Doctor of Medicine
by
Special Regulations

Guide for Current Candidates
and
Regulations for the Degree

November 2021
Your status in the University

In doing the MD by Special Regulations, you do not become a registered student of the University and therefore are not eligible to use University resources other than those available to you as an alumnus. In particular, you are not eligible to apply for remote online access to journals held at the University Library. Candidates should instead ensure that their own research institution provides the necessary research facilities.

The College at which you matriculated for your primary degree will become the College that will present you for conferment of your MD degree.

Supervision

At the time of application you were required to identify a specific adviser/supervisor at the time of developing the proposal. The adviser agreed to be involved in the work throughout, including planning of studies, advice on problems in data collection, methods of data analysis, advice on the writing of the thesis and reading drafts.

The MD Committee recommends regular monthly meeting with the supervisor to keep the research on track and monitor progress.

Thesis Submission

Standard required

The thesis should consist of original work, carried out by the candidate, and set in the context of previous work in the field. The standard expected is that of a PhD. It should be specially composed and must give evidence of independent research, observation and reflection. New discoveries in medicine are not essential, but the substance of the thesis must consist of the candidate’s own analysis, observations and experiments. Compilations from the work of others cannot be accepted. There is no objection to incorporation and use within the thesis of results of work already published by the candidate, provided that full reference is given and reprints supplied if possible.

Statistical advice

Statistical planning by candidates is frequently inadequate. The MD Committee advises candidates to seek expert advice before they embark on their experiments. It is important for candidates to be able to defend the statistical treatment of data in the face of questioning by examiners at the Act

Presentation of original data

Sufficient original data should be incorporated into the thesis for the examiners to be able to gain a clear idea of what original observations and measurements were made in the work. If necessary, numerical data may be put into an appendix. Although it may be difficult to condense large amounts of data into the text or an appendix, the material given should be detailed enough to enable examiners and others to follow the working
out of results from the raw data, and to understand how the conclusions were arrived at. Detailed specimen calculations may be necessary. It is not acceptable, for example, to refer to a statistical computer program without describing the statistical methods used.

**Deadline for submission**

The thesis must be submitted **within 6 years** of being granted approval to proceed, unless given special permission by the Degree Committee (paragraph 8 of the Regulations), on the recommendation of the MD Committee, to delay submission until a later date. It is essential that the work, on submission, is interpreted in the light of the latest developments in the field and that the reference list contains the most recently published work.

**Format**

While not seeking to impose rigid limits, the MD Committee advises candidates that theses should not normally exceed 60,000 words (excluding references, captions and notes), and that many excellent theses are much shorter than this.

It is suggested that the thesis should follow the usual format:

- Short summary/abstract
- Table of contents
- List of abbreviations used
- Acknowledgements
- Introduction – to include a statement of the object of the research and a critical review of earlier work on the subject.
- Methods – these need description once only and should not appear in the legends of figures and tables. Sufficient detail should be given to allow the work to be repeated by others. Pertinent details of apparatus and equipment should be given where appropriate, in addition to the maker's name and the country of origin of equipment.
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References – candidates should use either the Harvard (author-date) or Vancouver (reference by number) system of referencing. The system used must be consistent throughout. Candidates are referred to *The Cambridge Handbook of Copy-editing*, Cambridge University Press. All quoted papers should have been read in the original. If this has been impracticable owing to language difficulties or inaccessibility, a note of this should be added to the reference in the bibliography.
- Appendices – large numbers of observations of individual results are best presented in an appendix.
In a separate appendix candidates must state, with details, the following:

(i) whether the work was carried out in an institution such as a hospital or university department, a laboratory or in general practice;

(ii) how much of the work was done personally or with the help of others (specify the nature of any help);

(iii) if the work was not entirely independent, under whose supervision or with whose collaboration it was done;

(iv) whether any of the work referred to in the thesis has been published previously by the candidate; if so, please supply a list of the papers concerned and, if possible, supply reprints;

(v) details of submission to, and approval from, an Ethical Committee (where appropriate); and a statement that human experiments were performed with the understanding and consent of each subject.

**Ethical considerations**

The MD Committee wishes to remind candidates that the design and conduct of research work proposed for the MD degree should conform to high standards of medical ethics. It is advisable to seek the approval of a local ethics committee where appropriate.

**Animal experiments:** candidates must provide a full description of their anaesthetic and surgical procedures. They must also provide evidence that they took adequate steps to ensure that animals did not suffer unnecessarily at any stage of the experiments.

**Human experiments:** theses describing experiments on human subjects involving procedures that are not therapeutic and carry a significant risk of harm must include (in an appendix) a statement that the experiments were performed with the understanding and consent of each subject. We draw candidates' attention to the code of ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki).

The MD Committee reserves the right to make a judgement on the ethical propriety of studies.

**Submission of the thesis**

Three soft-bound copies of your thesis should be submitted together with three loose-leaf copies of the summary to:

The Degree Committee, Faculty of Clinical Medicine
Postgraduate Education and Clinical Academic Training Section
School of Clinical Medicine
Box 111
Cambridge BioMedical Campus
Cambridge CB2 0SP.

However, during the current COVID restrictions, we are only accepting electronic copies, which should be sent to md-admin@medschl.cam.ac.uk

You should retain a copy of the thesis for your own use at the Act (viva).
Examination procedure

In the first instance, the Degree Committee will refer each thesis to be examined to the MD Committee, who may refer it to one or more referees for their opinion and advice before deciding whether the thesis constitutes prima facie a qualification for the MD degree.

If, on the basis of this advice, the Degree Committee decides that the work does not constitute prima facie a qualification for the degree, no Examiners will be appointed, and a resolution of the Degree Committee to that effect, with the names of those present and voting on either side, shall be sent to the Student Registry, which shall communicate the decision to the candidate.

If the advice is that the work does constitute prima facie a qualification for the degree, the work will be sent to two Examiners, appointed by the Degree Committee on the recommendation of the MD Committee. Each Examiner will make an independent report to the Degree Committee on the thesis. If the Examiners do not agree in their recommendations or if for any other reason the Degree Committee or the Student Registry need a further opinion or opinions on the merit of the work submitted, the Degree Committee may appoint an additional Examiner or additional Examiners. You will be informed who your examiners are when you are sent details of the arrangements for the Act (viva).

The Act (viva voce examination)

The examination is completed by “the Act” – an oral examination on the subject of the thesis and the general field of knowledge within which it falls. This is normally held in Cambridge at the Clinical School. It is conducted by the two Examiners appointed by the Degree Committee and chaired by the Assessor (or a Deputy if necessary). The Chair will report to the MD Committee on the outcome of the Act.

The Examiners jointly examine the candidate viva voce on questions connected with the work submitted as well as on other medical subjects and sign a joint certificate of the result. If the Examiners do not agree in their recommendations or if for any other reason the Degree Committee or the Board need a further opinion or opinions on the merit of the work submitted, the Degree Committee may appoint an additional Examiner or additional Examiners.

The Degree Committee will consider your Examiners’ reports and, if they are satisfied that the work you submitted and your performance in the Act are of the requisite standard for the degree, you will be notified accordingly by the Student Registry. It is normal for this to be conditional on completion of minor or more substantial corrections. If you have not reached the required standard the Degree Committee may permit you to submit a revised thesis.

Corrections following the Act

The Student Registry will give you a maximum of 12 months to complete any corrections following the Act and to submit your corrected thesis for approval. Unless there are clear mitigating circumstances, candidates failing to meet this requirement will not be permitted to submit thereafter or be approved for the degree. Where only minor
corrections are required, it is expected that candidates will aim to have these completed **within 3 months** if possible. For those candidates who are required to undertake further data collection or experimental work, or to make very substantial changes to the text, the completion time will be determined by the Degree Committee on an individual basis and communicated to the Student Registry.

**Hardbound corrected thesis**

Before the degree can be finally approved, you are required to submit 2 hardbound copies of the corrected thesis to the Student Registry for deposition in the University and Medical Libraries.

**Binding:** dark-blue buckram, with the title and candidate's name only on the spine. The title page inside the thesis should state: ‘A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine of the University of Cambridge’ followed by the thesis title; your full name (first names – no initials – and surname), Cambridge degrees and Cambridge College; and the date when submitted for examination.

The two bound copies should be sent or delivered to the Graduate Examinations Section, Student Registry, University of Cambridge, The Student Services Centre, New Museums Site, Bene’t Street, Cambridge, CB2 3PT.

You are also encouraged to deposit digital versions of your thesis on DSpace@Cambridge, which is the institutional repository of the University of Cambridge.

**Conferment of the degree**

Successful candidates will be notified by the Student Registry, and asked to contact the Praelector at their College about the conferring of their degree.

**The Postgraduate Education and Clinical Academic Training Office** is administrative support for the MD degree.

Secretary to the MD Committee is Ms Jane Muir

[md-admin@medschl.cam.ac.uk](mailto:md-admin@medschl.cam.ac.uk)

**Data Protection – How we use your personal information**

Go to this link for all you need to know about Data Protection

DOCTOR of MEDICINE (MD): SPECIAL REGULATIONS

1. In order to qualify for the degree of Doctor of Medicine a candidate shall be required to give proof, in accordance with the provisions of these regulations, of a significant original contribution in the science, art, or history of medicine.

2. Any person may apply in accordance with Regulation 5 of these regulations to become a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Medicine who

   either (a) holds a primary degree of the University,

   or (b) has been admitted to

   (i) some office in the University or to a Headship or a Fellowship of a College, and

   (ii) to the degree of Master of Arts under Statute B, III, 6 or to a degree of the University by incorporation,

   and also holds

   either a medical degree giving entitlement to provisional or full registration with the General Medical Council,

   or a degree recognized by that Council for the purpose of full registration,

   or a medical degree approved by the M.D. Committee for the purpose of candidature.

No person whose candidature has been approved under Regulation 5 shall submit a thesis or any other work until four years have elapsed since he or she was admitted

   either to the degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery,

   or to the degree of Bachelor of Surgery under Regulation 5 of the special regulations for the conferment of the degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery,

   or to a medical degree of another university as defined above.

3. A person shall not be eligible to proceed to the M.D. Degree under these regulations if he or she has been approved for the M.D. Degree under the regulations requiring registration as a Graduate Student.

4. A graduate of the University who has been examined for the M.D. Degree under the regulations requiring registration as a Graduate Student, but has not been approved for the M.D. Degree, may become a candidate under these regulations after a period of not less than five years from the date of submitting a thesis or a revised thesis, as the case may be, for the M.D. Degree.

5. A person who wishes to become a candidate for the M.D. Degree under these regulations shall submit an application to the M.D. Committee. The application shall specify:

   (a) the applicant’s proposed subject of study or research, including a plan of the work to be undertaken and an account of the methods to be used;

   (b) the place where the work is to be undertaken;

   (c) the name of a member of the Faculty in which the research is to be carried out who has agreed to advise the candidate on the research project specified;

   (d) the method of financing the work;

   (e) a letter of support for the application from the intended adviser and Head of her or his Department;
an application fee as specified in the Schedule to these regulations.

6. The M.D. Committee may refer the proposal to one or more referees for their opinion before deciding to approve, reject, or suggest some modification to the applicant’s proposal. A referee appointed for this purpose will receive a fee as set out in the Schedule. The Assessor shall communicate the decision of the M.D. Committee to the applicant. If the proposal is rejected, all but £500 of the application fee shall be returned to the candidate.

7. The examination for the degree of M.D. under the Special Regulations shall consist of:
(a) the submission of a thesis embodying the results of the candidate’s study or research, which shall be submitted in accordance with the provisions of Regulations 8 and 9;
(b) an oral examination (‘the Act’) on the subject of the thesis and the general field of knowledge within which it falls.

By special permission of the M.D. Committee, candidates may submit with the thesis published work which they wish the Examiners to consider; such work may be considered by the Examiners at their discretion.

8. A candidate shall submit to the Degree Committee for the Faculty of Clinical Medicine, not later than six years after the date of such approval under Regulation 6, unless given special permission by the Degree Committee to delay submission until a later date:
(a) three copies of the thesis, in a form recommended by the M.D. Committee and approved by the Degree Committee;
(b) two copies of a summary of about 300 words in length;
(c) two copies of any published work which the candidate wishes to submit under Regulation 7.

9. In submitting their theses, candidates shall state, generally in a preface and specifically in notes or in a bibliography, the sources from which their information is derived, the extent to which they have availed themselves of the work of others, and the portions of the thesis which are claimed as original. They shall also be required to declare that the thesis submitted is not substantially the same as any that they may have submitted for another degree or for a diploma or similar qualification at this or any other university. A thesis, apart from quotations, shall be written in English. The Degree Committee shall have power to specify a maximum length for theses, in consultation with the M.D. Committee.

10. The Degree Committee shall refer each application to the M.D. Committee, who may refer it to one or more referees for their opinion and advice before deciding that the thesis constitutes prima facie a qualification for the degree. A referee so appointed shall receive a fee as specified in the Schedule to these regulations. If such a person is subsequently appointed an Examiner, the fee shall form part of the fee due to her or him as an Examiner.

11. If the Degree Committee, having been advised by the M.D. Committee, decide that the work submitted does not constitute prima facie a qualification for the degree, and no Examiners are to be appointed, a resolution of the Committee to that effect, with the names of those present and voting on either side, shall be communicated to the Student Registry, which shall communicate the decision to the candidate. In such a case all but £600 out of the fee paid by the applicant under Regulation 5 shall be returned.

12. Each thesis judged under Regulation 10 to constitute prima facie a qualification for the degree shall be referred to two Examiners, appointed by the Degree Committee on the recommendation of the M.D. Committee. Each Examiner shall make an independent report to the Degree Committee on the thesis. If the Examiners do not agree in their recommendations or if for any other reason the Degree Committee or the Student Registry need a further opinion or opinions on the merit of the work submitted, the Degree Committee may appoint an additional Examiner or additional Examiners, provided that not more than one additional Examiner shall be appointed without leave of the Student Registry. Each additional Examiner so appointed shall make an independent report on the thesis to the Degree Committee. Each
Examiner shall receive a fee and shall, if appropriate, be entitled to claim travelling expenses and a subsistence allowance as specified in the Schedule.

13. The Act shall be conducted by the two Examiners appointed under Regulation 12 and chaired by the Assessor, or her or his deputy. The Examiners shall jointly examine the candidate *viva voce* on questions connected with the work submitted as well as on other medical subjects and sign a joint certificate of the result. If the Examiners do not agree in their recommendations or if for any other reason the Degree Committee or the Board need a further opinion or opinions on the merit of the work submitted, the Degree Committee may appoint an additional Examiner or additional Examiners, provided that not more than one additional Examiner shall be appointed without leave of the Board. Each additional Examiner so appointed shall make an independent report on the thesis to the Degree Committee.

14. If a candidate fails to satisfy the Examiners in the oral examination, the Degree Committee may permit the candidate to be re-examined by the same Examiners. Permission so given shall be communicated to the Student Registry and shall not be given on more than one occasion. Each Examiner who takes part in an examination under this regulation shall be paid an additional fee as specified in the Schedule in addition to any fees to which he or she may be entitled under Regulation 12, and may also claim travelling expenses in accordance with the provisions of that regulation.

15. The Student Registry shall be the deciding authority on all recommendations for the award of the degree. If, after considering the reports of the Examiners on a candidate’s thesis and on her or his performance in the oral examination, the Degree Committee are satisfied that the work submitted by the candidate and her or his performance in the Act are of the requisite standard for the degree, a resolution of the Committee to that effect, with the names of those present and voting on either side, shall be communicated to the Student Registry, together with the reports of the Examiners. If the Board, after receiving such communication, at a meeting at which not less than five members of the Board are present, resolve that the candidate be approved for the degree, the Secretary of the Board shall publish a notice of the candidate’s approval for the award of the degree.

16. If, after considering the reports of the Examiners of a thesis, the Degree Committee are of the opinion that a candidate’s thesis is not of the requisite standard for the degree, they may recommend to the Student Registry that the candidate be permitted to submit a revised thesis. The communication conveying such a recommendation shall contain the names of those present and voting on either side, and shall be accompanied by the reports of the Examiners. The Board may permit a candidate to submit a revised thesis on not more than one occasion.

17. If, after considering the reports of the Examiners, the Degree Committee are of the opinion that a candidate’s work is not of the requisite standard for the degree (and if they do not recommend that the candidate be allowed to submit a revised thesis) their resolution to that effect, with the names of those present and voting on either side, shall be communicated to the Student Registry, together with the reports of the Examiners. The Secretary of the Board shall communicate this decision to the candidate.

18. If a candidate’s application for the degree under these regulations fails, he or she may reapply on one occasion only, after a period of not less than five years from the date of the original application.

19. A candidate whose application for the M.D. Degree under these regulations is not approved shall not be eligible to be approved for the M.Sc. Degree.

20. No candidate for the degree shall be present at the deliberations either of the Degree Committee or of the Student Registry in respect of her or his own candidature.

21. No fee shall be payable on admission to the degree.

22. All the thesiis submitted by candidates under these regulations who have been approved for the M.D. Degree in each academical year shall be considered by the M.D. Committee for any Prize, Medal, or
other emolument that is awarded for work done by a candidate for the degree; the Committee may be advised by the Assessor in this matter.

**SCHEDULE**

*Payments to Examiners*

- To a referee whose opinion is sought on the proposal (Regulation 6) or on a thesis (Regulation 10): £45.
- To an Examiner for examining and reporting on a thesis and for taking part in the conduct of an oral examination (Regulation 12): £165.
- To an additional Examiner not participating in an oral examination (Regulation 13 or 16): £100.
- To the Assessor: £45.
- To an Examiner conducting an additional oral examination (Regulation 14): £42.

Each External Examiner shall receive in addition travelling expenses, in accordance with Regulation 12 of the regulations for the Ph.D., M.Sc., and M.Litt. Degrees.

*Application fee* (Regulation 5): £1,866.