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RESEARCH DEGREE REGULATIONS

[MPhil and PhD]

Research Degree Regulations
Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH DEGREE REGULATIONS

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (MPhil) AND DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Scope of this document	2
3. Admission and Initial Enrolment.....	3
4. Appointment of Supervisors and Advisors	4
5. Periods of study	4
6. Annual Review	5
7. Research Degree Proposal	6
8. Transfer from MPhil/PhD.....	7
9. Presentation and Submission of the thesis	8
10. The Examination Panel	9
11. Examination	10

Research Degree Regulations

Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the regulatory framework for the awards of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) offered by Cardiff Metropolitan University (hereafter referred to as the University). The regulations for the award of PhD by Published Works are available as a separate document.
- 1.2 This document seeks to reflect nationally recognised good practice as stated in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education and other relevant policies and codes of practice issued by the UK higher education funding councils and Research Councils UK.
- 1.3 These regulations are subject to annual review via the University Research Degrees Committee (RDC). A list of amendments made at each annual review will be made available alongside these regulations. Candidates will normally be subject to the version of these regulations which was extant at the time of their initial enrolment.
- 1.4 In addition to the annual review, these regulations are subject to periodic review, as part of the University's quality assurance system. Such review aims to ensure that standards are comparable with those in place across the UK HE sector and consistent with QAA requirements and to ensure that the quality of provision provides candidates with a fair and reasonable expectation to achieve their award within an acceptable timeframe.
- 1.5 Candidates should ensure they are familiar with the contents of this document. They should also ensure familiarity with the Code of Practice for the awards of MPhil and PhD and the PGR Student Handbook, which provide further advice and guidance.

2. Scope of this document

- 2.1 This document sets out the regulatory framework for the following Cardiff Met awards:
 - 2.1.1 Master of Philosophy (MPhil) by Research: This award will be bestowed by the University in recognition of the completion of a programme of study and research, the results of which are judged to constitute a critical evaluation and analysis of a body of knowledge or an original contribution to learning or knowledge.
 - 2.1.2 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Research: This award will be bestowed by the University in recognition of the successful completion of a programme of study and research, the results of which are judged to constitute an original contribution to learning or knowledge and to give evidence of systematic study and of ability to relate the results of such study to the general body of knowledge in the subject.
- 2.2 Candidates can pursue the award of MPhil or PhD via either full time or part time study.
- 2.3 The award of MPhil and the award of PhD can be conferred on an honorary basis. See process for the awarding of Honorary Research Degrees.

Research Degree Regulations

Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

3. Admission and Initial Enrolment

- 3.1 The normal minimum entrance requirement for research degrees offered by the University is an upper second class honours undergraduate degree relevant to the proposed programme of study and research (or International Equivalent). The award must have been made by a recognised university or higher education institution, or by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Applicants are required to provide evidence of their qualifications as part of the application process.
- 3.2 Applicants who do not possess the normal minimum qualification will be considered on a case by case basis. In such cases, the relevant School will take action to determine the applicant's academic attainment and suitability to undertake the programme of study and research. Prior experiential learning may be recognised as part of this process.
- 3.3 Where it is considered that an applicant may not have sufficient prior experience to immediately enrol for a PhD, they may be enrolled on an MPhil/PhD basis. In such instances, the candidate will undergo a formal review process within 12 months of full time enrolment or 24 months of part time enrolment to approve, or otherwise, progression to enrolment for the award of PhD. Further details are provided in Section 8 of this document and in the PGR Student Handbook.
- 3.4 In addition to the above entrance requirements, applicants must be capable of satisfying the University with regard to their proficiency in the English or Welsh language (whichever they have chosen to pursue the award in) at a level necessary to complete the programme of work and to prepare and defend a thesis in that language.
- 3.5 In order to establish proficiency in the English language, overseas applicants whose first language is not English will normally be required to provide evidence of a minimum IELTS score (or equivalent) of 6.5 at application with a minimum of 6.5 in the reading and written components, or of a Masters Level qualification, gained through the medium of English from a recognised institution. Candidates will be required to provide such evidence as part of the admissions process.
- 3.6 Once in receipt of an offer letter from the University, applicants are required to confirm acceptance of the offer and to subsequently enrol via the University's online enrolment system.
- 3.7 The University offers three official enrolment points each academic year, normally in September, January and April. Should a candidate enrol at another point in the year, their official start date will be the closest official enrolment point.
- 3.8 The initial enrolment date will be considered the date of commencement of the research degree and begins the period of candidature.
- 3.9 Applicants will be advised of the fees applicable to their programme of study during the application process. All applicable fees must be paid upon enrolment.
- 3.10 The University will consider applications from individuals who have commenced a research degree programme at another institution. Applications to transfer into the University will be considered by the RDC and will follow the process set out in the document entitled *Application*

Research Degree Regulations **Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy**

Process for a PGR Candidate at Another Institution to Transfer their Enrolment to Cardiff Metropolitan University.

- 3.11 Where such applications are successful, the research conducted at the former institution may contribute to the thesis. The period of time spent studying for the award at the former institution will therefore be deducted from the applicable Cardiff Met maximum candidature period.

4. Appointment of Supervisors and Advisors

- 4.1 Each candidate will have at least two supervisors, and normally no more than three. One of the supervisors will be appointed as Director of Studies and will have overall responsibility for the work of the supervisory team. In order to be approved as part of the team, all supervisors must appear on the RDC List of Approved Supervisors and the proposed Director of Studies must appear on the RDC List of Approved Directors of Study.
- 4.2 A Director of Studies must be a member of the University's academic staff with a contract equivalent to at least 0.2 of a full time position.

5. Periods of study, suspension and mitigation

- 5.1 Maximum candidature related to full time and part time study are provided below. Candidates will be required to submit their thesis within these timescales.

	MPhil	PhD
Full Time	2 years (24 months)	4 years (48 months)
Part Time	4 years (48 months)	8 years (96 months)

- 5.2 **Suspension.** In instances where a candidate's progress has been or is likely to be impeded thereby preventing satisfactory progress, they may apply for a period of suspension. Suspension requests will be made by the candidate and their supervisory team through the Change Request option on PhD Manager to the School (or equivalent) RDC and will be supported by appropriate independent documentary evidence. Applications may be escalated to the University RDC for further consideration.
- 5.3 A formal period of suspension may not exceed twelve months for candidates enrolled on either a full time or a part time basis. During the suspension period, candidates will not have access to any Cardiff Met staff or resources.
- 5.4 When a period of suspension ends, candidates will be reminded of their resumption of studies through an email generated from PhD Manager two weeks prior to the end of suspension date. If a candidate wishes to extend the candidature period, he/she (or a supervisory team member)

Research Degree Regulations

Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

must apply for this extension through the Change Request option on PhD Manager *prior* to the end of the initial suspension period

- 5.5 **Mitigating Circumstances.** Mitigating Circumstances, often called exceptional personal circumstances, are significant changes in the candidate's circumstances during their studies, which are acute, unexpected and outside the control of the candidate, for example, a short illness, family emergency or accident. The candidate believes such circumstances will adversely affect their ability to engage with their studies to the extent that they may be unable to complete work to a high standard by the required deadline.
If granted mitigation, the candidate will be given an extended deadline and will still have access to Cardiff Met staff and resources.

Longer-term or ongoing difficulties which are likely to prevent the student from engaging with their studies for a period of weeks or months will likely require a student to suspend their studies (see above).

- 5.6 All applications for mitigation must be made by the candidate and their supervisory team through the Change Request option on PhD Manager to the School (or equivalent) RDC and will be supported by appropriate independent documentary evidence.
- 5.7 Maximum periods of candidature listed in 5.1 above do not include periods of suspension, but do include periods where mitigation has been approved. Any approved period of suspension will be added to the maximum candidature period upon resumption of studies.
- 5.8 Maximum periods of candidature may only be exceeded in exceptional circumstances and following formal approval by the School RDC. Applications to extend candidature will normally be made by the Director of Studies in conjunction with the candidate and other members of the supervisory team through the Change Request option on *PhD Manager*.
- 5.9 Should a candidate not submit their thesis without any suspension or mitigation by the end of their maximum candidature length, the candidate will be confirmed as exited from the programme without completion and informed via email and letter.

6. Annual Review

- 6.1 Candidates are required to reenrol annually on the anniversary of their initial enrolment. This requires completion of an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) on PhD Manager. A candidate will not be permitted to progress onto the next year of study if a satisfactory AMR is not submitted.
- 6.2 Candidates must submit their completed AMR before the anniversary of their enrolment. Failure to do so without any mitigating reasons approved by the School's RDC through the suspension process, will result in the candidates receiving their first and only warning to complete the AMR. Failure to then complete it within three months following the anniversary of enrolment (or after the new date provided through suspension) will result in the termination of the candidate's enrolment.

Research Degree Regulations

Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

- 6.3 If a candidate has suspended within an academic year, the length of suspension can be added to time required to complete the AMR. So, for example, if enrolment was in April 2020 and the candidate suspended for three months during their first year, then he or she can submit the AMR by July 2021. The candidate will then be required to complete the AMR on the anniversary of enrolment from 2022 onwards.
- 6.4 The AMR must be completed jointly by the candidate and supervisory team although candidates will have access to a confidential section in which they can submit comments directly to the Chair of the University's RDC.
- 6.5 The AMR will establish that the candidate:
- remains actively engaged on the research project and is making satisfactory progress;
 - is maintaining regular and frequent contact with the supervisory team;
 - is likely to complete successfully within the relevant maximum candidature period set by the University.
- 6.6 Where the report indicates that progress has been impeded, the School will exercise academic judgement in deciding if progress has been satisfactory and if the proposed future timetable is realistic.
- 6.7 Final approval of continued enrolment lies with the School's RDC, a member of which will report outcomes to the University's RDC. The candidate may only re-enrol once their AMR has been approved by the School's RDC.
- 6.8 Where the School's RDC determines that progress has not been satisfactory, informed by supervisor reports on the AMR and any other relevant evidence (e.g., Student Meeting Records and correspondences between supervisors and candidate), it can recommend that the candidate's enrolment is terminated. School RDCs can also escalate any concerns to discuss further at RDC. A candidate may appeal against such a decision in accordance with Section 2 of the University's [Appeals Procedure \(Postgraduate Research Degrees\)](#).

7. Research Degree Proposal

- 7.1 Candidates must work jointly with their supervisory team to submit a Research Degree Proposal (RDP) on PhD Manager within 9 months of initial enrolment for full time study or 18 months of enrolment for part time study.
- 7.2 The RDP will undergo an internal School review either by members of the School's RDC or by a suitable staff member who has experience with the subject matter. Any comments provided as an outcome of the internal School review must be addressed on PhD Manager within four weeks of receipt, with a table of corrections uploaded.
- 7.3 After this review the RDP will be subject to formal approval by the School's RDC. The Committee may withhold approval of the RDP if members are not satisfied that it shows sufficient evidence of the programme of study and research being suitable to have the potential for completion by the candidate within the appropriate maximum candidature period.

Research Degree Regulations

Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

- 7.4 Failure to submit an RDP within the timescales indicated in 7.1, without any mitigating reasons approved by the School's RDC through the suspension or mitigation process (with the new deadline extended by the length of suspension), will result in the termination of the candidate's enrolment at the University. Where suspension or mitigation has been approved, candidates must then submit their RDP by the extended deadline.
- 7.5 If an RDP is not approved and then returned to the candidate for revision, any revision must be edited on PhD Manager, with a table of corrections uploaded within one month of the feedback being received (unless mitigation is sought through the suspension process – with a new extended deadline being provided). Failure to resubmit within the one-month (two months for PT candidates) period will result in the termination of the candidate's enrolment.
- 7.6 Each candidate will have a maximum of three attempts to have their RDP approved. Failure to have an RDP approved at the 3rd attempt will result in the termination of the candidate's enrolment.

8. Transfer from MPhil/PhD

- 8.1 Where a candidate is enrolled on an MPhil/PhD basis they must undergo a formal transfer process within 12 months of full-time enrolment or 24 months of part time enrolment, unless the candidate has mitigating reasons approved by the School's RDC through the suspension or mitigation process – with a new deadline provided by the candidate and supervisory team. Failure to formally submit the transfer documentation within 11 months of full-time enrolment or 22 months part-time equivalent (or by the new date provided through the suspension process) will result in the termination of the candidate's enrolment.
- 8.2 The candidate will submit a written report 3000 – 6000 words in length (or equivalent) to their supervisory team. The report could: i) provide a context for the research or literature review, give an account of progress to date and propose a clear timetable for the doctoral phase of study or; ii) include a brief introduction, a paper prepared for peer review (e.g., literature review, systematic review or empirical study), and a clear timetable for the doctoral phase of study.
- 8.3 A formal assessment panel will be convened to interview the candidate on the basis of the report. The panel will include the candidate's supervisory team plus a subject specialist, independent of the supervisory team, who will act as an Independent Assessor. The Independent Assessor will normally have experience of successful supervision and/or examination at doctoral level. They will be reviewed and approved by the School's RDC.
- 8.4 The outcome of the assessment process will be one of the following:
- (i) The panel approves the application for transfer to PhD.
 - (ii) The panel approves the application subject to clearly specified conditions to be completed within a clearly specified timescale, but not surpassing 2 months post formal confirmation of outcome with candidate (4 months for a PT candidate).

Research Degree Regulations

Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

(iii) The panel refers the application and recommends that the candidate be given more time to reach the required level. The period for completing the transfer will be extended by a maximum of 3 months for a full time student or by a maximum of 6 months for a part time student. For this outcome, the candidate is expected to resubmit the transfer documentation on PhD Manager for a further formal assessment. Based on the direction of the examination panel from the previous formal assessment, the candidate may be required to undertake a further formal assessment interview with the panel. The outcomes available to the examination panel on this further assessment are Outcomes I, ii, iv, and v.

(iv) The panel rejects the application and reaffirms the candidate's enrolment for an MPhil.

(v) The panel rejects the application and requests withdrawal of the candidate.

8.5 Final approval of the transfer process lies with the School's RDC, a member of which will report outcomes to the University's RDC.

8.6 The candidate has the right to appeal in the case of a rejection of the transfer application, in accordance with Section 2 of the University's Appeals Procedure (Postgraduate Research Degrees).

9. Presentation and Submission of the thesis

9.1 Full details of the requirements of the University with regard to the presentation and binding of a thesis are provided in the PGR Student Handbook.

9.2 The thesis, including footnotes, must not exceed 100,000 words for the award of PhD or 60,000 words for the award of MPhil. The word count would not include tables, figures, reference list and appendices. Candidates who submit a thesis which is longer in length will have their thesis returned to them to address the word count – with a deadline of one month (two months for PT candidates) provided to address the word count.

9.3 Candidates undertaking an award in the creative and performance arts are permitted to make a submission which includes the following:

(i) a thesis not exceeding 30,000 words for the award of PhD or 15,000 words for the award of MPhil.

(ii) work in one of the following formats: artefact, score, portfolio of original works, performance or exhibition.

(iii) a written commentary, normally of 5,000 – 6,000 words, placing the work submitted under (ii) in its academic context as part of the thesis. The word count of the written commentary will count as part of the total word count of the thesis as outlined in (i) above.

9.4 In all cases, the thesis must contain within its binding an abstract not exceeding 300 words and a Declaration Form, signed by the candidate which includes:

Research Degree Regulations

Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

- (i) a statement showing to what extent the work submitted is the result of the candidate's own investigation.
- (ii) a declaration certifying that the work has not already been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree.
- (iii) a statement regarding the availability of the thesis.

9.5 A submitted thesis will be made openly available and will not normally be subject to any security or restriction of access. In cases where this is not appropriate, a candidate's Director of Studies will make an application to the RDC to prohibit copying and/or access to the thesis for a specified period. Such applications should be made as soon as any issues relating to confidentiality arise. In such cases the title and summary of the thesis will normally be made freely available.

9.6 Candidates are required to submit two hard copies of the thesis and any additional material to the Registry Officer for Higher Degrees at Research and Innovation Services, in line with the guidance provided on examinations page of the PGR Academy Portal. In addition, candidates are required to submit an electronic copy of the thesis and any additional material via [PhD Manager](#). Hard copies of the thesis should be accompanied by completed and signed copies of the Thesis Submission Form and Declaration Form.

9.7 Once the thesis has been submitted the candidate is not permitted to make any amendments, additions or deletions to it prior to examination, except where consent has been explicitly granted by the RDC.

9.8 The electronic submission will be uploaded to Turnitin, the plagiarism detection platform, in order to generate an originality report with a 'similarity index'. The report will be forwarded to the Chair of the Examination Panel to review and any submission whose academic integrity is deemed to be of concern will be forwarded to Registry Services to be formally considered under the Unfair Practice procedures.

10. The Examination Panel

10.1 The Examination Panel will ascertain that the thesis submitted is at the appropriate standard for the award and that the thesis is the work of the candidate being examined.

10.2 Details of a proposed Examination Panel will not be considered by the University's RDC in the event that a candidate remains enrolled on an MPhil/PhD basis.

10.3 The composition of the Examination Panel will be determined by the nature of the candidate's relationship with the University. Where the candidate is either not employed by the University or holds an HPL contract for six hours or less per week (averaged across the academic year), their Examination Panel will consist of a Chair, one internal examiner and one external examiner. Where the candidate holds an employment contract with the University, including an HPL contract for more than six hours per week (averaged across the academic year), their Examination Panel will consist of a Chair and two external examiners.

Research Degree Regulations

Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

- 10.4 If it should prove impossible to appoint an internal examiner, a second external examiner may be appointed.
- 10.5 In all instances, the Chair will be a member of staff of the University, normally from the same School (or equivalent) as the candidate, who has undertaken appropriate training. The Chair will be reviewed and approved by the University's RDC.
- 10.6 The University's RDC will approve the appointment of an examiner only in instances where it is satisfied that they are sufficiently familiar with the nature and purpose of the degree for which the candidate is being examined and that they possess sufficient knowledge and expertise in the subject area of the research project. Any rejected proposed exam panel application must be addressed within four weeks of receipt of outcome.
- 10.7 The candidate may opt for a member of their supervisory team to attend the oral examination as an observer.

11. Examination

- 11.1 The examination process consists of two stages:

STAGE ONE: preliminary independent assessment of the thesis by the examiners, who will each prepare a pre viva report on the thesis to be submitted no later than 5 working days before the Viva Examination date. Examiners will be asked to complete their report on PhD Manager before the proposed date of the oral examination.

STAGE TWO: an oral examination (the *viva voce*) conducted by the Examination Panel.

- 11.2 Following the *viva voce* examination, recommendations available to panel members are:

- A: The candidate fulfils the criteria for the award on which they are enrolled.
Examiners may recommend that the award be made:
- i) Without further correction or amendment to the thesis.
 - ii) Subject to correction of presentational or typographical errors within the thesis within a maximum of 2 weeks (full time candidates) or 4 weeks (part time candidates).
Corrections will be approved by one or both examiners.
 - iii) Subject to minor amendment of the thesis as indicated by the examiners which can reasonably be completed within a maximum of 12 weeks (full time candidates) or 24 weeks (part time candidates).
Amendments will be approved by one or both examiners.
 - iv) Subject to major amendment of the thesis which could include addressing deficiencies in terms of content, analysis and/or presentation in areas indicated by the examiners and which can reasonably be completed within a maximum of 6 months (full time candidates) or 12 months (part time candidates).
Amendments will be approved by both examiners although no re-examination will be required.
This option is not available to examiners when considering a resubmitted thesis from a candidate who was awarded a Bi in the first submission.

Research Degree Regulations

Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

B: The candidate does not currently fulfil the criteria for the award on which they are enrolled. Examiners may recommend that one of the following courses of action are taken:

- i) Referred for resubmission: The candidate does not currently fulfil the criteria of the award for which they are enrolled due to significant deficiencies of content and/or presentation as indicated by the examiners. The candidate is permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis for the same award and be re-examined on one further occasion, with or without a viva voce. Required revisions should be completed within a maximum of 12 months (full time candidates) or 24 months (part time candidates).
All examiners will conduct the re-examination.
This option will not be available to examiners when considering a resubmitted thesis.
- ii) FOR THE AWARD OF PhD ONLY:
Recommend MPhil following amendments: The candidate does not fulfil the criteria for a doctoral award but does meet the criteria for MPhil subject to amendments as indicated by the examiners. Amendments should be completed within a maximum of 4 weeks (full time candidates) or 8 weeks (part time candidates) and will be approved by one or both examiners.
- iii) FOR THE AWARD OF PhD ONLY:
Resubmission for MPhil: The candidate does not fulfil the criteria for a doctoral award but has the potential to meet the criteria for MPhil subject to amendments as indicated by the examiners. Revisions should be completed within a maximum of 6 months (full time candidates) or 12 months (part time candidates). Both examiners will conduct the re-examination.
This option is also available to examiners when considering a first resubmission of a thesis.

C: The candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined either for the award for which they are enrolled or an alternative award.

- 11.3 In cases where the examiners cannot agree on an examination outcome, an arbitrating external examiner may be sought following the procedures set out in the Academic Handbook ([Guidance for Examiners \(PhD by Research\)](#) and [Guidance for Examiners \(MPhil by Research\)](#)).
- 11.4 A candidate may appeal against the decision of the Examination Panel in accordance with Section 1 of The University's [Appeals Procedure \(Postgraduate Research Degrees\)](#).
- 11.5 The University will only consider appeals on one or more of the grounds outlined in Section 1 of the Appeals Procedure (Postgraduate Research Degrees). Appeals which question the academic judgement of the examiners will not be admissible.
- 11.6 For major resubmissions (i.e., Bi), should the examination panel feel that the resubmission has not addressed the requirements and a significant amount of work is still required to reach a pass, the thesis will be referred. The candidate will be afforded a maximum of 12 weeks to complete the work and resubmit. The candidate will only be afforded this option once.

Research Degree Regulations
Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

- 11.7 Candidates will only have two attempts at addressing corrections, which constitutes three submissions in total, and candidates cannot receive the same outcome as the previous submission (See Figure 1 for a flow chart of options against submission number).
- 11.8 Any candidate who receives a Bi outcome in the first instance, cannot receive an Aiv for the second or final submission. If the candidate fails to achieve at least a pass with minor amendments (Aiii) on resubmission, following a Bi outcome, then they will receive a Bii or Biii outcome (dependent on the exam panel’s appraisal).

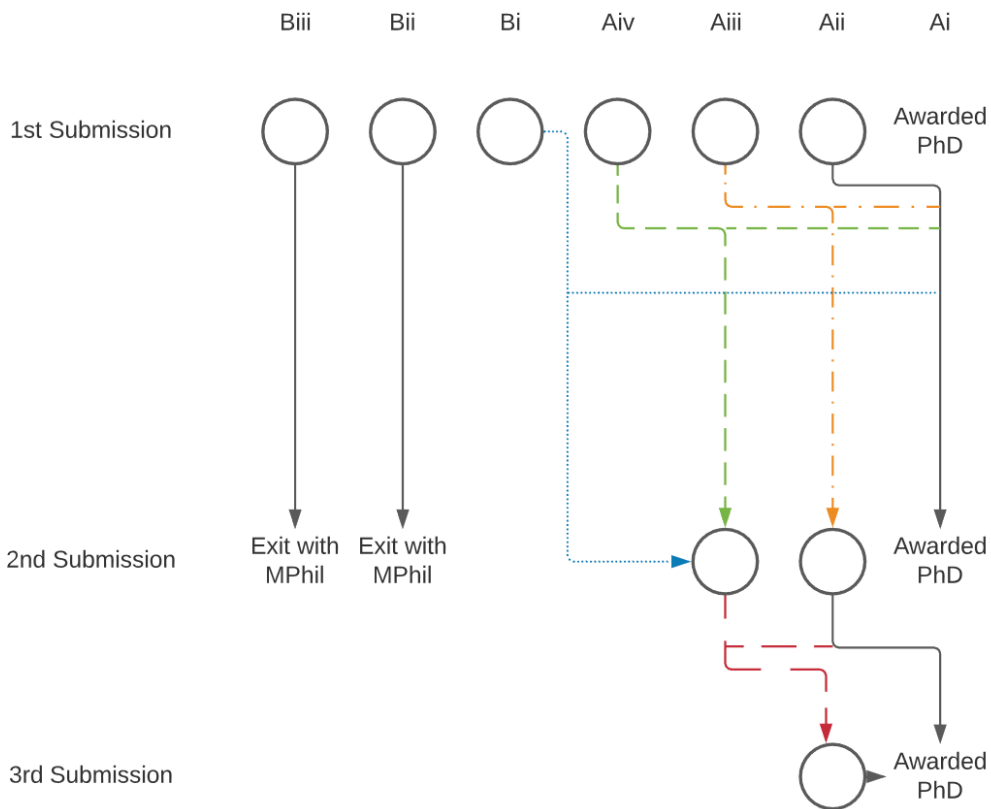


Figure 1. Exam outcome options against submission stage