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Contents

INTRODUCTION

DEFINITIONS

TERM OR ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
Academic Council	The Academic Council shall be established by the IHRI President's Office and shall constitute no less than three and no more than seven members, all of whom are affiliated with IHRI and take on the role of senior academic or senior management within IHRI.
Doctoral Student	The Doctoral Candidate shall be an individual who registers as a student at IHRI and is accepted to follow the DHS programme. The Doctoral Candidate cannot follow any other postgraduate programmes at IHRI or with any other institution while following this DHS programme.
Adviser	The adviser shall be an experienced doctoral adviser and dedicate significant time to mentoring and guiding the Doctoral Candidate.
Subject Matter Expert	The subject matter expert shall be an expert either in the research theme or the identified research methodology, or possibly both, and shall dedicate adequate time to the additional support and guidance of the doctoral candidate during the thesis stage. The Adviser and the Subject Matter Expert shall constitute the Candidate's advisory team.
Examiner Panel	The Academic Council shall select the Examiner Panel in the composition outlined in this Regulation. It shall report to the Academic Council on the implementation and outcome of the final doctoral viva.
Arbitration Panel	The Academic Council shall select the Arbitration Panel in the composition outlined in this Regulation. It shall report to the Academic Council on conflict issues as outlined in this Regulation.
Doctor of Health Science	A doctoral student who completes the full doctoral journey shall be titled 'Doctor of Health Science,' identified by the post-nominals 'DHS'.

Admission to the Doctorate Programme

To be admitted to the Doctoral Programme, candidates must satisfy the following criteria:

2.1 Academic Entry Requirement

- Relevant MQF/EQF L7 Master's degree or equivalent, min 5 + years' work in health/social care or other professional areas at a mid-senior level.
- Interview with the course coordinator or nominee.

2.2 Non-native English-speaking applicants

If English is not your first language, you must have.

- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 7 or more.



Exemptions of the IELTS are available for students qualifying for MQF Level 6 or higher from institutions that hold courses in English, e.g., a Maltese, Irish, UK, Australian, New Zealand, US, or Canadian qualification.

2.3 Pathways – Direct Application

If the candidate meets the direct entry requirement stated above, the candidate must submit the following documents.

- Application form titled ‘DHS Application Form’.
- The student signed the contract
- Certified copies of qualifications, MQRIC validation of qualifications and proof of identity

Appointment and Duties of the Advisor and Subject Matter Expert

Doctoral Candidates shall be provided with one Principal Adviser and one Subject Matter expert (where required) for the research stages of the doctoral programme.

3.1 Primary Adviser

The Principal Adviser shall be an IHRI Senior Academic or a visiting part-time senior academic. This adviser must be knowledgeable about the chosen research theme and the research methodology pertinent to the topic.

Principal Advisers may take on no more than a maximum of 5 candidates at any one time and shall dedicate (per student) an average of 2 contact hours per week for 36 weeks of each academic year.

The duties of the Principal Adviser shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following actions:

- Holding regular meetings and discussions with the Candidate and the Second Adviser within the remit of the available contact hours the Adviser has at their disposal.
- Provide general academic guidance to the Candidate as deemed necessary.
- Regularly read the academic materials created by the Candidate and provide formal feedback and direction on possibly enhancing these written materials.
- Maintain records of interactions with the Candidate and of the Candidate's ongoing performance.
- Provide an annual review and associated report on the general progress of the Candidate.
- Provide a final evaluation report on the Candidate's dissertation before the viva for the benefit of the Examiner Panel.

The Academic Council shall be tasked with replacing a Principal Adviser who has opted to leave their position within IHRI with an appropriate alternative within 4 weeks of initial notice. If a candidate alternatively requests a change in Principal Adviser, this will be decided upon by the Academic Council, and if due justification of the reason is provided, conceded to within three months of initial notice. Candidates are advised to refrain from a request to change their Principal Adviser unless completely necessary, given the possible setback that this will have on the timing of the doctoral journey.

The Academic Council shall select a Second Adviser who is also an IHRI senior academic, a visiting part-time senior academic, or a senior administrative manager. This second Adviser must know the chosen research's theme, methodology or possibly both.



3.2 Subject Matter Expert

May take on no more than a maximum of 8 candidates at any one time and shall dedicate (per student) an average of 1 contact hour per week for 36 weeks of each academic year.

The duties of the Subject Matter Expert shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following actions:

- Assist the Principal Adviser in guiding the Doctoral Candidate.
- Determine, in consultation with the Principal Adviser, how the Subject Matter Expert can be involved in the regularly scheduled meetings between the Principal Adviser and the Candidate.
- Provide concise feedback and opinions on the academic materials presented by the Candidate at the various programme stages, particularly the dissertation writing stage.

The Academic Council shall be tasked with replacing a Subject Matter Expert who has opted to leave their position within IHRI with an appropriate alternative within 4 weeks of the initial notice. The Doctoral Candidate cannot request a change in Subject Matter Expert.

Doctoral Progress and Examination of the Final Doctoral Dissertation

After completing the modules DHS 800–803, the candidate shall take on a primary research task that will typically be over an additional 2.5 years on a part-time basis. Candidates may extend this main research period without needing Student Services approval for another year, assuming that agreement is reached with the Principal Adviser. Candidates may request that Student Services extend their main research period for up to three additional years, meaning that the doctoral journal may take up to a maximum of eight years to complete.

4.1 Deliverables

The complete Doctoral Journey is summarised in the following table and typically follows a linear trajectory:

Deliverable	Description	Sanctioning Mechanism
Deliverable 1	Successful Completion of modules DHS800 - 803	Approved and recorded by IHRI Student Services
Deliverable 2	Research Proposal approved – DHS804	Approved by Primary Adviser
Deliverable 3	Presentation of Early-Stage Research Findings.	Peer-reviewed research papers, peer-reviewed working papers, or peer-reviewed poster exhibits.
Deliverable 3	Submission and Acceptance of Peer-Reviewed Academic Paper in a Reputable, Relevant Journal Co-authored by the Principal Adviser.	Evidence of Journal Acceptance of Paper.
Deliverable 4	Submission and Acceptance of Peer-Reviewed Academic Paper in a Relevant Journal with an Established Impact Factor.	Evidence of Journal Acceptance of Paper.
Deliverable 5	Final Dissertation Viva	Conclusion of Examiner Panel

At the end of each academic year, the Academic Council shall task the Principal Adviser with submitting a review report in a provided format that outlines the candidate's progress and any issues of concern. If the Academic Council feels that intervention is required, it may opt to meet with the candidate and one or both advisors. The Academic Council shall formally notify the Doctoral Candidate of the registered progress.

The Candidate is tasked with providing the necessary research and progress work that the Principal Adviser requires to compile the annual review report.



4.2 Viva-based Final Assessment

The viva-based final assessment shall occur within six months of the Candidate submitting the formal dissertation for evaluation. The doctoral viva follows the implementation mechanisms in the IHRI Regulation titled 'Research at IHRI' (MQF/EQF Level 7 & 8). The Examiner Panel shall request initial evaluation reports from both the Principal Adviser and the Second Adviser and will consider these reports when evaluating the doctoral dissertation. The Candidate may opt to enter a viva even if guided otherwise by his or her Advisers, but this is strongly recommended against.

4.3 The Examiner Panel

The final dissertation submission shall be of PhD rigour and examined by an Examiner Panel that is identified and reports to the Academic Council. The Panel shall consist of the following composition, with the Principal Adviser attending in a silent, non-voting capacity if they have the candidate's consent to participate in the viva session.

- Panel Convenor: Chosen from amongst IHRI Senior Academic Management Staff.
- External Examiner: A person who is external to IHRI and who is identified by IHRI to be an expert in the field, who holds a relevant doctoral qualification, ideally holds a professorship position, and who has supervised at least ten doctoral dissertation students. A significant publication list shall be sought as evidence of academic standing.
- Internal Examiner: A person identified by IHRI who is a full-time senior academic within IHRI, holds a relevant doctoral qualification and has significant knowledge of the research theme and/or the research methodology the Candidate has adopted.
- Panel Secretary: A person the Office of Administration identified to coordinate and record the complete viva process and report on proceedings.

4.4 Outcomes

The outcome of the DHS dissertation viva shall take on one of the three grading options below. The Examiner Panel shall provide the Academic Council with an adequately detailed and conclusive examiner report within two weeks of the candidate's completion of the viva, identifying which grading option has been convened. It shall be the responsibility of the Academic Council to convey all necessary result information to the Doctoral Candidate, possibly through the Principal Adviser. This formal notification shall be completed within one week for the Academic Council to provide the candidate with the formal viva result information. If the Examiner Panel are in internal disagreement, a majority vote shall be cast and taken as the final direction for the Academic Council to act upon.

Option 1	CATEGORY A: Award (recommendation A(i) and A(ii))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A(i) Award with no corrections.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A(ii) Award subject to minor corrections. The thesis meets the degree criteria, but some minor corrections are necessary.
Option 2	CATEGORY B: REFER FOR RE-EXAMINATION (recommendations B(i), B(ii) and B(iii)).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B(i) that the thesis is satisfactory in substance but defective in presentation and/or content and does not require further oral examination. • B (ii) that the thesis is satisfactory in substance but defective in presentation and/or content and requires a further oral examination. • B (iii) that the thesis is unsatisfactory in substance, defective in presentation and/or content and requires further research and a further oral examination.
Option 3	CATEGORY C: REJECT (recommendations C(i), C(ii), C(iii) and C(iv))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C(i): Reject but award the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil). The candidate must resubmit the thesis with a new title page indicating that it is a master's (not a doctoral) thesis. • C(ii): Reject but award the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) subject to minor corrections being made to the thesis: The candidate is normally required to revise and resubmit the thesis for the MPhil degree within four weeks of receiving the examiners' statement detailing the required revisions. • C(iii): Reject but invite the candidate to revise and resubmit the thesis for examination for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil). The candidate must revise and resubmit the thesis for examination for the MPhil degree within six months of receiving the examiner's statement detailing the required revisions. The candidate will be permitted to resubmit on only one occasion. • C(iv): reject, and no resubmission is permitted.

Note: For recommendations B(i) and B(ii), the candidate is normally required to revise and resubmit the thesis for the doctoral degree within six months of receiving the examiner's statement detailing the required revisions.



Duties and Responsibilities of a Doctoral Candidate

The Doctoral Candidate shall be expected to conduct his or her research in proper and complete ethical rigour, meticulously following IHRI policy titled Research at IHRI and any other ethics-related guidance or direction provided by the IHRI Research Ethics Committee (REC).

The Doctoral Candidate shall complete all the deliverables this document outlines to graduate with the doctoral qualification.

The Doctoral Candidate is expected to attend and present papers on behalf of IHRI at conferences, where appropriate, under the guidance of the advisory team.

The Doctoral Candidate shall ensure that they hold regular communications with the Advisory team and shall keep due track of work progress, interactions and feedback in a DHS logbook that will be provided for this purpose.

The Doctoral Candidate must fully abide by all relevant IHRI regulations, such as the IHRI learning, teaching and assessment policy and all other pertinent regulations.

The Doctoral Candidate shall be responsible for his or her final doctoral dissertation, ensuring that the innovative contribution in the particular area of research results from his or her own independent work.

Format and Content of the Doctoral Dissertation

The Doctoral Dissertation shall be compiled in English and carefully proofread by the Doctoral Candidate prior to submission. The Examiner Panel may refuse to evaluate a dissertation that falls below the expectations of a properly compiled doctoral endeavour.

The dissertation manuscript submitted to the Principal Adviser for final approval must be identical in form and content to the doctoral dissertation manuscript that is subsequently provided to the Examiner Panel.

The Doctoral Candidate shall carry out a plagiarism check utilising an IHRI-approved plagiarism check tool on the dissertation manuscript before submitting the final version and shall include the plagiarism evaluation report with the submission. The Examiner Panel shall give due weight to the plagiarism report when carrying out their review of the dissertation.

The design and content of the dissertation shall be in such a manner that it can be reproduced by photocopying, printing and electronically. Advertising in the dissertation is strictly prohibited.

The Doctoral Candidate is to provide one spiral-bound colour copy of the final dissertation to the Adviser team, as well as an identical electronic version for replication purposes. The Academic Council shall reproduce other dissertation copies for internal use and provide them to the Examiner Panel as necessary.

Intellectual Property Rights:

The Doctoral Candidate shall retain full intellectual property rights over the work they have produced. IHRI shall retain the full right to store and display the dissertation in its library and online repositories and to utilise it for education and research. Thus, IHRI shall have full rights, full permissions, and full license to copy, publish, make available, distribute, or disseminate the dissertation manuscript in any manner worldwide via any possible medium.



Temporary Embargo:

In exceptional cases where a Doctoral Candidate may advocate a temporary embargo on the publication of the dissertation, the Candidate must submit to the Principal Adviser the filled-in form titled 'Request for Exemption Embargo for Dissertation Publication.' The Candidate must present a detailed reason why such an embargo is advocated to the Principal Adviser, who will approve or reject the embargo request and, if approved, decide on the length the embargo shall be retained. The Principal Adviser shall consult with the Academic Council regarding a temporary embargo.

6.1 Format

The Doctoral Dissertation shall include the following elements and shall aim to follow the following guidelines and limitations:

The following section provides information regarding the front cover's design, dissertation chapter structure, layout, font size and line spacing. No page designs are to be included in the doctoral dissertation.	
Front Cover	
Front Page	<p>This page is to include in font size Times New Roman 14 and 1.5 line spacing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The IHRI logo is positioned in the top right corner 2. Dissertation title (bold font) and fully justified 3. Doctoral Candidate's name and surname (italics) 4. Adviser/s name and surname (italics) 5. Month, the year when the dissertation is submitted. <p>The following text: 'A dissertation submitted to IHRI in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Health Science degree.'</p>
Authenticity Statement Page	<p>This page is to include Times New Roman font size 12 and 1.5 line spacing:</p> <p>Text 1: This dissertation is based on my research results, is my own composition, and has not been previously presented for any other certified or uncertified qualification.</p> <p>Text 2: The research was carried out under the supervision of (name of dissertation Adviser/s – Title, Name and surname)</p> <p>Signature and Date</p>
Copyright Statement Page	<p>This page is to include Times New Roman 12 and 1.5 line spacing.</p> <p>Text 1: In submitting this dissertation to IHRI, I understand that I am permitting it to be made available for use per the regulations of IHRI and the Library and Learning Resource Centre. I accept that my dissertation may be publicly available at IHRI's discretion.</p> <p>Signature and Date.</p>
'Acknowledgement page'	<p>This page is to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In font size Times New Roman 12 and 1.5 line spacing 2. The list of people that the Doctoral Candidate would like to thank on completing the dissertation. For example, I would like to mention Mr Name Surname, who supported me during my dissertation work as my tutor.



	Acknowledgements should be kept to a maximum of five people.
'Contents' Page	<p>This page is to include the main items of the dissertation in Times New Roman 12 font, with 1.5 line spacing, indicating the page from where each item starts. The contents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dissertation Title (and corresponding page number) - Authorship Statement (and corresponding page number) - Copyright Statement (and corresponding page number) - Abstract (and corresponding page number) - Acknowledgements (and corresponding page number) - Contents (and corresponding page number) - List of Abbreviations (and corresponding page number) - List of Figures (and corresponding page number) - List of Tables (and corresponding page number) - *Chapter 1: Introduction (and recommended page number) - Chapter 2: Literature Review (and recommended page number) - Chapter 3: Research Methodology (and recommended page number) - Chapter 4: Findings/ Analysis of Results and Discussion (and recommended page number) - Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations (and recommended page number) <p>(* The chapter mentioned above may be adapted according to the research methodology and research design requirements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of references (and recommended page number) - Bibliography (and recommended page number) - Appendices (and recommended page number).
Subsequent Pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The font of all the remaining text (following the contents page) is to be Times New Roman 11, with 1.5-line spacing, and printed on one-sided pages. - A wide left-hand side margin of 3.7 cm is to be included throughout the dissertation. Other margins are to be set at 2.5 cm. - Quotations of more than three lines should begin on a new line, indented 2.5 cm from the main text. - Pages are to be numbered consecutively, in the bottom right corner, using Roman numbers for the initial pages and natural numbers starting from the first page of Chapter 1. - It is usual for chapters to have sub-sections (1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.) to display text in a more readable format
Guideline for Content of Main Sections	<p>The Dissertation presented for the Doctor of Health Science shall be no fewer than 65,000 words with a tolerance margin of 15% higher word count.</p> <p>Abstract (400 – 500 words) This section should clearly state what the study is about, summarising how it was carried out and what the results were. References are not to be included in the abstract. It should present only the essentials of the work in general and up to 5 main keywords at the end of the section.</p> <p>Introduction (2,000 – 4,000 words) In this section, the Doctoral Candidate is expected to state:</p>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The ‘problem’ or ‘question’ being researched; b. Why this topic was chosen; c. What motivated the Doctoral Candidate to select this topic? d. Why did the Doctoral Candidates investigate it the way they did? e. What problem did the Doctoral Candidate wish to explore? f. What is the context for the research?
	<p>Literature Review (12,000 – 15,000 words)</p> <p>The primary purpose of a literature review is to show the reader that the Doctoral Candidate studied and analysed the viewpoints of other researchers on the problem under consideration. A literature review is a summary of the books read and a thorough analysis of different perspectives on the problem being analysed.</p>
	<p>Research Methodology (10,000 – 13,000 words)</p> <p>This section should make up about 20% of a dissertation. It presents the chosen research methods and explains why they are effective.</p>
	<p>Findings, Analysis of Results and Discussion (30,000 – 38,000 words)</p> <p>This section includes a critical discussion of the Doctoral Candidate’s findings. It shows how these findings support the original objectives for the dissertation, which may be partially or fully achieved or even exceeded. The Doctoral Candidate may also include new areas of investigation prompted by developments in the research dissertation. Above all, strong arguments must be presented that show how findings may offer a valid contribution to the development of the subject of the selected research area or issues related to it.</p>
	<p>Conclusions and Recommendations (5,000 – 10,000 words)</p> <p>In this chapter, the Doctoral Candidate has to evaluate the significance of the work done and give recommendations for further investigations.</p>
	<p>Bibliography</p> <p>This section demonstrates what sources were used to conduct research. All sources presented in a bibliography list should be sorted alphabetically.</p>
	<p>References</p> <p>The Doctoral Candidate is generally requested to use the IHRI-identified Harvard referencing style in the dissertation.</p>



Adviser Approval and Feedback on Doctoral Dissertation

The Principal Adviser will consult with the Second Adviser on all issues relating to the evaluation of the Doctoral Dissertation and shall aim to represent this two-person Advisory team in all dealings and interactions with the Academic Council and the Examination Panel.

If the advisory team believes that the Doctoral Dissertation meets the requirements of the DHS, the Principal Adviser shall give his or her final approval to the Academic Council for the dissertation manuscript to be provided to the Examiner Panel for evaluation through viva.

The Principal Adviser shall coordinate the compilation and collection of the initial evaluation reports from both the Principal Adviser and the Second Adviser, which will be subsequently provided to the Examiner Panel.

The implementation of any changes to the dissertation manuscript after it has been finally approved by the advisory team is only permitted with the express permission of the Principal Adviser in consultation with the Second Adviser.

The Principal Adviser shall submit the final approved dissertation manuscript, together with both initial evaluation reports, to the Academic Council to be provided to the identified Examiner Panel for evaluation through viva. The Academic Council shall ensure that the full sequence of actions, from the date of the candidate's submission of the manuscript to the date of completion of the viva, does not exceed six months at the most.

If the Doctoral Candidate believes that the dissertation manuscript is ready and of adequate quality for successful viva defence, but no approval is forthcoming from the Principal Adviser, then they may refer the matter to the Academic Council for intervention. The Academic Council may opt to intervene, either to communicate with the Advisory team to expedite matters or possibly to allow the Candidate to approach the viva, notwithstanding that there is no approval or if there are negative reviews from part of the Advisory team.

Arbitration Mechanism

The arbitration may be sought by the Doctoral Candidate, either whilst within the doctoral passage or as a result of the Examiner Panel's conclusions following the viva evaluation of the dissertation manuscript. The arbitration is an internal doctoral progress mechanism that aims to resolve and reconcile and does not impede the candidate from escalating a case to the IHRI Student Services or externally to the Office of the Ombudsman or to legal recourse.

In the event of arbitration sought by the Doctoral Candidate during the course of progress in the doctoral journey due to a significant dispute between the Candidate and the Advisory team, the Candidate is requested to formally communicate this dispute to the Academic Council. The Academic Council shall attempt to mediate the issue and find an amicable solution. If no solution is found, the candidate may opt to request a change in the advisory team, being clearly cognizant of the implications and possible difficulties that could be encountered when replacing one or both advisers. The Candidate shall bear joint responsibility for this decision, and with full awareness of its implications.

In the event of arbitration sought by the Doctoral Candidate due to a significant disagreement with the outcome and final evaluation of the Examiner Panel following the doctoral viva, the Candidate is requested to formally communicate this dispute to the Academic Council. The Academic Council will establish an Advisory Committee, consisting of no less than three members and no more than five members, to provide it



with a guided opinion on the validity of the Candidate's claim. This Committee shall include one member from the IHRI Council of Governors, another member from senior academic management and a third member from senior academic standing. If the Advisory Committee deems the claim to be unsubstantiated or erroneous, the Academic Council shall sanction the earlier conclusion of the Examiner Panel. If the Advisory Committee deem the claim to be substantiated, the Academic Council shall opt to reconvene a new viva session with an entirely new viva team.

In the possibility that one or both members feel that their position as Adviser to the particular Candidate is untenable for any reason, the member/s may request that the Academic Council permanently remove them from the Advisory team. The Academic Council shall seek due reason for conceding to this request, and if in agreement, take action to replace one or both Advisers with minimal possible disruption to the progress of the Candidate.

Doctoral Graduation and Title

IHRI shall hold doctoral graduations once a year, which will be included with the graduations of candidates in its postgraduate programmes.

In the graduation ceremony, the successful doctoral candidate shall be required to don the robes that IHRI identifies as befitting the doctoral title being bestowed on the candidate.

The successful candidate shall be given the title of Doctor of Health Science, denoted by the post-nominals 'DHSc', by the Principal IHRI or his delegate in the graduation ceremony.

APPENDIX / REFERENCES