

**Kathmandu University**  
**School of Education (KUSOED)**  
**Guidelines for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Programs 2023**

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education (three years full-time equivalent) is a rigorous, advanced study program. KUSOED also has the provision of part-time PhD study, especially for in-house faculty and staff, and other working professionals who take this option. Their study duration is eight years (maximum) and time for submission is after the completion of four years. Other provisions/conditions are same as mandated to the full-time students.

This program is intended to produce graduates with the capacity to conduct research independently at a high level of originality and quality. By the end of the degree program, the PhD students will be capable of independently designing and executing original research that generates a body of new knowledge.

**Application Process**

Applications for PhD Program are open all year round though admission is normally announced for the Spring intake. All applicants are expected to demonstrate capability and interest to carry out independent research and have adequate training and ability to pursue the desired PhD program.

**Eligibility**

- At least 17 years of schooling with a master's degree, preferably with MPhil (or MPhil equivalent) degree from the university recognized by Kathmandu University;
- Demonstrated competency in the English language;
- CGPA 3.25 on a four-point scale or 60% in aggregate in the previous degree
- For those working full-time should produce a consent letter from their offices.

**Application Process**

- Identify/communicate with a Professor/Associate Professor/ Assistant Professor within KUSOED to proceed with the application for the PhD candidate's position; OR  
Apply to the desired program when admission is announced.
- The applicant must submit the following:



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- A duly filled admission application in a form provided by the School;
- Two references from academic referees;
- A fully developed research proposal of around 4000 words (written in English);
- A 5000 words research paper (preferably a published sample) on any topic (written in English);
- If the concerned professor is satisfied, s/he will recommend the proposal to the Research Committee; or the Research Committee will select the suitable candidate(s) from among the applicants after the evaluation of the research proposal(s) and relevant documents.
- The Research Committee will consider the following aspects while making its evaluation:
  - Past academic records
  - Research proposal
  - Writing ability [written test/sample written essay]
  - References
  - Relevant work experience
  - Interview performance
  - Presentation based on the research proposal
  - 5000-word paper on any subject (published or unpublished)

### **The PhD Process**

All students who join PhD program at KUSOED must fulfill specific requirements to get an award of a PhD. The requirements to be fulfilled to get PhD award are: completing designated courses, *successfully completing qualifying papers, publishing (at least two) articles in peer-reviewed journals, presenting in national/international conferences (at least two), and writing and defending the thesis*. The following sections explain these requirements in detail.

#### **Completing Course Requirements, if any**

The respective Head of the Department (HoD) and/or supervisor(s) may recommend the courses to be taken.

#### **Preparing and Defending the Research Proposal**

After the enrollment, the PhD students start working on a full research proposal in their area of specialization with support from the provisional supervisor and the Head of their respective Department or with some other faculty members assigned by the Head. The students must submit their well-developed research proposals to the Head of their respective Department by the first month of the second semester. The proposal should be developed as a detailed document containing the roadmap of the study



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and, thus, should give sufficient detail to allow a reader to ascertain the research intentions unambiguously. KUSOED welcomes a creatively designed research proposal. The fully developed research proposal may include an introduction of the agenda, problem statement, a statement of purpose, research questions, literature review, and the research roadmap. The students can develop their proposals and design the subtitles creatively.

The Head of the Department will then assess the proposal and, if found satisfactory, recommend its presentation to the Research Committee. The presentation date is fixed by the Head after consultation with the Dean. The student will make an oral presentation of about 20 minutes, followed by questions, comments, observations, and advice from the Research Committee. The student should defend her/his work by responding to all the questions.

If satisfied with the student's written proposal and oral presentation, the Research Committee will approve the proposal with or without suggestions for improvement. The Committee might also ask the student to re-present her/his proposal if the minimum requirements are not met. The Committee will indicate areas where improvements are needed both in the proposal and in oral presentations in such a case. If the student cannot satisfy the Committee even during her/his second presentation, the Committee might decide whether the student needs some additional exposure and practice in research proposal development. If the student cannot get the proposal approved within a year (two years for part-time students) from the date of admission, her/his PhD registration may be cancelled by the Research Committee through a due process.

### **Completing Qualifying Papers**

When the research proposal is approved, they further have to write and defend two qualifying papers within the second year (three years for the part-time students). Students are expected to develop a sound theoretical/conceptual knowledge base on aspects of research methodology and their research domain while writing and defending the papers. The papers' clarity, argumentation and originality, coverage, organization and language, and citation and references will be considered in the evaluation. In case of failure to defend the qualifying papers on the first attempt, a student will get an additional opportunity. If a student cannot pass even after appearing in qualifying tests the second time, the student will be considered unsuccessful and lose their PhD candidacy and studentship. Successful completion of defending papers is essential because students will be considered PhD candidates only when they complete these requirements. This is to say, actual PhD research work begins only after completing these examinations.

### **Publishing Articles in Peer-Reviewed Journals**



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After getting enrolled in the PhD program, all students must prepare and publish at least two academic papers in any peer-reviewed journal(s). Students are also encouraged to get their works published in indexed journals. Before sending their papers to any peer-reviewed journal, they must get the approval of their Department and supervisors. This ensures that students select only good quality and reputed academic journals for publishing their articles. Emphasis on publishing papers in peer-reviewed and globally recognized indexed academic journals is to enable and encourage the research students to communicate with national/international learning communities and build their confidence in participating in academic discourses. Articles published before getting enrolled in the PhD program and not related to their PhD study area are not considered for the purpose. In case of any doubt about whether any paper is students' PhD topic related or not, the Research Committee's decision will be final. Among two articles that should be published, one is expected to be methodological/theoretical aspects of the student's research domain, and the other on the theme the student will be exploring. The publication of papers in a peer-reviewed journal is an individual task. However, publishing jointly with the supervisor(s) is encouraged.

### **Presenting at National and International Conferences**

A PhD student must present at least two papers in national and international seminars. The papers must be derived directly from their PhD study. Papers presented before getting enrolled on the PhD and papers presented on topics other than their study theme(s) are not accepted. In case of any doubt about whether any paper is related to students' PhD topics or not, the Departmental decision will be final. Presentation of papers in national/international seminars is an individual task. However, papers presentation jointly with the supervisors (the student should be the first author) is encouraged.

### **PhD Thesis**

A PhD thesis is the reporting of original research that meets the scholarly standards of the field and communicates research outcomes in writing clearly and convincingly to other scholars and related disciplines. The originality of the theme, contribution to knowledge building, a discussion of existing knowledge, a detailed discussion of the methodology adopted, theoretically backed analysis of findings/results, and implications of the study are some of the important aspects considered to evaluate PhD theses. Simple but scholarly and academic language, proper coherence and organization of the thesis, and appropriate formatting and referencing style as prescribed by KUSOED are also important aspects to be considered.



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### **Working under the Guidance of the Supervisors**

Once the PhD proposal of a student is finalized, the Dean will assign the student one or more Supervisors to support them in their thesis writing. If there are two or more Supervisors, one may be asked to act as the primary supervisor. However, all Supervisors can support the student in their own capacity and equal role. The Research Committee will decide the role if required.

The concerned students can also express their desire to work with a particular Supervisor(s). However, assigning Supervisor(s) mainly depends on their expertise and availability, and they should be at least working as Assistant Professors or at par that level with a PhD degree. The decision of the Research Committee chair is final in this regard.

The role of the Supervisor(s) is to facilitate students throughout the process of carrying out PhD research. Supervisors help students in several ways, such as supporting in conceptualizing their work and actualizing those concepts, putting them on track throughout the entire research work, reading students' writing, and advising for further improvement. It is natural for the Supervisor(s) to comment on the draft chapter writings of the students several times before the thesis becomes good enough to be submitted for external evaluation and final viva voce. Hence, it is the responsibility of the student to work closely under the guidance of the Supervisor(s). Students must maintain regular contact with Supervisors during the entire research work.

### **PhD Schedule and Progress Report**

To maintain the direction and persistence of PhD studies, each PhD candidate must make a progress presentation and submit a written report two times a year in a prescribed format (February and August). If the progress report is not submitted timely or the students do not appear to share their progress in the assigned date, the Dean, upon the recommendation of the concerned Department, might decide to cancel her/his registration. In such a case, the student will lose the student status in the PhD program of KUSOED.

Supervisors also must submit their evaluation report to the Head of the respective Department and the Dean on the students' work and progress every February. If the student cannot maintain the previously agreed schedule, s/he must give a satisfactory explanation for the delay.

### **Field Work and Thesis Drafting**

After the students complete data collection, they need to analyze the data and prepare the final draft under the close guidance of their respective supervisors. After the supervisors agree on the quality of the draft, the document will be forwarded by the supervisors to the Head of their respective Departments



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for departmental presentation. Before submitting the draft thesis for the purpose of departmental viva, students should properly format their theses as per the style guidelines prescribed by KUSOED. Likewise, students should also get the thesis thoroughly edited at the Writing and Communication Center (WCC). The Head organizes a departmental viva to which all the faculties and PhD students will be invited. After the feedback from the departmental viva is incorporated, the Head will submit the thesis to the Office of the Dean for external evaluation. The thesis submitted for examination should satisfy the following requirements:

- It must in general be between 40 thousand to 80 thousand words;
- It must be an independent and original piece of individual research work;
- It must have made knowledge contribution to its area of the research;
- It must have clarity in research purpose and must have achieved its stated purpose;
- It must be conceptually/theoretically sound;
- It must have used appropriate methodology as per the research problem and have methodological coherence;
- It must be referential and must show the evidence of capturing the existing knowledge in the area of the research carried out;
- It must be satisfactory in terms of its language and presentation;
- It must be written in English following the format and style prescribed by KUSOED. The Abstract of the thesis must also be included in the Nepali language.

KUSOED allows library-based Ph.D. studies. These types of research are generally theoretical or philosophical mainly derived from the existing literature. However, students must convince the research committee that they can carry out such research. PhD studies based on secondary data are also allowed. In such research, students use the data collected by other agencies/individuals for their purposes. Regional and national surveys like National Population Census, Nepal Living Standard Survey, etc. and databases (maintained by different international and national agencies) are some of the important sources for secondary data. While basing their study on these secondary sources, students must be aware of the aspects like relevance, applicability, and usability of the data.

### **Evaluation by External Examiners**

There will be two external examiners for a PhD thesis review. The examiners are appointed by the Dean from among the pool of experts (both national and international) in KUSOED's contact. The examiners are selected by the Dean mainly on the basis of their expertise in the subject matter and the methodological approach applied in the thesis being evaluated. Generally, the examiners will have four



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weeks' time to evaluate the thesis. They will examine the thesis focusing on knowledge contribution, originality, theoretical clarity and soundness, methodological rigor, argumentation, substantiation and referencing, organization, coherence and flow, language and presentation, etc. (See Annex). After the evaluation of the thesis, both Examiners will provide their evaluation report separately, giving their opinion on the overall quality of the thesis and, specifically, on the above-mentioned points.

Based on the Examiners' recommendations, the Office of the Dean decides whether the thesis needs further improvement before a public presentation. In case further works are recommended, students should do additional works and re-submit the thesis working under the guidance of the Supervisors. If the Supervisors find that the comments are well adjusted, the thesis is considered ready for a preliminary defense, which is carried out as a public viva.

In case both or one of the examiners find the thesis unsatisfactory, the Dean appoints other reviewer(s). If the thesis is found unsatisfactory even in the second round of review, the PhD candidacy of the student will be terminated.

### **Defending the Thesis**

After the departmental presentation, students have to defend the thesis in two phases. First, there will be a preliminary or public defense, in which a wider audience – academics, professionals, and students – are invited. The purpose of the preliminary defense is to disseminate the novel findings of the research and receive a diversity of comments, observations and feedback.

The preliminary defense involves a 40-minute presentation from the candidate, followed by questions and feedback from the audience. On this date, the candidate is asked to distribute printed copies of the abstract and presentation slides. Likewise, they should also bring all their raw data (for example, filled-in questionnaires, observation sheets, checklists, interview notes, field diary/notes, memos, audio and video records of interviews and observations etc.), and other relevant materials such as photographs of the field, approved proposal, earlier versions of their thesis/chapters, notes, etc. After the preliminary/open presentation, candidates should work further on their thesis and address the comments and observations made by the audience, where appropriate.

Once the students complete addressing all the comments given to them in the preliminary defense and when the Supervisors are satisfied with the revised work, the thesis goes to the final viva voce to be performed in front of the Research Committee. Like in the preliminary Defense, students are required to make a 40-minute presentation, and respond all the questions asked by the external examiner(s) and Research Committee members. Students' presentations should also highlight the major comments and suggestions received in preliminary presentation and from the external examiners. The presentations may also be organized online depending on the circumstances.



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Immediately after the Defense, the Research Committee can decide to accept or reject the thesis with necessary justifications. Possible decisions could be one of the following:

- i. Both written thesis and the oral presentation are accepted without correction and hence PhD degree is awarded to the candidate.
- ii. The presentation is pleasing, but the thesis can only be accepted with improvements. The thesis is accepted on the condition that the student addresses the concerns made by the Research Committee and improves the thesis as advised. In such cases, students do not need to re-defend but need to improve their thesis.
- iii. The thesis is accepted but needs substantial improvement and re-defending. This is a conditional acceptance, and the students need to address the concerns made by the Research Committee and improve the thesis as advised and re-defend.
- iv. The thesis is not satisfactory and cannot be accepted and, therefore, is rejected. In such case, the whole PhD program of the particular candidate comes to an end.

### **Submitting the Proof of Academic Publications and Conference Presentations**

Before sending the thesis for final defense, the Office of the Dean seeks the proof of publication of at least two academic papers in peer-reviewed journals and paper presentation in at least two national/international conferences on the topic related to the student's thesis. Without receiving adequate proof of such contribution, the Office of the Dean will not proceed with the final defense.

### **After Defending the Thesis**

After getting approval from the supervisor(s) and the Head, the candidates need to prepare the hard-bound copies of their thesis and get the thesis signed by the supervisor/s, external examiners present in the defense, the HoD and the Dean. Before sending for hard-binding, students should also incur certification from the Writing and Communication Center for the completion of language editing and formatting. Finally, the thesis goes to the KUSOED and other libraries and becomes the public property. KUSOED makes a digital copy of the thesis available on an online database. However, the copyright of the thesis remains with the student.

### **Duration of PhD Completion**

PhD at KUSOED is a three-year study program. Students must complete all degree requirements in three years (four years for part-time students). KUSOED allows an extension of the timing for two additional years (three years for part-time students). With this extension, students can complete their PhD within five years from their admission (seven years for part-time students). An extension of one year is also possible in the case of some students if there are good reasons for such an extension. If the work is in



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progress, students could request such an extension and if the students' supervisor(s) recommend it, the Research Committee chair may grant one-year extension.

Students must consume the minimum time duration of three years required to complete their studies. The timeline as given below (see Annex) assumes three-year timeline for completing PhD thesis. Those who extend the timeline (three years) must pay the semester renewal fee for each semester they extend in order to maintain their student status. Similar conditions apply to part-time students.

### **Cancellation of PhD Candidacy and Withdrawal of Degree**

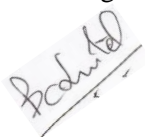
In case of misconduct against KUSOED or any malicious intent to defame the PhD program and malpractice (such as plagiarism) in the PhD thesis and course assignments submitted as part of a student's PhD study, KUSOED can decide to cancel his/her PhD candidacy and studentship. Other administrative reasons (e.g., not paying the fees) can be a ground for not awarding the PhD degree. However, the person gets an opportunity to explain her/his case before the final action is taken.

### **Ethical Aspects**

A duly filled KUSOED Ethical Form (Approved by the Research Committee on January 21, 2019) should be submitted when submitting the proposal for presentation. The Research Committee evaluates the filled-up ethical form and approves the research process if it finds satisfactory. The Committee may ask for the revision or reject the research process if there is potential violation of ethics.

The proposal or thesis is considered to violate the ethical standards if there are evidences of:

- Plagiarism
- Violation of confidentiality
- Disrespect to the norms of anonymity
- Absence of informed consent of participants for participation in the research
- Insensitivity to the integrity of the participants
- Harm/Exploitation to the participants
- Violation of the interest of the participants
- Unauthorized dissemination of the individual/household level data
- Commercial use of the collected data (However, this does not restrict the publication of articles, books, etc. using the data collected).
- Dishonoring the existing socio-cultural practices
- Monetary/non-monetary exchange of benefits with participants
- Violation of the copyright of others' work, and property
- Not getting consent of author(s), agency(ies) while using their data, tools, pictures, or any other work



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**ANNEX I:**  
**INTENDED SEMESTER-WISE ACTIVITIES FOR PHD STUDENTS**

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Intended Activities</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in courses (if applicable)</li> <li>• Develop thesis ideas further</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation about courses and thesis</li> <li>• Complete some course work if applicable</li> <li>• Prepare concept note on thesis ideas and discuss them with the assigned supervisor</li> <li>• Submit and present semester progress report</li> </ul>
Second	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and expand proposal and defend among Research Committee members</li> <li>• Prepare the first qualifying paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defend proposal in early second semester</li> <li>• Submit and present the annual progress report</li> </ul>
Third	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and expand thesis ideas</li> <li>• Begin thesis work such as field work</li> <li>• Prepare the second qualifying paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defend the first qualifying paper</li> <li>• Submit semester progress report</li> </ul>
Fourth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on thesis continued</li> <li>• Publication</li> <li>• Seminar presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defend the second qualifying paper</li> <li>• Fieldwork/ thesis work continues</li> <li>• Participate in conferences</li> <li>• Publish journal articles</li> <li>• Submit and present annual progress report</li> </ul>
Fifth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis drafting</li> <li>• Defend the thesis in departmental viva</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field work/ thesis work continues</li> <li>• Complete draft thesis</li> <li>• Defend departmental viva</li> <li>• Participate in conference</li> <li>• Publish journal articles</li> <li>• Submit and present the semester progress report</li> </ul>
Sixth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis defense and completion</li> <li>• Preliminary viva</li> <li>• Final viva</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defend preliminary and final viva</li> <li>• Submit the final hard-bound thesis</li> </ul>

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ANNEX II:  
GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINATION

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KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
Guidelines for External Examination 2023

The following table is intended to guide the examination of Theses/Dissertation prepared by graduate/postgraduate students at the Kathmandu University School of Education. The Examiner may focus on the given key points/questions and add other observations that would help the candidate update the Thesis/Dissertation to a desirable standard.

<b>Main Components</b>	<b>Key Points/Questions</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Research Context/Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the research context/agenda made explicit (with relevant literature/reference)?</li> <li>- Does it align with the research problem, research gap, research purpose and research questions?</li> </ul>	
Problematization (problem statement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the research problem/issue adequately discussed and substantiated with relevant literature?</li> <li>- Does it overlap (or reasonably align) with the research gap?</li> </ul>	
Statement of Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the purpose stated according to the work accomplished, or vice versa?</li> <li>- Is the purpose statement properly structured (e.g., avoidance of abstraction, use of action verbs)?</li> <li>- Does it overlap (or reasonably align) with the research gap?</li> </ul>	
Research Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do the Research Questions align with and explain the purpose?</li> <li>- Do the questions reflect the intent and requirement of the research method?</li> <li>- Is the overall Dissertation/Thesis built on the questions, with corresponding chapters?</li> </ul>	
Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is there justifiable/reasonable amount of the review of current thematic, empirical and/or policy-related literature?</li> <li>- Is there reasonable geographical, thematic, and methodological diversity in the selection of literature?</li> <li>- Is local literature included?</li> <li>- Is the review coherently followed by research gap(s)?</li> </ul>	



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Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the methodology adequately discussed in line with its key dimensions (research philosophy, paradigm, data collection/generation, data analysis, ethical considerations)?</li> <li>- Does the methodology correspond with the study accomplished?</li> <li>- Are the proposed quality/validity criteria suitable to the research, and applied as promised?</li> </ul>	
Discussion/Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How are the results/findings/themes extracted and arguments discussed?</li> <li>- Are the arguments logically backed and substantiated?</li> <li>- Is there proper integration of and linking with the theories and works, especially those discussed in the Literature Review?</li> <li>- How are the Research Questions addressed?</li> </ul>	
Final Chapter (Conclusion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insights/Highlights: How is each research question addressed?</li> <li>- Implications: Where and how does the study contribute?</li> <li>- Limitations and future directions (optional)</li> <li>- Reflection: personal transformation and critical self-awareness (optional)</li> <li>- Final statement of the thesis (optional)</li> </ul>	
Structure (rhetorical strategies, language, style, documentation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the Dissertation/Thesis follow a rigid convention, or show a logical intent for creativity?</li> <li>- Does the text respect the nuances of academic communication in terms of language, style and (APA) documentation?</li> <li>- Does the text reflect the convention of the respective discipline and the methodology applied?</li> </ul>	
Review Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Originality of the theme</li> <li>- Theoretical foundation</li> <li>- Methodological rigor and strength</li> <li>- Contribution to discourse/scholarship</li> </ul>	
Overall impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the thesis/dissertation meet the degree requirements?</li> <li>- In what major aspects does the work need improvement (if any)?</li> </ul>	



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Name of the External Examiner:

Date of Review:

Signature:

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