewed the above student's research proposal and am satisfied that it meets the academic and methodological standards required for a proposal defence.
I recommend that the proposal be presented for defence before the Confirmation Panel.

Signature of Principal Supervisor: _____ **Date:** _____

Section D: Approval by Programme Leader (PL)

I confirm that the student's application for research proposal defence has been received and verified as per the requirements of the Research Degrees Framework.

Signature of Programme Leader (PL): _____ **Date:** _____

Section E: Office Use Only

Date of Defence Scheduled :
Venue :
Panel Members. :
Remarks (if any). :

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Progress Report Form

Candidate Details

Name : _____
Student ID : _____
Programme : _____
Year (I/II/III/IV): _____
Thesis Title: _____

Progress Report Period

From: _____

To: _____

Progress Overview

Summary of Research Progress:

.....
.....
.....

Achievements and Milestones Reached:

.....
.....
.....

Challenges and Issues Faced:

.....
.....
.....

Goals for the Next Six Months:

.....
.....
.....

Declaration: I, the undersigned, declare that the information provided in this progress report is accurate and reflects my research progress over the reporting period.

Signatures:

Candidate:

[Signature of Candidate]

Date: _____

Principal Supervisor:

[Signature of Principal Supervisor]

Date: _____

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Supervisor Registration Form

Section A: Applicant Details

Name: _____
 Employee ID: _____
 Designation/Position: _____
 Qualification: _____
 Department/Faculty: _____
 Email Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____

Section B: Academic and Professional Qualifications

Please provide details of your academic background:

Degree	Field of Study	Institution and Country	Year Completed

Section C: Research Supervision Experience

1. Have you supervised Master's or PhD students before?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. If Yes, please list the details below (add rows as needed):

Name of Student	Degree Programme	Academic Year	Institution	Role (Principal/Co-Supervisor)	Status (Completed/Ongoing)

Section D: Research and Publications

1. List your recent (past 5 years) peer-reviewed publications or provide an updated CV:

Title	Journal/Publisher	Year	DOI/Link

Section E: Areas of Research Interest

Please list your specific areas of expertise or research interest to help match you with appropriate students.

-
 -

Section F: Declaration by Applicant

I, the undersigned, hereby apply to register as a Higher Degree Research Supervisor. I declare that the information provided in this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that approval is subject to meeting university policy and criteria.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

Section G: Recommendation and Approval

Head of Department Recommendation:

☐ Recommended ☐ Not Recommended

Comments (if any): _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

College Research Committee Approval:

☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved

Annexure 6.1

Comments (if any):

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

DRIL

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Royal University of Bhutan
[Name of the College]
Principal Supervisor/Co-Supervisor Agreement Form

I, Mr./Ms./Dr. _____, hereby agree to supervise
.....[Name of the Student/Candidate]..... as Principal Supervisor/ Co-Supervisor
for the Master's by Research/PhD and thesis entitled.....
.....

I commit to comply with all the requirements of the Research Degrees Framework in my role
as a Supervisor/Co-Supervisor.

Supervisor Details:

- Name: _____
- Position: _____
- Email address: _____
- Phone number: _____

Appointment Details:

- Appointment Type: ☐ Regular Faculty ☐ Emeritus Professor ☐ Adjunct Appointment
- Start Date: _____
- End Date: _____ (if applicable)

Responsibilities: The appointed Principal Supervisor/Co-Supervisor agrees to undertake all
duties and obligations specified for Principal Supervisor/Co-Supervisors as appropriate,
including but not limited to:

- Providing academic guidance and support to the candidate(s).
- Overseeing the progress and quality of research work/projects.
- Ensuring compliance with the University policies and procedures.

Contractual Obligations: By signing this agreement, I, above-named, agree to enter into a
contract with the University and abide by its regulations regarding supervision and academic
standards.

Name and Signature:

For Office Use

[Signature of PL]

[Signature of DRIL]

Date: _____

Date: _____

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Change of Supervisor Form

Candidate Details:

Name: _____
Thesis title: _____
Student ID: _____
Year (I/II/III/IV): _____
Programme: _____

Current Supervisor(s) Details:

Principal Supervisor: _____
Co-Supervisor(s): _____
Reason for Change: _____

Proposed New Supervisor/Co-Supervisor:

Principal Supervisor:
Name: _____
Position: _____
Qualification: _____

On University's Supervision Register: [] Yes [] No

Co-Supervisor (if applicable):

Name: _____
Position: _____
Qualification: _____

On University's Supervision Register: [] Yes [] No

Signatures:

Name and Signature of Candidate: _____
Name and Signature of Current Supervisor(s): _____
Name and Signature of New Supervisor(s): _____
Submitted by: (Name, date and signature) _____

For Office Use Only:

For Programme Committee:

- Recommended
- Not recommended

Comments (if any):

.....
.....

[Signature of PC Chair]

Date: _____

For CRC decision:

Approved

Not Approved

Comments (if any):

.....
.....

[Signature of CRC Chair]

Date: _____

Annexure 9.1



College Logo

[Title of the Thesis]

[Name of the Candidate]

Annexure 9.1

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the PhD/Master's Degree

in.....

[Name of the College]

Royal University of Bhutan

(22 October 2025)

Blank Page



College Logo

[Title of the Thesis]

[Name of the Candidate]

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the PhD/Master's Degree
in.....
Royal University of Bhutan
[Name of the College]
(22 October 2025)

[Dedication Page] (Optional)
(a few sentences not exceeding one page)

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the substance of the Thesis titled.....*[title of thesis]* has not been submitted for any degree or qualification.

I declare that the work is my original contribution and appropriate acknowledgement has been made for any help received or sources referred to in preparing this thesis.

Name and Signature of the Candidate

Royal University of Bhutan
[Name of College]
[Name of the Department]

Thesis Approval
For
Master's in Science *[specify appropriate masters]/* **Doctor of Philosophy**
In
[specify title of Programme]

Title of Thesis: _____

Author: _____

Thesis Principal Supervisor:.....
(e.g., Associate Professor Dr Yeshey Khandu)
(Co-Supervisor).....
(Co-Supervisor).....

.....*[Sign of the PL]*.....
(Associate Professor Dr Sangey)

.....*[Sign of the DRIL]*.....
(Associate Professor Dr Sonam Tashi)

Abstract
(250-300 words)

Acknowledgements

List of Figures

List of Tables

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Table of Contents (<i>for monograph</i>)		
i.	Declaration	i
ii.	Thesis Approval	ii
iii.	Abstract	iii
iv.	Acknowledgements	iv
v.	List of Figures	v
vi.	List of Tables	vi
vii.	Abbreviations and Acronyms	vii
Chapter 1	Introduction	
Chapter 2	Literature Review	
Chapter 3	Methodology	
Chapter 4	Results and Discussion	
Chapter 5	Conclusion	
References		
Appendices		

Table of Contents (*for Publication-based thesis*)

i.	Declaration	i
ii.	Thesis Approval	ii
iii.	Abstract	iii
iv.	Acknowledgements	iv
v.	List of Figures	v
vi.	List of Tables	vi
vii.	Abbreviations and Acronyms	vii

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Literature Review
Chapter 3	Paper 1 (Title, author, abstract, introduction, materials and method, results and discussions and conclusion, references, supplementary data)
Chapter 4	Paper 2 (Title, author, abstract, introduction, materials and method, results and discussions and conclusion, references, supplementary data)
Chapter 5	Paper 3 (Title, author, abstract, introduction, materials and method, results and discussions and conclusion, references, supplementary data)
Chapter 6	Conclusion
References	
Appendices	

Writing guidelines:

1. Spacing: 1.5
2. Font style and size: Arial 11
3. Reference: Latest APA edition
4. Abstract should not be italicised
5. Five Keywords to be italicised
6. The one-inch margin on all sides of the page
7. Footer page numbers on the bottom right
8. Each chapter should start on a fresh page.
9. Use British English consistently

Royal University of Bhutan (RUB)
[Insert Name of the College]
Conflict of Interest Declaration Form

I, (Full Name)....engaged in....*Proposal Defence/Thesis Defence/Written Thesis Evaluation* as.....*a chair/committee member/Examiner*....of the candidate whose details are provided below declares **A Conflict of Interest/No Conflict of Interest**(*tick appropriate one*)

- Candidate Name :
- Student ID :
- Degree Programme : ☐ PhD ☐ Master's by Research
- Proposal/Thesis Title :

I have a conflict of interest due to the following reason(s):

- i.
- ii.
- iii.
- iv.

Declaration and Undertaking

I declare that the information provided above is true, complete, and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I have disclosed all actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to this appointment. I undertake to immediately notify the Programme Leader or relevant authority should any conflict of interest arise during the examination process.

I understand that failure to disclose a conflict of interest may result in my disqualification from the Thesis Examination Committee.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Official Use Only

Reviewed by (Programme Leader):

Decision: ☐ No Conflict/Conflict Managed ☐ Conflict–Appointment Not Approved

Remarks:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF BHUTAN
[Insert College Name]
Thesis Evaluation Form

Candidate Details

Thesis ID :

Programme/Degree : ☐ PhD ☐ Master's by Research.....

Title of the Thesis :

Date of Thesis Submission :

Thesis Examination Criteria

Sl.	Criteria	Weight	Score
I	Introduction	12	
a)	Abstract is coherent, covers background, method, results and findings	2	
b)	Originality and innovation in topic and research	1	
c)	Coherent background to the study	1.5	
d)	Research problem, aims, objectives, and questions are precise	2	
e)	Significance and relevance to national and global context	1	
f)	Theoretical contribution and advancement of knowledge	2	
g)	Theoretical or conceptual framework of the study is stated clearly	1.5	
h)	Provides a brief outline of the structure and organisation of the thesis	1	
II	Literature Review	10	
a)	Shows depth, breadth, and knowledge of relevant and current literature	3	
b)	Identifies gaps, contradictions, and critically evaluates existing literature	3	
c)	Provides personal views to critique literature substantiated by citations	4	
III	Methodology and Design	20	
a)	Articulates research methodology and design with appropriate justifications	6	
b)	Data collection, sampling, instruments, and their feasibility are well-justified	6	
c)	Demonstrates understanding of methodological choices and their implications on validity, reliability, and trustworthiness	6	
d)	Ethical issues related to the research are explained clearly	2	
IV	Result and Discussion	35	
a)	Results are presented clearly, systematically, accurately, and consistently with research objectives, questions, and methodology	6	
b)	Data are presented appropriately using tables, figures, charts, or narratives for ease of understanding	6	
c)	Results are logically sequenced and aligned with the study's framework	3	
d)	Originality and contribution to knowledge creation, policy, and practice	4	
e)	Uses accurate data analysis tools and demonstrates deep analytical reasoning and interpretation of data	5	

Annexure 9.3

f)	Identifies trends, patterns, and relationships within the data for analysis and interpretation	5	
g)	Ability to compare, contrast, and validate results from different sources is evident	3	
h)	Demonstrates understanding of how results confirm, challenge, or extend existing knowledge	3	
V	Conclusion	10	
a)	Provides a clear, concise, and coherent summary of the whole thesis	2	
b)	Demonstrates the ability to synthesise results than simply repeat them	3	
c)	Identifies the limitations of the study transparently and realistically	1	
d)	Discusses the theoretical, practical, or policy implications of the study	2	
e)	Provides constructive recommendations for future research or practice	2	
VI	Academic Writing, Citation, and Referencing	10	
a)	Writing is clear, coherent, and scholarly, with logical flow	1	
b)	Arguments are well-structured and supported by evidence from literature	2.5	
c)	Uses current and credible sources of literature	1.5	
d)	Uses correct grammar, punctuation, and syntax with clarity of expression following British English	3	
e)	Properly acknowledges others' ideas, sources referred to avoid plagiarism	1	
f)	Uses citations and referencing according to the latest APA edition	1	
VII	Overall Structure and Presentation	3	
a)	Clear, logical, and consistent structure that reflects scholarly conventions for research presentation	1	
b)	Presented in a professional, readable, and visually coherent format	1	
c)	The thesis reflects attention to detail, accuracy, and care in editing and proofreading	1	
TOTAL		100	

IX. Recommendation

Please tick the most appropriate recommendation:

- ☐ **Accepted in its current form** (Outstanding work; suitable for publication)
- ☐ **Accepted with minor revision** (Editorial or minor revisions only)
- ☐ **Requires major revision** (Substantial revisions required, but acceptable)
- ☐ **Resubmit for re-examination** (Major flaws; further work required)
- ☐ **Fail** (Does not meet the requirements for the award)

Note:

- i. Incorporation of feedback shall be undertaken by the candidate under the guidance of the Principal Supervisor. In cases requiring major revision, the revised thesis shall be returned to the examiner once all required feedback has been incorporated.
- ii. Final grades to be released if thesis is accepted or requires only minor revision.

X. Examiner's Summary Report

Please provide an overall evaluation of the thesis, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and any specific recommendations for improvement or publication.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Examined by:

2) Examiner's Name &

Signature:.....Date:.....

Received by:

.....

.....

Name & Signature
(Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages).

Date Received

ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF BHUTAN
[Insert College Name]
Thesis Oral Defence Evaluation Form

Candidate Details

Name :

Student ID :

Name of the College :

Programme/Degree : ☐ PhD ☐ Master's by Research

Title of the Thesis :

Date of Oral Defence :

Evaluation Criteria

Sl.	Criteria	Weight	Score
I	Introduction	10	
a)	Provides clear background and context of the study	2	
b)	States research problem, aims, objectives, and questions precisely	2	
c)	Clearly explains the research gap to establish the need and significance of the study	2	
d)	Explains the theoretical or conceptual framework of the study	2	
e)	Provides a brief outline of the structure and organisation of the thesis	2	
II	Literature Review	10	
a)	Shows depth, breadth, and knowledge of relevant and current literature	5	
b)	Identifies gaps, contradictions, and critically evaluates existing literature	5	
III	Methodology and Design	20	
a)	Clear explanation of research methodology and design with appropriate justifications	5	
b)	Explains the data collection procedures, instruments, and sampling adopted for the study	5	
c)	Demonstrates understanding of methodological choices and their implications on validity, reliability, and trustworthiness	4	
d)	Sound knowledge of the analytical/statistical methods used for data analysis	4	
e)	Ethical issues related to the research are explained clearly	2	
IV	Result and Discussion	30	
a)	Results are presented clearly, systematically, accurately, and consistently with research objectives, questions, and methodology	9	
b)	Presents a well substantiated and intellectually convincing arguments based on the results	9	
c)	Presents results and discussion by linking to research objectives and hypothesis	6	
d)	Presents the analysis and interpretations of the study results by drawing connections to review of literature	6	

V	Conclusion	10	
a)	Summarizes key findings concisely without repeating full results	3	
b)	Clearly states if objectives were achieved	2	
c)	Shows implications for practice, policy, or further research	2	
d)	Provides relevant, evidence-based recommendations	3	
VI	Presentation Skills	8	
a)	Presentation is clear, coherent, and logically structured with seamless flow of ideas	1.5	
b)	Speaks confidently, fluently, and presents with authority and mastery of the thesis	2	
c)	Engages and interacts effectively with examiners/audience through eye contact	1	
d)	Comprehends the questions from the examiners/audience and responds accurately and appropriately	2.5	
e)	Manages time efficiently and transitions smoothly from one section to another	1	
VII	Quality of Preparation	2	
a)	Slide decks are well-organised, clear, and not text-heavy	1	
b)	Visual aids (graphs, tables, images, etc.) clearly illustrate results/discussions for ease of understanding	1	
TOTAL		100	

Final Result

Please tick the most appropriate recommendation:

☐ **Defence Successful**☐ **Defence Unsuccessful****VIII. Examiner's Summary Report**

Please provide an overall evaluation of the thesis oral defence, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and any specific recommendations for improvement.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Examined by:

3) Examiner's Name &

Signature:.....Date:.....

ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF BHUTAN
[Insert College Name]
University Thesis Publication License Form

This agreement grants the Royal University of Bhutan (hereinafter referred to as “*the University*”) a nonexclusive, worldwide, perpetual, and irrevocable license to reproduce, distribute, display, and transmit the thesis submitted by the author listed below, for scholarly, research, and educational purposes.

Section A: Candidate Information

Name of Candidate

Student ID

Programme/Degree ☐ PhD ☐ Master’s by Research

Title of Thesis

Date of Final Submission

Section B: Author’s Declaration and License Grant

I, the undersigned, being the author of the above thesis, hereby:
Certify that the thesis is my original work and that all sources have been duly acknowledged.
Grant the Royal University of Bhutan a **nonexclusive, worldwide, perpetual, and irrevocable license** to reproduce, distribute, display, and transmit my thesis in any format, including digital and electronic forms, for educational and research purposes.
Authorise the University to deposit and make the thesis publicly accessible through the **University’s digital repository or library archives**, subject to applicable copyright and confidentiality restrictions.
Retain the copyright of my thesis and understand that this license does **not restrict my rights to publish or use** the work in any form.
Confirm that the thesis does not contain any confidential, restricted, or proprietary material unless prior written consent has been obtained from relevant parties.

Section C: Author’s Signature

Signature of Author _____

Date _____

Section D: Verification by Principal Supervisor

I confirm that the above thesis has been approved for final submission and that the author understands and agrees to the publication terms stated above.

Signature of Principal Supervisor: _____ **Date:** _____

Section E: Endorsement by DRIL

I certify that the signed publication license has been received and recorded with the Higher Degree Research Division (HDRD).

Signature of Dean, DRIL: _____ **Date:** _____

Note:

The signed copy of this license shall be retained by the Higher Degree Research Division (HDRD).

*This document **shall not be included in the thesis***

Royal University of Bhutan
[Name of the College]
Thesis Approval Form

The undersigned hereby declares that the thesis titled*Thesis Title*....., submitted by the candidate whose details are provided below, has been granted final approval in accordance with the provisions of the Research Degrees Framework of the Royal University of Bhutan.

Name :
Student ID :
Department :
Programme : ☐ PhD ☐ Master's by Research

This approval is granted on the basis that the:

- i. candidate has incorporated suggested changes, or an acceptable justification has been provided.
- ii. thesis has received approval from the TEC members.
- iii. thesis complies with the academic, ethical, and regulatory requirements of the University.

Thesis Examination Committee (TEC)

Name and Signature of Chair: _____ Date: _____
Name and Signature of Member 1: _____ Date: _____
Name and Signature of Member 2: _____ Date: _____

Supervisory Team

Name and Signature of Principal Supervisor: _____ Date: _____
Name and Signature of Co-Supervisor(s): _____ Date: _____

Programme Leader

Name and Signature of PL: _____ Date: _____

DRIL

Name and Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Official Seal)

Royal University of Bhutan
[Insert College Name]
Guideline for Initiating a New Academic Programme

1. Purpose of the Guideline

This guideline sets out the requirements for Colleges proposing new academic programmes under the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB).

The introduction of a new programme must be supported by a clear, evidence-based justification demonstrating:

- i. Academic merit
- ii. National and sectoral relevance
- iii. Student and employer demand
- iv. Institutional readiness and sustainability

The existence of related academic provision, or the intention to expand programme offerings, does not in itself justify the introduction of a new programme. Colleges must demonstrate that the proposed programme is necessary, viable, and aligned with the strategic priorities of the University and the nation.

2. Programme Definition

A programme shall be clearly defined through the following components:

- i. Name of the College/Institute
- ii. Name of the programme and the award(s) to which it leads
- iii. Duration and mode of study
- iv. Campus/location where the programme will be offered
- v. Award-granting body and/or accrediting body (where applicable)
- vi. Broad purpose and intent of the programme, including indicative career pathways
- vii. Specific programme objectives and graduate attributes
- viii. Entry requirements and progression criteria
- ix. Learning and teaching approach, including:
 - a. Balance between lecturer-centred and learner-centred approaches
 - b. Accommodation of full-time, part-time, in-service, and distance learners
 - c. Use of ICT and digital delivery modes
 - d. Proposed teaching group sizes
- x. Assessment approach, including:
 - a. Alignment with learning outcomes and programme objectives
 - b. Consistency with module descriptors
 - c. Award requirements
- xi. Programme structure, including:
 - a. Modules and credits per year/stage
 - b. Pre-requisites and co-requisites
 - c. Curriculum map showing inter-relationships between modules
 - d. Regulations governing compulsory and optional components
 - e. List of modules composing the programme
 - f. Date of preparation or last amendment and approving authority

3. Justification for initiating a programme

Colleges must provide a comprehensive and evidence-based justification addressing:

3.1 Purpose and Philosophy of the Programme

Clearly articulate the academic purpose and philosophy of the proposed programme by explaining:

- i. The academic intent of the programme
- ii. The disciplinary orientation and scope (e.g., theoretical, applied, professional, interdisciplinary)
- iii. The type of graduates the programme aims to produce, in terms of:
 - a. Knowledge

- b. Skills
- c. Values
- d. Professional attributes

3.2 Need for the Programme

Demonstrate a clear and compelling need, supported by evidence, under the following headings:

3.2.1 National and Global Relevance

- i. Alignment with Bhutan's economic, social, cultural, or educational priorities
- ii. Consistency with national policies, development plans, and sector strategies
- iii. Alignment with emerging global trends

3.2.2 Market and Employer Demand

- i. Evidence of demand from employers or industry sectors
- ii. Use of labour-market data, sector reports, employer surveys, or stakeholder consultations
- iii. Identification of skills gaps or capacity needs
- iv. Evidence that existing programmes do not adequately address these needs

3.2.3 Comparative Evidence

- i. Reference to similar programmes offered nationally or regionally (where available)
- ii. Justification for establishing the programme within RUB rather than relying on existing provision

3.3 Evidence of Potential Student Demand (Demand Forecast)

3.3.1 Feeder Qualification Evidence

- i. Number of students completing relevant Class XII streams, diplomas, or degrees
- ii. Trends in completion from feeder programmes within RUB or nationally

3.3.2 Expressions of Interest and Stakeholder Signals

- i. Documented enquiries, surveys, and consultations
- ii. Employer or agency interest in staff upskilling (where applicable)

3.3.3 Labour-Market and National Priority Indicators

- i. Evidence of workforce demand
- ii. National development priorities likely to drive enrolment

3.3.4 Benchmarking to Related Programmes

- i. Demand patterns from related programmes within RUB
- ii. External benchmarking where no direct comparator exists, with justification

3.3.5 Intake Justification and Delivery Feasibility

- i. Justify proposed annual intake using evidence (not assumptions)
- ii. Explain how the mode of delivery improves access while maintaining academic standards

3.4 Alignment with the University's Strategic Direction

Demonstrate alignment with the:

- i. University Strategic Plan
- ii. Planned academic development of the University and the College

Show that the programme:

- i. Is appropriate in level, discipline, and mode
- ii. Avoids unnecessary duplication and complements existing programmes

4. Resources and Institutional Capacity

4.1 Academic Staffing

- i. Availability of qualified academic staff
- ii. Plans for recruitment, staff development, or adjunct support

4.2 Physical and Learning Resources

- i. Teaching spaces, laboratories, equipment, library, and digital resources
- ii. Identification of specialised facilities required

4.3 Planned Student Numbers

- i. Planned student intake over a five-year period

4.4 Additional Resource Requirements

- i. Any additional resources required
- ii. How will these be secured and sustained
- iii. Phasing of resource development (if applicable)
- iv. Ability to mobilise required resources with budget commitment

5. Transitional or Replacement Programmes (If Applicable)

Where the proposed programme replaces or builds upon an existing programme, an evaluative report or the most recent annual monitoring report must be included.

6. Institutional Endorsement

A formal statement from the Head of the College/Institute must confirm:

- i. Explicit institutional support for the proposal
- ii. Involvement of the Head of Library and Head of IT in resource planning
- iii. Identification of the person and department responsible for programme development

Template for Initiating a New Academic Programme

1. Basic Programme Information

Name of College:
Proposed Programme Title:
Award to be Conferred:
Level: (Undergraduate / Postgraduate)
Duration:
Mode of Study:
Campus / Location:
Proposed Commencement Date:
Awarding / Accrediting Body (if applicable):

2. Requirement for Justification

Briefly state the purpose of this proposal, confirming that it seeks approval to initiate a new academic programme under the University. This section should summarise why the programme is being proposed.

3. Purpose and Academic Philosophy of the Programme

Explain the academic philosophy underpinning the programme, including:

- i. The academic intent as conceived by the programme proponents
- ii. Disciplinary orientation and scope (e.g. theoretical, applied, professional, interdisciplinary)
- iii. The type of graduate the programme seeks to produce
- iv. How the programme reflects RUB's commitment to quality, relevance, and lifelong learning

4. Need for the New Programme
Demonstrate the need for the proposed programme using evidence under the following sub-sections.
 - 4.1 National and Developmental Relevance
 - i. Explain how the programme responds to Bhutan's national development priorities
 - ii. Reference relevant policies, development plans, or sector strategies
 - 4.2 Workforce Needs
 - i. Identify specific skills gaps or capacity needs
 - ii. Explain why existing programmes do not adequately meet these needs
 - 4.3 Market and Employer Demand
 - i. Provide evidence of employer or sector demand for graduates
 - ii. Cite labour-market data, sector reports, employer surveys, or consultations
 - 4.4 Comparative and Benchmarking Evidence
 - i. Reference similar programmes (nationally, regionally, or internationally)
 - ii. Justify why a new programme is required within the University's context
5. Evidence of Potential Student Demand (Demand Forecast)
For a new programme with no existing student cohort, provide forward-looking evidence of demand, such as:
 - 5.1 Feeder Qualification Evidence
 - i. Data on relevant Class XII streams, diplomas, or undergraduate programmes
 - ii. Trends in completion or progression from feeder qualifications
 - 5.2 Expressions of Interest and Stakeholder Signals
 - i. Documented enquiries, surveys, consultations, or alumni feedback
 - ii. Employer or agency interest in staff upskilling (if applicable)
 - 5.3 Labour-Market and National Priority Indicators
Evidence of workforce demand or national priorities likely to influence student uptake
 - 5.4 Benchmarking to Related Programmes
 - i. Enrolment or demand patterns from related programmes within RUB
 - ii. External benchmarks where no direct comparator exists
 - 5.5 Proposed Intake and Delivery Feasibility
 - i. Proposed annual intake size and justification
 - ii. Explanation of how the mode of delivery improves access while maintaining academic standards
6. Alignment with the University's Strategic Direction
Explain how the proposed programme aligns with:
 - i. The RUB Strategic Plan
 - ii. The academic development plans of the University and the proposing CollegeDemonstrate how the programme contributes to portfolio balance, avoids unnecessary duplication, or complements existing programmes
7. Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Approach
 - 7.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy
Describe learning and teaching and learning approaches, use of ICT and digital platforms, accommodation of diverse learner groups and proposed teaching group sizes
 - 7.2 Assessment Strategy

Explain how assessment supports learning, alignment with learning outcomes and module descriptors, and requirements for the granting of the award

8. Programme Structure

Provide:

- i. Programme structure by year/stage and credit allocation
- ii. List of modules, including compulsory and optional components
- iii. Pre-requisites and co-requisites
- iv. Programme structure showing inter-relationships between modules

9. Resources and Institutional Capacity

9.1 Academic Staffing

- i. Existing staff available (numbers, qualifications, expertise)
- ii. Additional staffing required and plans for recruitment or development

9.2 Physical and Learning Resources

- i. Teaching spaces, laboratories, and equipment
- ii. Library and digital resources
- iii. Specialised facilities required (if any)

10. Planned Student Numbers

Provide projected enrolments over five years, including:

- i. Initial intake
- ii. Expected growth
- iii. Assumptions underpinning projections

11. Additional Resource Requirements

Identify:

- i. Any additional resources required beyond the current provision
- ii. How these resources will be secured and sustained
- iii. Phasing of resource development (if applicable)

12. Transitional or Replacement Arrangements (If Applicable)

If the proposed programme replaces or builds upon an existing programme, attach:

- i. An evaluative report of the previous programme, or
- ii. The most recent annual monitoring report

13. Institutional Endorsement

Provide a formal statement from the Head of the College/Institute confirming:

Explicit institutional support for the proposal

- i. Involvement of the Head of Library and Head of IT in resource planning
- ii. Identification of the person and department responsible for programme development

Signature:

Date:

President of the College:

The role of the Panel secretary

The secretary to a validation panel acts as an academic guide to the panel members in their work as a logistic coordinator. The activities include the following:

1. Identify the major policy issues that are likely to arise from a consideration of the programme and advise the Chair accordingly.
2. Be aware of the outcomes of validation of similar events and seek to establish a consistent framework of decision-making by the Committee through its panels.
3. Arrange the logistics for the members of the validation team in consultation with the DAA.
4. Plan the validation exercise, including the visit to the facilities, meeting with staff and other logistics.
5. Upon confirmation of the visit date, issue a formal invitation at least 14 days in advance, enclosing the following:
 - i. Validation/review document
 - ii. Programme schedule
 - iii. Panel members
 - iv. Roles of panel members
 - v. Relevant University policy/guideline paper(s)
 - vi. Other supporting documents, if any
 - vii. Attend the panel meetings as the rapporteur.
6. The HDRD, as the secretariat, shall:
 - i. Coordinate the selection of panel members and schedule on-site validation/periodic review.
 - ii. Send the validation/periodic review document to the validation/periodic review panel members for reading and noting their comments, feedback, suggestions, and issues to be deliberated during the on-site validation/periodic review at the college.
 - iii. Coordinate the validation/periodic review panel's visit to the college for the on-site validation/periodic review. The schedule of the validation/periodic review would involve:
 - i. meeting to share the purpose and schedule of the validation/periodic review with the President, Deans, and the programme team.
 - ii. meeting privately amongst the panel members to collate the main issues related to the validation/periodic review.
 - iii. engaging in detailed discussion with the programme team and relevant staff.
 - iv. meeting with the management of the college to confirm adequacy and allocation of resources for the programme.
 - v. visiting the facilities that are proposed to support the delivery of the programme to determine their adequacy.
 - vi. presenting and confirming the written report on the final day of the validation/periodic review to the programme team in the presence of the President and relevant staff.

Criteria for Selection of Chairs and Validation Panel Members.

1. The PVC, DeARS, shall serve as the Chairperson of the Panel. In the event that the PVC is not available, a senior-most member with relevant academic experience shall be appointed as the Chair.
2. The selection of Chair/members shall ensure a balance in expertise and experience by considering the following:
 - i. Experience in teaching and research, or in running a programme similar to that being validated in terms of mode, level and subject area.
 - ii. Competence in that discipline.
 - iii. Experience in the professional practice of that subject.
 - iv. Experience in the employment of graduates.
 - v. Experience in the exercise of assessing a programme.
 - vi. Research expertise, especially for postgraduate programmes.
3. The selection of panel members shall ensure that the same individual is not repeatedly appointed to review the same programme, to obtain diverse professional perspectives when assessing the health of the programme.

A. Template for Validation Report

Validation Report for the *insert programme name* at *insert college name*

(Executive Summary)

This report is the outcome of the validation of the *insert programme name (mode of study)* conducted from... *insert date of the onsite validation*. The report is based on the programme's validation documentation, visits to facilities and interactions with staff and management of the College.

The Panel submits the report for consideration of the Academic Board:

Name of College:

Name, Duration and Mode of Programme:

The award-granting body: The Royal University of Bhutan

The validation panel recommends that:

1. The programme will be approved for implementation beginning *Spring/Autumn Semester of insert year*, through the *insert mode of study*, for the conferment of the award of a *insert programme name*.
2. A major review of the programme should be carried out in *insert year*.
3. The approval of the programme shall be contingent upon meeting the following conditions:
 - a. The Definitive Programme Document (in MS Word format) should be prepared and submitted to the QAED/HDR, Office of the Vice Chancellor by *insert date and year*. The document should address paragraphs [] to [] and [] of the Full Validation Report.
 - b. The status of the staff composition should be reported through the Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR). Refer to paragraph [] and [] of the Full Validation Report.
 - c. A student handbook should be developed and made available to students entering the programme. Refer to paragraph [] of the Full Validation Report.
4. The programme's action plan for 2025 should address the recommendations in paragraph [], [], [] of the Full Validation Report.

The validation panel, comprising the following members, submit the report to the Academic Board:

Name & Address	Signature

The panel endorsed the report on *insert date* with the following faculty members:

Name & Address	Signature

Validation Report for the *insert programme name* at *insert college name*

(Full Report)**Introduction**

1. This report presents the main issues arising from the discussions between the validation panel members with the programme team and management of the *insert the name of the college*, which led to the panel's decisions and conclusions.
2. The report is presented in the format, and its sequence is aligned to the programme's validation document.

Overall Comments on the Programme**B. Template for Periodic Review Report****Periodic Review Report for the Postgraduate Diploma in Contemplative Counselling Psychology (PgDCCP) Programme, Samtse College of Education**

Name of Programme Award	Date of Validation	Date of Current Review
Members of Review Panel:		
Name and address	Signature	

The panel endorsed the report on *insert date* with the following faculty members:

Name and address	Signature
-------------------------	------------------

Report A: Executive Summary

Sample:

Background

1. The Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Social Research (PgDASR) Programme, validated in November 2019, was approved for implementation from February 2020 for the conferment of the following award through 18 Month, full-time study:
 - 1.1 Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Social Research (PgDASR)
2. This is the first periodic review of the programme and was approved by the 74th Programmes and Quality Committee meeting held from 30th to 31st October 2024.
3. The College proposes to continue the programme with the following changes:

- a. ASR501 Introduction to Social Research merged into ASR502 Research Methods and Practice to provide students with both foundational knowledge and applied research skills essential for professional practice.
 - b. Inclusion of a new module, ASR505 Contemporary Social Issues and Policy Analysis to address emerging societal and policy needs.
 - c. With changes to the existing modules.
4. The observations, recommendations and conditions set in this report are based on the review of the Programme Review document submitted by the College to the QA&ED, Department of Academic and Research Services (DeARS), interaction with the programme team, meeting with the management and students, visit to the facilities and review of Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, and the External Examiners' reports.
5. The Review Panel looked at the academic standards, the achievement of students and the quality of learning opportunities provided by the programme.
6. The Panel concludes that the aims and learning outcomes of the programme have been achieved and has confidence in the continued delivery of the programme, but with changes to the programme structure and module descriptors.

Commendations

7. Areas for commendation include:
 - a. Successful completion of the first cycle of the programme and graduation of three cohorts of students.
 - b. The programme equips graduates with applied research competencies, enabling them to contribute effectively to evidence-based decision-making in government agencies, NGOs, research institutions, and development organisations in Bhutan and beyond.
 - c. The inclusion of a substantial field-based research component ensures graduates develop practical research skills and professional confidence.
 - d. The PgDASR reflects national development priorities while aligning with international standards in social research and policy analysis.
 - e. The small cohort model and close academic supervision foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Recommendations and Areas for development include

1. The write-up of the review document and its different sections must be vetted against the standards outlined in F3 of the Quality Criteria of the Wheel of Academic Law (WAL), which has benchmarks to assess and critique the programme in the following areas:
 - i. The curricula
 - ii. Curriculum design and review
 - iii. Staff resources
 - iv. Learning, teaching and assessment
 - v. Students' work
 - vi. Facilities and learning resources
 - vii. Programme organisation
 - viii. Student support, and
 - ix. Standards of the programme

2. The programme team should aspire to meet the benchmarks outlined as the reviewed programme is rolled out for implementation in the next cycle.
3. The design of the curriculum must take account of the needs of the industry and its associated professional body requirements to align with the expectations set for professional counsellors.
4. The College should ensure all future review and validation documents are adequately vetted at the Programme Committees, endorsed by the College Academic Committee for onward submission to the QA&E Division, DeARS at the OVC.
5. For enhancement of the programme, the College should take account of the recommendations set out in paragraphs [2] to [98] of the Full Report.

What Next:

6. The Panel recommends that the reviewed programme be implemented from February 2026 with the new cohorts of students. However, this is contingent on the finalisation of the Definitive Programme Document (DPD) by the review panel through the following processes:
 - a. The next periodic review of the programme is due in 2030.
 - b. The final DPD should be submitted (in electronic Word format) by December 25, 2025, to OVC. The document should consider the comments in paragraphs [8–10] of the Executive Summary and paragraphs [27–97] of the Full Report, and the observations from the review.
 - c. The status of plans should be reported through the Annual Programme Monitoring report on an annual basis.
7. A programme handbook should be developed and made available to learners entering the programme. Refer to paragraph [98] of the Full Report.
8. The Review Report is recommended to the Academic Board of the Royal University of Bhutan for approval.

Report B: Full Report

Sample

Background

- i. This part of the report presents the discussions and findings of the review of the **Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Social Research** programme at SCE, carried out from 27-28 October 2025 and is based on:
 - a. The programme review document submitted to the QA&ED, Department of Academic and Research Services, OVC, and other documents relevant to the review exercise.
 - b. Interactions with the programme team, students, management, and Visit to the facilities.
- ii. The reviewed programme, upon approval by the Academic Board, will be offered to the new cohorts of students in the programme from Spring Semester 2026.

General Observations and Recommendations for the Insert Programme Name Programme

Template for Definitive Programme Document

Definitive Programme Document

1. Programme Specification

1.1 Basic Information on the Programme

- Name of the home base college
- Title of the award
- Duration and mode of study
- Award granting Body
- Date of initial approval (mention whether validated or adopted. Reflect the number and date of the AB meeting that approved the programme)
- Date of last review

1.2 Aims and Learning Outcomes of the Programme

1.2.1 Aims of the Programme

This section provides a concise overview of the programme, setting out its broad purpose and objectives. It identifies the intended audience and highlights the key reasons why prospective learners would choose to study it.

The aims should provide a brief, but clear, overall impression of the educational and vocational purposes of the programme. They should summarise what the programme intends to achieve, highlighting its core concepts and the underlying rationale. The aims should also distinguish the programme from others offered by the University and other providers in Bhutan, considering the nature, and level of award as well as any unique, innovative, or distinctive features.

The programme aims should be broader and more general than the specific learning outcomes.

1.2.2 Learning Outcomes of the Programme

The learning outcomes are more detailed statements of what the programme seeks to achieve. These should specify the attributes which learners are expected to demonstrate or acquire at the end of the programme as a result of their learning in terms of knowledge, understanding, subject related and transferable skills, and values. Transferable skills are those skills which have applicability beyond the confines of a particular academic discipline. Examples include teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and communication skills.

The statement of outcomes should address the following:

- Cognitive outcomes: “What do you want your graduates to know?”
- Affective outcomes: “What do you want your graduates to think or care about?”
- Behavioural outcomes: “What do you want your graduates to be able to do?”

The learning outcomes must take into account the general intentions of the award to which the programme leads (either Master’s by Research or PhD). Besides, the learning outcomes should link with the University’s graduate attributes (WAL, B6 Expectations of RUB Graduates).

The aims and learning outcomes of the programme should be achievable by the modules that make up the programme.

1.3 Career Related Opportunities

An outline of expected graduate employment opportunities should be provided.

1.4 Programme Structure

This section provides a description of the programme structure: including essential information such as the modules and credits to be completed in each semester and academic year. It also details any intermediate awards that may be granted upon successful completion of each stage of the programme.

A full description of the mode of study should also be provided, including the structure in terms of attendance patterns, particularly for part-time programmes.

The programme structure should be presented in a tabular form, clearly showing the inter-relationship between modules, and the placement by year and semester. The standard nomenclature for years and semesters should be used, as Year 1 Semester I, Year 1 Semester II, Year 2 Semester I, Year 2 Semester II. Any interdependencies between modules should be identified, and any programme specialisations must be clearly indicated. For programmes offering substantial student choice, the permitted pathways of study should be clearly identified, specifying compulsory modules, and regulations governing the selection of optional modules.

If placements or work-based learning form part of the programme, the components of academic studies, placement periods and vacations must be clearly reflected.

A full description of the mode of study should also be provided, including the structure in terms of the attendance patterns, particularly for part-time programmes.

1.5 Learning and Teaching Approach

The HDR programme emphasises independent, student-centred learning supported by structured supervision. Each candidate is guided by a supervisory team, with regular meetings to ensure academic progress, ethical research conduct, and critical engagement with the field.

Learning is enhanced through seminars, workshops, and access to digital platforms and research infrastructure. Research training focuses on developing analytical, methodological, and professional skills through literature reviews, field/lab work, data collection, and peer engagement.

Assessment is staged through proposal defence, confirmation, progress reviews, and thesis examination integrating formative and summative methods in alignment with national HDR quality standards.

1.6 Assessment Approach

This section explains how the assessment contributes to the learning process by providing learners with structured opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the programme aims and learning outcomes. Assessment approaches may include proposal writing, oral defence, data collection, writing process, seminars, final thesis examination.

All assessments should be implemented consistently with the approaches specified in the module descriptors.

1.7 Regulations

A minimum of the following regulations related to the programme should be included.

1.7.1 Entry Requirements

This should specify the University's general minimum entry requirements (RUB Admission Policy) and programme-specific minimum requirements in identified subjects. Details of the ability ratings of subjects must be included. The procedures for selection and admission must be presented in detail for programmes where learners are not selected through the University's central online selection system.

The entry requirements should reflect the fit of the applicant's prior knowledge and experience to the programme applied for.

1.7.2 Assessment and Progression Requirements

The structure and modalities of assessments are established to determine the candidates' progression and achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programme. Progression is contingent upon satisfactory completion of all prescribed assessment components and programme requirements at each stage. A candidate who fails to successfully defend the research proposal shall not be granted Confirmation of Candidature. Failure to fulfil the requirements of any each semester shall result in the candidate being barred from registering for the subsequent semester in accordance with the University regulations.

1.8 Planned Student Numbers

Planned student numbers should be set out in a table with projections for five years starting from the proposed year of implementation. The numbers under every year should reflect a detailed breakdown by cohort numbers, i.e. Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, etc.

1.9 Programme Management, Quality Assurance and Enhancement

This section should briefly outline the arrangements for the management, operation and monitoring of the programme, including student feedback arrangements, and evaluation mechanisms.

It provides a concise description of the roles and responsibilities of the Programme Leader, Programme Committee, the Head of Subject/Department, Module Coordinator, Module Tutor, supervisors, Confirmation panel, Thesis Examination Committee (including the External Examiner for thesis and oral defence), Seminar Committee, the CRC, and the arrangements for moderation of assessments and Student Consultative Meetings. The relationships between these roles and bodies should be clearly defined. All programme management arrangements shall be consistent with the RUB regulations. Further the section also outlines mechanisms for learner engagement in the quality assurance and enhancement, including representation on committees (e.g., Programme Committee), and participation in modules and programme evaluation in accordance with the Regulation D3 Student Module Evaluation.

In addition to University quality assurance requirements, any innovative College-level approaches to monitoring, evaluating, and enhancing academic standards and educational quality should be highlighted.

The constitution and terms of reference of the Programme Board of Examiners, including proposals for the appointment of External Examiner(s), shall also be specified.

In addition to the University quality assurance requirements, any innovative College-level approaches to monitoring, evaluating, and enhancing academic standards and educational quality should be highlighted.

The constitution and terms of reference of the Programme Board of Examiners, including any proposals for External Examiner(s) to be appointed to the programme should also be presented.

1.10 Academic Staff

This section should provide details of staff qualifications and experience that is appropriate for effective delivery of the HDR programme. Plans for recruitment of additional staff with timelines and areas of specialisation should also be included. Staff development needs associated with the programme should be included with plans for realisation with timelines and sources of funding.

1.11 Resource Needs

This section should specify the learning resources that are directly relevant to, and required for the delivery of the programme. Both existing resources and those essential resources to be acquired for the proposed programme should be clearly identified under the headings below:

- Overall staff support
- Teaching learning spaces such as classrooms and laboratories
- Equipment such as laboratory resources
- Library support
- Computing support including software
- Other support facilities such as accommodation, general expenses

Where additional resources are essential, the proposal should clearly justify the need for such resources and be supported by concrete acquisition plans, including cost estimates, timelines for procurement and identified sources of funding.

Resources that cannot be met through the proposing College's annual operating budget, due to substantial funding needs, should be secured through the Five-Year Plan capital budget or financial support from relevant donor agencies.

The nature of funding for the programme (tuition fees through government funding, fees from self-funded students both domestic and foreign) should be specified. This should be

accompanied by an overview of expected revenue against estimated expenditure for the programme.

2. The Module Descriptors

This section should include complete module descriptors for each module which form part of the programme. Refer to WAL, B4 Module Descriptor.

Written Style

The written style of the definitive document should be concise and focused with judicious use of short paragraphs, bulleted lists, tables and, where essential, appendices.

For uniformity and ease of use, the document should be prepared using the following basic style in MS Word:

- Font Arial, size 11 with single line spacing for English and font DDC Uchen, size 11 for Dzongkha

- One-inch margin on all sides of the page
- Footer page numbers on the bottom right

Guideline for Documentation Required for Periodic Review of a Programme

The documentation for the periodic review should be set out as: Critical Self Appraisal of the Programme, Changes to the Programme, Programme Structure, Resource Implications, Programme Specification and the Module Descriptors

1. Critical Self-Appraisal of the Programme

The principal component of the documentation for the periodic review of a programme shall be a critical self-appraisal of the programme's operation since the programme it's last approved through validation or review. This self-appraisal should be prepared by the programme team comprising of staff who teach on the programme and who are responsible for its management and academic oversight. It shall address the elements specified in E4 Critical Self Appraisal of a Programme.

2. Changes to the Programme

2.1 Changes made to the Programme:

Any change made to the programme between the validation and review of the programme or between the current and last review approved by the Programmes and Quality Committee (PQC) or the College Academic Committee (CAC) should be listed along with the date of approval and the name of the body that has granted the approval. It is not necessary to mention details of changes made if those changes were endorsed either by the PQC or the CAC.

2.2 Proposed Changes to the Programme:

2.3 This section should reflect a statement of the changes proposed in the revised programme segregated under subheadings "Major Changes" and "Minor Changes."

3 Any proposed change shall be supported by academically sound justification. The rationale for change should be clearly presented, preferably in tabular form, comparing the existing and proposed module descriptors.

4 Changes may include, but are not limited to, the following

4.1.1 Any change proposed shall be justified with academically valid reasons. The rationale for change should be clearly presented, preferably in tabular form, comparing the existing and proposed module descriptors. Changes could be proposed for the following reasons:

4.1.1.1 As a result of feedback from students, tutors, external examiners, and other stakeholders

4.1.1.2 As a result of issues highlighted in the annual programme monitoring reports for the programme

4.1.1.3 In an effort to keep the programme current and to align with recent changes in the discipline

3. The Programme Structure

This section should include the existing programme structure and the proposed programme structure.

4. Resource Implications

4.1. This section should include a statement of resource implications, both material and human, arising from the proposed changes proposed and the continuity of the programme. Where resources are required to support the implementation of the changes and/or maintain programme continuity, the section should specify the type and extent of resources, how and when they will be acquired, and the confirmed funding, ensuring the proposed changes are feasible, sustainable, and adequately supported.

- 4.2. A list of academic staff with responsibility for delivering the programme should also be included.

5. Programme Specification

- 5.1. A programme specification is a concise description of the aims and learning outcomes of a programme informed by the learning outcomes of the modules that form part of the programme, and the means by which these are achieved and demonstrated. It relates to the learning and attributes developed by a programme as a whole. A programme specification can show how modules can be combined to form a programme.
- 5.2. A programme specification provides an overview of the programme and will be underpinned by more detailed information found in the module descriptors, and programme handbooks. The programme specification is a source of information to many interest groups seeking an understanding of a programme, particularly for prospective and current learners.
- 5.3. It is mandatory for all programmes leading to an award of the RUB to produce a programme specification. The programme specification should reflect the following information in the order presented:

6. Basic Information on the Programme

- 6.1 Name of the home base college of the programme and name of the college adopting the programme
- 6.2 Title of the award or awards to which the programme leads
- 6.3 The duration and mode of study
- 6.4 Award-granting body
- 6.5 Date of initial approval (mention whether validated or adopted. Reflect the number and date of the AB meeting that approved the programme)
- 6.6 Date of last review

7. Aims and Learning Outcomes of the Programme

This section should contain the following subheadings:

7.1. Aims of the Programme

- 7.1.1. This should be a general statement that sets out the broad purpose and intention of the proposed programme. It should briefly state who the programme is aimed at and why prospective learners would want to study it.
- 7.1.2. The aims should provide a brief, but clear, overall impression of the educational and vocational purposes of the programme. These should summarise what it is that the programme intends to achieve, identifying the core concepts and the rationale behind it. The aims should also bring out the distinctness of the programme from other programmes being offered by the University and other providers in Bhutan in terms of the nature, level of award, and any unique, distinctive and innovative features.
- 7.1.3. The aims for the programme should be more general than the learning outcomes of the programme.

7.2. Learning Outcomes of the Programme

- 7.2.1. The learning outcomes are more detailed statements of what the proposed programme seeks to achieve. These should specify the attributes which learners are expected to demonstrate or acquire at the end of the programme as a result of their learning in terms of knowledge, understanding, subject-related and transferable skills, and values. Transferable skills are those skills which have applicability beyond the

confines of a particular academic discipline. Examples include teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and communication skills.

7.2.2. The statement of outcomes should address the following:

- Cognitive outcomes: “What do you want your graduates to know?”
- Affective outcomes: “What do you want your graduates to think or care about?”
- Behavioural outcomes: “What do you want your graduates to be able to do?”

7.2.3. The learning outcomes must take into account the general intentions of the award to which the proposed programme leads (either diploma, undergraduate degree, undergraduate degree with Honours or postgraduate certificate/diploma or Master’s degree) reflected in the University’s Academic Programme Structure (A1) and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (A8). Besides, the learning outcomes should link with the University’s graduate attributes (Wheel, A6 Expectations of RUB Graduates).

7.2.4. The aims and learning outcomes of the programme should be achievable by the modules that make up the programme.

8. Nested Awards

For programmes with nested awards, the aims and learning outcomes specific to each award should be clearly identified and written separately for every award and in ascending order of the level of awards.

9. Career Related Opportunities

An outline of expected graduate employment opportunities should be provided.

10. Continued Demand for the Programme

This should reflect justifications for the continued need and demand for the programme, substantiated by a market analysis and learner demand.

11. Programme Structure

The proposed programme structure.

12. Learning and Teaching Approach

13. Placements/Work-based Learning (Where these form a feature of a programme) must also be included

14. Regulations

A minimum of the following regulations related to the programme should be included:

14.1 Entry Requirements

This should specify the University’s general minimum entry requirements (RUB Admission Policy) and programme-specific minimum requirements in identified subjects. Details of the ability ratings of subjects must be included. The procedures for selection and admission must be presented in detail for programmes where learners are not selected through the University’s central online selection system.

14.2 The entry requirements should reflect the fit of the applicant’s prior knowledge and experience to the programme applied for.

14.3 Assessment and Progression Requirements

14.3.1 All programmes are expected to use the standard University assessment and progression regulations. It is sufficient to state that the programme conforms to the most recent version of C1 Assessment Regulations where this is the case. However, details of the assessment regulations that go beyond the minimum requirements of C1 Assessment Regulations set out

in the Wheel must be provided. In addition, it should include the minimum criteria, expressed in terms of modules, credits and marks, for proceeding to the next stage or year of the programme, and the requirements to be fulfilled for granting the award or awards.

14.3.2 Reflect on relevant information related to the role of the Programme Board of Examiners in the assessment and progression of learners.

15. Planned Student Numbers

Planned student numbers should be set out in a table with projections for five years starting from the proposed year of implementation. The numbers under every year should reflect a detailed breakdown by cohort numbers i.e., Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, etc.

16. Programme Management, Quality Assurance and Enhancement

16.1 This section should briefly outline the arrangements in place for the management, operation and monitoring of the programme, including student feedback arrangements, and evaluation mechanisms.

16.2 Provide brief information on the role of the Programme Leader, the Programme Committee, the Head of Subject/Department, Module Coordinator, Module Tutor, the College Academic Committee, Moderation of Assessments, Student Consultative Meetings and the relationship between these persons and bodies. The arrangements in place for programme management should be consistent with the RUB regulations. Reference may be made to relevant sections of the Wheel, in particular, regulation E6 Programme Management.

16.3 Information should also be provided on how learners are engaged in the quality assurance and enhancement of the programme, including learner representation in committees such as the Programme Committee, and their role in the feedback and evaluation of modules/programmes in accordance with the regulation C3 Student Module Evaluation.

16.4 Besides the University's requirements for quality assurance and enhancement, this section should also be used to highlight any innovative approaches to quality assurance and enhancement that individual Colleges have instituted for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of educational provision.

16.5 The constitution and terms of reference of the Programme Board of Examiners, including any proposals for External Examiner(s) to be appointed to the programme should also be presented.

17. Staff

17.1 For the purpose of this section, *staff* refers to faculty, laboratory staff and other staff directly related to the delivery, support, and management of the programme. This section should demonstrate that adequate and appropriate faculty and programme-related staff support is available to ensure effective delivery and long-term sustainability of the programme.

17.1.1 Overall Faculty and Programme-Related Staff Support Required

This subsection should describe the overall faculty and programme-related staff support required for the delivery of the programme. The description should cover teaching, laboratory and technical support, assessment, academic coordination, supervision, and quality assurance functions. Staffing requirements should be aligned with the curriculum structure, practical and

laboratory components, mode of delivery, and anticipated student intake. Particular attention should be given to staffing needs related to laboratory supervision, technical assistance, safety requirements, and workload distribution.

17.1.2 Existing Faculty and Programme-Related Staff Support

This subsection should provide details of existing faculty, laboratory staff, and other programme-related staff who will support the programme. Information should include relevant academic, technical, and professional qualifications, experience, and areas of expertise directly linked to programme delivery. The adequacy of existing staff support for initial and ongoing delivery should be clearly indicated. Any identified staff development or upskilling needs, especially for laboratory or technical roles, should be outlined along with proposed timelines and mechanisms for professional development.

17.1.3 Faculty and Programme-Related Staff Recruitment Plan

This subsection should outline plans for the recruitment of additional faculty and programme-related staff where gaps in expertise or workload capacity are identified. The recruitment plan should specify areas of specialisation, role requirements, and indicative timelines. It should also describe arrangements for staff induction, laboratory safety training, mentoring, and ongoing professional development. Sources of funding to support recruitment and staff development should be clearly identified.

18. **Resource Needs**

18.1 This should state the learning resources that have direct relevance and will be used to support the delivery of the programme. Learning resources that are in place (existing resources) and those essential resources that need to be acquired for the proposed programme must be specified according to the headings below:

- i. Teaching learning spaces such as classrooms and laboratories
- ii. Equipment such as laboratory resources
- iii. Library support
- iv. Computing support, including software
- v. Other support facilities, such as accommodation, general expenses

18.2 The need for resources (where these are essential) should address the requirement for the programme backed up by concrete plans for acquisition that include cost estimates, timelines for procurement and committed sources of funding.

18.3 Resources that cannot be met through the proposed College's annual operating expenses, since they require substantial funding, should be sourced and committed through the Five-Year Plan capital budget or financial support from relevant donor agencies.

19. **The Module Descriptors**

19.1 This section should include a full set of module descriptors for the reviewed programme. (Copies of the module descriptors of the existing programme should be made available during the time of the review and therefore are not required to be included here).

19.2 All module descriptors should be written and presented in the most current version of the Module Descriptor format.

Written Style

The written style of the validation document shall be concise and focused, making judicious use of short paragraphs, bulleted lists, tables, and, where essential, appendices.

For uniformity and ease of use, the document should be prepared using the following basic style in MS Word:

- Font Arial, size 11 with single line spacing for English and font DDC Uchen, size 11 for Dzongkha
- One-inch margin on all sides of the page
- Footer page numbers on the bottom right

Guidance for Colleges on the Repeat of Modules Following Programme Review

Background

1. To ensure programmes remain relevant, fit for purpose, and engaging for both students and tutors, RUB's quality assurance and enhancement processes require that all programmes undergo period review and annual monitoring.
2. A reviewed programme is offered to new cohorts of learners and students enrolled on the old programme, usually complete their study and gain their award on the old programme. The rollout of a reviewed programme and phasing out of its older version is managed to ensure continued and regular intake of students on the programme.
3. Periodic review of programmes often results in significant changes between the reviewed programme and the old programme. This hinders the smooth progression of students on a programme where, e.g., students enrolled on the old programme have to repeat modules which are not part of the reviewed programme.
4. Since the College and RUB are obliged to provide for the student's completion of the programme within the established norms and regulations of the programme, it is an additional burden to deliver few modules to a small number of repeating students.
5. Colleges of RUB have differing means of allowing their students to repeat modules where a programme has been reviewed.
6. The 61st PQC meeting endorsed the following guidance for Colleges to deal with when students repeat modules on a recently reviewed programme.

Guidance

- i. To address the difficulties to both students and colleges, captured above, the individual College, under the direction of the CAC, will consider the following points to make the implementation uniform across all the colleges:
 - a. Consult students who are affected by the module(s) they have to repeat.
 - b. Allow students to enrol for the reviewed programme or change the programme, provided the entry requirements are met in both cases. In such cases, students shall not repeat the module studied and passed if the module is exactly the same or substantially similar. The academic transcript will be issued based on the new programme.
 - c. If the student is not eligible for any of the reviewed/new programmes or the programme is discontinued, he/she should be allowed to continue on the old programme, even with one student. However, an arrangement can be made to enrol for the modules from the reviewed/new/other programme(s) if they are of substantially similar in nature. The academic transcript will be issued based on the old programme.

Annexure 12.6

- d. The period of registration (timespan) should be counted from the day on which he/she was admitted to the old programme.
- e. The College may refer to E7 Changes to Programmes to judge the similarity among modules of the old programme and the reviewed/new/other programme

APPLICATION PROPOSAL FORM FOR DISCONTINUATION OF A PROGRAMME

Use this form to submit the application to discontinue a programme. It must be submitted to the Academic Planning and Resource Committee by the Dean (Academic Affairs) of the College, along with a copy of the minutes of the CAC meeting which considered and recommended the proposal.

Information on the Programme to be Discontinued:

Name of College	
Title of the Programme	
Duration of Programme	
Mode of Delivery	
Date of the Programme's last review/validation	
Student numbers on the programme over the last 5 years (Use the standard table of student number)	
Date and year of the last enrolment	

Information on Approval for Discontinuation:

1. What is the rationale for the proposed discontinuation of the programme?
2. What modules of the programmes are adopted and used by other programmes and/or Colleges? Are these programmes and/or Colleges aware of the proposed discontinuation? What arrangements are proposed for the continued use of or alternatives after discontinuation of the programme?
3. Is the programme proposed for discontinuation adopted in another College? If YES, is the adopting College aware of the proposed discontinuation and what is the reaction from the College? What does the adopting College propose?
4. Describe the arrangements for students continuing on the programme to complete their study and gain their award(s)? More specifically, describe how students who are on approved leave of absence from their study and those students who are eligible to repeat modules/semesters can complete their study.
5. Are there any implications for staffing, library, IT and space resources which are planned and used for the programme? For example, address issues related to loss of revenue as a result of reduction in student numbers, use of equipment and use of staff who are no longer required to teach the programme.
6. Would the discontinuation of the programme have any implications on the strategic plan of the College and/or the University as a whole? Consider the targets that have been set in terms of student numbers, skills development, research and publications amongst others and how the proposed discontinuation will affect such goals.
7. Does the programme prepare students for entry to any occupation that is experiencing a national skills shortage? Would its discontinuation be likely to create a national skills shortage because the University is a sole or dominant provider of the national skill base for that occupation?
8. Will the discontinuation of the programme affect the nation in terms of its cultural, historical, political, economic, or other social aspects?

Glossary

Candidate: The Higher Degree student who has completed the Confirmation of Candidature (CoC).

College: Any member College of the Royal University of Bhutan.

Research Competency: The integrated ability of an individual to effectively design, conduct, analyse, and communicate research using appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ethical principles.

Confirmation Panel: A panel responsible for evaluating the research proposal defence of an HDR student and completing the Confirmation of Candidature process.

External Examiners (EE): An academic or professional expert from another institution or organisation appointed to independently monitor and evaluate the assessment process to ensure the fairness, rigour, and academic standards of programmes by providing objective judgments, benchmarking against external reference points, and offering expert advice through formal reports.

Faculty: a member of the academic staff or academic support staff employed by the University under regular, contract, temporary or part-time services.

Office of the Vice Chancellor (OVC): The University's central coordinating office.

President: The Head of a member College of RUB.

Programme: the collection of modules, research plan, and thesis that a student completes. Programmes shall be designed and developed to lead to specified awards.

Research: Any work that the University or the faculty undertakes and which leads to the creation/development of knowledge of various forms.

Services: Any work that the University or the faculty undertakes and which contributes to the community and to academic and professional organisations.

Student: The Higher degree student who has not yet defended the research proposal and completed the Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) process.

Thesis Examination Committee (TEC): A committee responsible for evaluating and marking the thesis and the oral defence of the HDR candidate.

University: The Royal University of Bhutan.