

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.

Offers are made to all qualified candidates without consideration or influence of 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 minorities 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 OIST Graduate University led by the Dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate School’s major role is to provide academic services, student support and administrative support. In addition, the Graduate School collaborates with others in OIST to participate in the Okinawa University Consortium and advance its missions. The Graduate School 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 division tasks and reporting, manages personnel, and facilitates divisional communications both within and outside of the division. It also liaises with other key education stakeholders including faculty and students at OIST. In particular, it provides early detection of challenges that students are experiencing and coordinates intervention measures. For coordination with faculty, the Office of the Dean of the Graduate

School coordinates the Faculty-GS Liaison Committee and assists in communication between the Dean of the Graduate School and Faculty Council and Assembly. Finally, the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School develops relationships with other universities and government entities.

5.2.2. Academic Affairs Section

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

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.

5.2.4. Admissions and Registrar Section

The Admissions and Registrar Section is charged with administering the process of admissions and handling academic records and data.

5.2.5. 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.

5.2.6. External Engagement Section

The External Engagement Section is charged with attracting potential students to OIST, and organizing outreach science and activities to engage alumni who are graduates of our degree programs.

5.3. Committees of the Graduate School

5.3.1. Admissions Committee

The Admissions Committee is a standing committee of the University with delegated authority from the Faculty Assembly to select students for admission to the PhD program. The Admissions Committee is advisory to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Admissions Committee deliberates and advises on matters related to graduate student recruitment and admissions to ensure the recruitment and selection of excellent students. The Admissions Committee has a particular role in the selection of individual candidates for admission to the graduate program. The Admissions Committee reports to the Assembly through the Dean of the Graduate School.

5.3.1.1. Membership of the Admissions 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 Provost, the Dean of Research, Vice Dean of the Graduate School, Manager of the Academic Affairs Section, Manager of the Student Affairs Section, Manager of the Admissions and Registrar Section, Manager of the External Engagement Section, and Manager of the Curriculum and Programs Section are ex-officio members of the Committee. The Admissions and Registrar Section provides administrative support for the Committee.

5.3.1.2. Number of members of the Admissions Committee

The Admissions Committee shall be comprised of twelve (12) members of the Faculty Assembly, including the Dean of Graduate School. .

5.3.1.3. Tenure of membership of the Admissions Committee

Tenure of membership on the Committee shall be three (3) academic years, with four (4) members appointed each year on a rotational basis to ensure experience/expertise is retained within the committee.

5.3.1.4. Chairperson for the Admissions Committee

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

5.3.2. Curriculum and Examinations Committee

The Curriculum and Examinations Committee is a standing committee of the University with delegated authority from the Faculty Assembly to deal with matters related to the curriculum and individual student progress in the PhD program. The Curriculum and Examinations Committee is advisory to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Curriculum and Examinations Committee reports to the Faculty Assembly through the Dean of the Graduate School.

5.3.2.1. Membership of the Curriculum and Examinations 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 Academic Affairs Section, Manager of the Student Affairs Section, Manager of the Admissions and Registrar Section, Manager of the External Engagement Section, and Manager of the Curriculum and Programs Section are ex-officio members of the Committee. The Academic Affairs Section provides administrative support for the Committee.

5.3.2.2. Number of members of the Curriculum and Examinations Committee

The Curriculum and Examinations Committee shall be comprised of twelve (12) members of the Faculty Assembly, including the Dean of Graduate School..

5.3.2.3. Tenure of membership of the Curriculum and Examinations Committee

Tenure of membership on the Committee shall be three (3) academic years, with four (4) members appointed each year on a rotational basis to ensure experience/expertise is retained within the committee.

5.3.2.4. Chairperson for the Curriculum and Examinations Committee

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

5.3.3. Faculty-GS Liaison Committee

The Faculty-GS Liaison Committee is a standing committee of the University with no delegated decision-making authority from the Faculty Assembly. The Committee serves as an information sharing and liaison body between faculty and the Graduate School.

5.3.3.1. Membership of the Faculty-GS Liaison Committee

The Committee consists of two members from the Faculty Council and two other faculty members. The Dean of the Graduate School appoints Committee members. The Vice Dean of the Graduate School, Manager of the Academic Affairs Section, Manager of the Student Affairs Section, Manager of the Admissions and Registrar Section, Manager of the External Engagement Section, and Manager of the Curriculum and Programs Section are ex-officio members of the Committee.

5.3.3.2. Tenure of membership of the Faculty-GS Liaison Committee

Tenure of membership on the Committee shall be up to three (3) academic years, with one (1) or two (2) members appointed each year on a rotational basis to ensure experience/expertise is retained within the committee.

5.3.3.3. Chairperson for the Faculty-GS Liaison 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 15 of the OIST University Rules.

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 25 of the University Rules), 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 35 of the University Rules.

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 Study Leave and Annual Leave. Periods of Non-Study 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 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. 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 that has been previously submitted towards a degree qualification.

5.4.3.6.1. Conferment of Degree

On meeting OIST graduation requirements the secretariat of the Curriculum and Examinations Committee passes to the Faculty Assembly the recommendation to award the degree.

When an OIST doctoral degree is conferred, it shall be reported to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and the abstract of the thesis and the result of the examination shall be publicized within 3 months following the day of the conferment of the doctoral degree.

The entire text of the thesis related to the conferment of the doctoral degree shall be published within one year following the day of the conferment of the doctoral degree; provided.

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 Science

The OIST Honorary Doctor of Science (DSc) Degree recognizes those who have made profound and enduring contributions to science, culture, or improved quality of life in society. It is important that recipients be persons of great integrity, as the choices we make reflect our values as an institution. The Honorary DSc Degree is awarded to the recipient in person at the Graduation Ceremony at the OIST Campus. The Honorary DSc Degree may not be awarded in absentia.

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. Special 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 Special 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

Undergraduate or recently graduated students interested in joining the OIST PhD program 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. Visiting Students

Visiting 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 6 months.

5.6.7. Science Communication Fellows

Science Communication Fellows are engaged in scientific writing in the Media Section of the Communication and Public Relations Division at OIST. Science Communication Fellows are not OIST PhD students.

5.7. Holidays and Leave of Absence for Students

5.7.1. 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

5.7.2. 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, Annual Leave, Study Leave, and Non-study Leave. Students must seek and receive approval from the Graduate School before going on leave.

5.8. 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.

5.9. 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.