

Authority:
Approved by the President
School Education Act

Chapter 5: Graduate School

Note: Further information on Graduate School policies and guidelines can be found on the [Graduate School website](#).

5.1 Mission and Core Policies of the Graduate School

The mission of the Graduate School of the OIST Graduate University is to provide first-class postgraduate education to the highest international standard. The Graduate School implements the following three core policies:

5.1.1 Admission Policy

The Graduate University aims to train researchers who will play important roles in the international scientific community at leading scientific institutions in the public and private sectors. Accordingly, the Admissions Policy will make it a principle to recruit candidates with the potential and motivation to become leaders in scientific research on the international stage.

Recruitment will focus on attracting outstanding students from within Japan and internationally. Here “outstanding students” means students who are highly motivated by the excitement and potential of the cutting-edge research that is possible at OIST, who have the curiosity and academic ability needed to excel in their chosen areas of study, and who have the capacity for independent research and original thinking. Our students will also require proficiency in oral and written communication skills in English for advanced study in science, and the ability to interact effectively with people from a wide range of backgrounds.

Students are selected for the OIST Graduate University PhD Program solely on merit, and not to a quota.

OIST strives to create and maintain an inclusive, equitable, and diverse environment that does not discriminate against gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, medical condition, race, ethnicity, ancestry, culture, national origin, religion, or marital status. Applications from women and other underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged.

Students will be eligible to apply if they are expected to complete a BSc or equivalent degree prior to admission, or have previously completed a BSc, MSc or equivalent degree representing the completion of an undergraduate course in science and

engineering, or exceptionally in other fields. The student should meet requirements for admission to a graduate school under the School Education Act. Successful candidates will only be enrolled into a doctoral program.

5.1.2 Curriculum Policy

In keeping with the concept of “Globally Recognized,” we will recruit outstanding students and conduct top class academic instruction. The academic program will aim to develop the full potential of each student toward scientific excellence and independence. In accordance with this aim, every student will be treated as a unique individual and have their program of studies tailored to their scientific aspirations, prior education, and current interests. The basic principles of the curriculum design are to facilitate independent scientific thinking, and to learn by doing research. There will be a single program without barriers between disciplines.

The students will be accepted directly into an integrated doctoral program leading to a postdoctoral career path in leading research institutes and universities. The doctoral program will have a standard enrollment period of five years, and will follow a course-based study system. A three-term per year system will be used. The first two years will comprise a combination of laboratory rotations and courses, designed to prepare the students for their doctoral thesis work in a flexible way. In the second year the students will choose a laboratory in which to undertake thesis research and will submit a Thesis Proposal. An examination for progression to thesis research is held by the end of the second year, based on the written Thesis Proposal and an Oral Examination that includes a defense of the proposal and examination of fundamental knowledge in the field of the research. In order to ensure the highest international standards, an external examiner who is expert in the field of the thesis study is a member of the examining panel. After determination of readiness for thesis work the students will enter into a three-year period of thesis research, which will conclude with examination of the thesis and an oral defense.

5.1.3 Diploma Policy

The PhD degree is conferred by the University in recognition of completion by the candidate of original research that makes a significant contribution to scientific knowledge. The degree is not awarded for completion of certain courses or a fixed period of enrollment, or for directed work as a technician. The work for the degree consists of original research and systematic studies that advance knowledge, conducted by the candidate with an appropriate degree of independence. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the ability to communicate the results of their research and scholarship effectively in both oral and written English.

5.2 Organization of the Graduate School

The Graduate School is a division of the University led by the Dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate School’s primary role is to provide academic services, student support and administrative support. The Graduate School further collaborates with others in OIST to participate in the Okinawa University Consortium and advance its

missions. The Graduate School's organization is as follows:

5.2.1 Office of the Dean of the Graduate School

The Office of the Dean of the Graduate School coordinates all divisional tasks and reporting, manages personnel, and facilitates divisional communications both within and outside of the division. The Office of the Dean also liaises with other key education stakeholders, including faculty and students, at OIST and further provides early detection of challenges that students are experiencing and coordinates intervention measures. Finally, the Office of the Dean develops relationships with other universities and governmental entities.

5.2.2 Academic Affairs Section

The Academic Affairs Section administers and supports the academic program of the Graduate School, including examinations.

5.2.3 Student Affairs Section

The Student Affairs Section is concerned with the everyday requirements of living, health and welfare of students at OIST. The Section is also responsible for student personal information, academic records, data, and Graduate School-related travel expense and relocation support for students.

5.2.4 Curriculum and Programs Section

The Curriculum and Programs Section is responsible for maintaining and enhancing the quality and diversity of the taught component of the educational programs delivered by the Graduate School.

5.2.5 Admissions and Recruitment Section

The Admissions and Recruitment Section is charged with attracting qualified students to OIST.

5.3 Committee of the Graduate School

5.3.1 Student External Funding Nomination Committee

The Student External Funding Nomination Committee is a standing committee of the University to select students to be recommended for external funding opportunities, such as scholarships, fellowships, awards, research grants and so on, which require university nominations. The Student External Funding Nomination Committee is advisory to the Dean of the Graduate School.

5.3.1.1 Membership of the Student External Funding Nomination Committee

The Committee includes faculty members representing the major fields of research and education at OIST who are charged with providing advice on matters requiring academic input. The Dean of the Graduate School appoints Committee members. The Vice Dean of the Graduate School, Manager of the Student Affairs Section, Manager of the Academic Affairs Section, and members from the Curriculum and

Programs Section are ex-officio members of the Committee. The Student Affairs Section provides administrative support for the Committee.

5.3.1.2 Number of members of the Student External Funding Nomination Committee

The Student External Funding Nomination Committee shall be comprised of six (6) members of the Faculty Assembly, including the Dean of the Graduate School.

5.3.1.3 Tenure of membership of the Student External Funding Nomination Committee

Tenure of membership on the Committee shall be two (2) academic years, with two (2) members appointed each year on a rotational basis to ensure experience/expertise is retained within the Committee.

5.3.1.4 Chairperson for the Student External Funding Nomination Committee

The Dean of the Graduate School shall preside at meetings of the Committee.

5.4 OIST PhD Students

OIST PhD Students are defined as students enrolled in the OIST PhD Program.

5.4.1 Number of Students Admitted

In accordance with best-practice graduate teaching methods where low numbers of students for each faculty member are essential; and in line with prestigious overseas universities; the admission capacity of PhD full-time graduate students accepted by the Graduate School shall be as stipulated in Article 14 of the OIST University Regulations.

5.4.2 Enrollment

An applicant who has been admitted to the OIST graduate program will become a student of the OIST Graduate School on the date of first registration. All students are required to register on admission to the Graduate School (Article 23 of the University Regulations), and thereafter two full calendar months prior to the beginning of each term of the graduate program.

5.4.3 The OIST Graduate Program

The OIST Graduate School offers an integrated doctoral program leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The degree of PhD is a research postgraduate degree. Such a degree shall be awarded to a candidate who:

- i. meets admission requirements and receives and accepts an offer of admission, and is registered as a full-time PhD student for a minimum of three years and not more than ten years; and
- ii. satisfactorily completes prescribed coursework amounting to at least 30 credits (20 from elective courses, 10 from mandatory requirements); and

- iii. successfully defends a thesis representing the result of the candidate's research, constituting an original contribution to knowledge and containing material worthy of publication.

5.4.3.1 Period of study

The standard period of study is 5 years.

5.4.3.1.1 Minimum period of study

The minimum period of study is stipulated in Article 33 of the University Regulations.

5.4.3.1.2 Extension to the standard period of study

In exceptional circumstances the period of study may be extended beyond the standard period of 5 years. Extensions require approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

5.4.3.1.3 Maximum Enrollment Period

The maximum enrollment period is 10 years, including Personal Time Off. Periods of Non-Study Leave and External Internship Leave are not included in the maximum enrollment period.

5.4.3.2 Academic year and dates of terms

The academic year begins in September each year, and is composed of three terms, with nominally 15 weeks of scheduled teaching in each term.

5.4.3.3 Coursework requirements

The first two years of the integrated 5-year doctoral program comprise a combination of research rotations and coursework, designed to prepare the student for his or her doctoral thesis work in a flexible manner. In the first two years of the program students will undertake an individualized study program constructed from a combination of courses.

5.4.3.4 Qualifying for Progression to PhD Thesis Research

OIST graduate students are eligible for PhD thesis research on submission of a thesis proposal and successfully passing the subsequent examination. In submitting the thesis proposal for examination, students are required to have adequate fundamental knowledge in the field or fields of study relevant to the thesis topic, and to have the ability to organize, apply and convey that knowledge effectively.

5.4.3.5 Appointment of Thesis Supervisor and Thesis Committee

All students are required to have a Thesis Committee, irrespective of the seniority of the Thesis Supervisor, to provide oversight of the thesis research supervision. The Thesis Committee will consist of the Mentor, the Thesis Supervisor, and a Third Committee Member or Internal Co-Supervisor; all selected from OIST

faculty members. If the Co-supervisor is selected from faculty members external to OIST, an additional Thesis Committee member also needs to be selected from among OIST faculty members.

Thesis Supervisors must be full-time faculty members. Other faculty members may only be appointed as Co-supervisor or as a Thesis Committee member. Any exception to the above must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Faculty external to the university may be Co-supervisors provided an institutional agreement exists with the university of the external faculty member. Information about such agreements is available from the Academic Affairs Section.

The student is responsible for nominating the Thesis Supervisor and may suggest names for the other committee members. The members of the Thesis Committee must be nominated and approved before appointment of the Examination Panel for the thesis proposal.

5.4.3.6 PhD Degree Completion

The PhD degree is conferred by the University upon a candidate who has completed the PhD program in accordance with the University Regulations. The candidate's thesis research must constitute original research that makes a significant contribution to scientific knowledge. The degree is not awarded for completion of certain courses, a fixed period of enrollment, or for directed work as a technician. The work for the degree consists of original research and systematic studies that advance knowledge, conducted by the candidate with an appropriate degree of independence. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the ability to communicate the results of their research and scholarship effectively in both oral and written English. The candidate must present their work in a thesis and defend it in an oral examination. A candidate may not submit for examination work that has been included in a thesis or dissertation previously submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for another degree qualification.

5.4.3.6.1 Conferment of Degree

Following the deliberation and resolution of the Curriculum and Examinations Committee (CEC) regarding examination results and the fulfillment of the requirements for program completion and degree conferment, the Graduate School, serving as the Secretariat of the CEC, shall, on behalf of the Chair of the CEC, submit the CEC's resolution to the President for final decision.

Upon receipt of the submission, the President shall make the final decision regarding program completion and conferment of the OIST Doctor of Philosophy degree. The CEC shall report to the Faculty Council the names of those for whom the President has made a final decision on program completion and degree conferment.

The conferment of the doctoral degree shall be reported to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and the thesis abstract and a summary of the thesis examination results shall be made publicly available within three months of the date of conferment.

The full text of the thesis shall be made publicly available within one year of the date of doctoral degree conferment.

5.4.3.6.2 Preclusion Period of Eligibility to a Postdoctoral Position
Appointment to a postdoctoral position at OIST is not permitted for OIST PhD graduates for a period of two years from the date of degree conferral.

5.4.4 Graduation Ceremony

The University holds an annual Graduation Ceremony, to which all eligible PhD graduates from the preceding year are invited. The President will present those graduates in attendance at the ceremony with their degree certificates in the presence of the assembled faculty of the University. Graduates who choose to graduate in absentia will be mentioned at the ceremony and their certificate will be sent to them by mail.

5.4.4.1 Honorary Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The OIST Honorary Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Degree recognizes individuals who have made profound and enduring contributions to science, culture, or improved quality of life in society. Recipients shall be individuals of great integrity, as the choices we make reflect our values as an institution. The Honorary PhD Degree is awarded to the recipient in person at the Graduation Ceremony on the OIST Campus.

5.5 Student Support for OIST PhD Students

The OIST Graduate University is committed to the success of students in the OIST PhD program. Toward this end, OIST offers financial and living support comparable to that offered by other leading research universities.

5.6 Visiting Student Categories

Further to students of the OIST PhD program, OIST also welcomes students who are attending OIST for educational purposes, but not seeking the OIST degree, as Visiting Students. The Graduate School aims to ensure an optimal experience for all students at OIST and provides various kinds of support for students in the following categories:

5.6.1 Special Research Students

Graduate students of other universities, when permitted by their institution (referred to as the “partner institution”), may apply to become a Special Research Student at OIST. Under the terms of an agreement with the partner institution, Special Research Students may receive research guidance at OIST.

5.6.2 Research Interns

Students enrolled at undergraduate or Master's programs in universities, colleges, junior colleges, and vocational schools in Japan or overseas, or graduates of such institutions may undertake educational activity at OIST as a Research Intern. A research internship at OIST provides students with experience working in a research environment under the direction of OIST faculty.

5.6.3 Visiting Research Students

Visiting Research Students are registered students of another institution who wish to undertake a period of research at OIST under the supervision of an OIST faculty member. Visiting Research Students collaborate on a recognized and defined research project.

5.6.4 Credit Seeking Students

Credit Seeking Students are registered students of another university who wish to take one or more courses offered by the OIST Graduate School, or to undertake an administrative internship at OIST, for credit at their home university.

5.6.5 Course Auditors

Members of the OIST community and students of other universities (the latter where a specific agreement exists) may apply to become Course Auditors of specific courses. Course Auditors may attend courses as a normal student. The Graduate School does not award credit or recognition for courses audited.

5.6.6 Junior Research Fellows

Junior Research Fellows are OIST PhD graduates who, with the approval of their former thesis supervisor, may finalize their research project following degree conferral. The maximum duration of a Junior Research Fellowship is 3 months in principle.

5.7 Alumni

Alumni are OIST graduates who have satisfied all academic requirements and successfully obtained their degree.

5.8 Holidays and Leave of Absence for Students

5.8.1 University Holidays

Students are entitled to university holidays as follows:

- i. Saturdays and Sundays; and
- ii. Holidays specified in the Act on National Holidays (Act No. 178 of 1948);
- iii. Year-end and New Year Holidays (from December 29 to January 3 of the following year);
- iv. Any extraordinary holidays deemed necessary and specified by the President

5.8.2 Leave of Absence

Research study in the Graduate School is considered a year-round activity that

continues between teaching terms. A student who wishes to be absent from Okinawa and/or the approved course of study and research, or who proposes to take vacation, is required to submit a written application for leave of absence. There are three types of study-related leave of absence, namely, Personal Time Off, Non-study Leave, and External Internship Leave. Students must seek and receive approval from the Graduate School before going on leave.

5.9 Childbirth Accommodation for Students

The OIST Graduate University promotes diversity and supports balance in work and family life. It recognizes the need to accommodate the demands on students associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and the care of children. The University encourages women to undertake postgraduate education and supports women who decide to have children while at graduate school. It also recognizes the demands on partners who share in the care of a newborn child, on parents who adopt, and foster parents. The Childbirth Accommodation Policy comprises a set of financial and academic measures designed to accommodate these needs, supporting family life during graduate studies.

5.10 Respectful Workplace and Anti-Harassment

The University is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and respectful environment in which all officers, employees, students, and visitors are treated with dignity and respect, in accordance with the Respectful Workplace Policy. The Respectful Workplace Policy is a core value of the University and the University will not tolerate disrespectful communication, discrimination, harassment, or bullying, in any form.