

**Medical Sciences Board**

**Course approved on behalf of Education Committee 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023;  
Regulations approved 23rd February 2024**

**Title of programme**

Degree of Doctor of Medicine

**Brief note about nature of change:** Introduction of a new variable-intensity Doctor of Medicine degree for locally employed clinicians, which is equivalent to the standards expected for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Location of change in Examination Regulations**

In Examination Regulations <https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/>

New course exam regulations to be published.

**Effective date**

**For students starting from 2023/2024 academic year**

**Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine****§1. Degree of Doctor of Medicine**

1. Any person who has been admitted to the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine by the Medical Sciences Board (hereafter 'the Board') and who has satisfied the conditions prescribed by these regulations may supplicate for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine.
2. The Board has the power to remove temporarily or permanently the name of a Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine from the Register of Students. This power shall include cases where a student has been found guilty of gross misconduct by their employer or where a student no longer holds full registration with the UK General Medical Council or otherwise where a student's fitness to practise medicine is in question.

3. Students for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine shall be regarded as part-time students within the regulations and shall not be required to keep statutory residence, but must attend in Oxford for such instruction as the Board shall require.
4. Students for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine who are not graduates of the University may wear a long gown of black stuff, whose shape and ornaments shall be in accordance with a pattern approved by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors and preserved in the University Offices, Wellington Square.
5. The provisions of the General Regulations Governing Research Degrees (§3, §5, §6 and §7) regarding the supervision of Probationer Research Students, suspension and removal of graduate students from the Register of Students, reinstatement to the Register of Students, students with disabilities and appeals, and the examination of Graduate Research Students, shall apply, provided that, in all cases, 'Doctor of Medicine' shall be substituted for 'Doctor of Philosophy'.
6. The provisions of the General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (§5) regarding the supervision of Students for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy shall apply, provided that, in all cases, 'Doctor of Medicine' shall be substituted for 'Doctor of Philosophy'.

## **§2. Admission of Candidates**

1. Any person intending to work for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine must apply in the first instance for admission as a Probationer Research Student, except as provided in the appropriate regulation. The Board may admit any person as a Probationer Research Student provided that the Board is satisfied:
  - (i) that the candidate has achieved a medical degree,
  - (ii) that the candidate holds full registration with the UK General Medical Council,
  - (iii) that the candidate holds a contract of employment at Specialty Trainee grade 1 or above with the University of Oxford, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, or another organisational unit of the NHS approved by the Board for this purpose, or in a Primary Care setting within Oxfordshire,
  - (iv) that the candidate is well-fitted and well-qualified to conduct work for a research degree,
  - (v) that the branch of study proposed by the candidate is one which may profitably be pursued under the Board,
  - (vi) that supervision will be available, and
  - (vii) that the department under whose aegis the research is to be conducted has adequate facilities to enable the research to be undertaken.
2. Applications for admission shall be forwarded to the Registrar, according to such timetables as the Education Committee shall determine. The Registrar shall be responsible for transmitting the candidate's application to the Board, together with such evidence of their fitness to undertake the proposed study as may be required by the Board. All applications shall be accompanied by:

- (i) a completed online application form;
  - (ii) a statement of not more than 1,500 words outlining the proposed scope of the research to be undertaken, which should be in synergy with the candidate's clinical practice, and a provisional thesis title;
3. The Board shall determine for each candidate appropriate timescales for transfer to the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine, confirmation of status, and submission for examination, after due consideration of their clinical responsibilities.
4. Upon application for admission to the status of Probationer Research Student the candidate may request that work undertaken in collaboration with the proposed DM supervisor normally not more than 12 months prior to admission to the status of Probationer Research Student be recognised as part of their work towards the Degree of Doctor of Medicine. The Board shall assess such prior work to consider whether it is substantially pertinent to, and coherent with, the student's proposed DM study, and determine whether the timescales for transfer to the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine, confirmation of status, and submission for examination should be shortened. The Board may appoint independent assessors for this purpose.
5. Candidates may in exceptional circumstances apply for permission to work for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine with the intention of submitting as their thesis a series of linked papers (thesis by publication) in accordance with §7, cl. 5 of these regulations. The Board shall admit such a candidate directly to the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine provided that, in addition to meeting the conditions of suitability set out in cl. 1 of this section, the Board is satisfied:
  - (i) that the proposed works to be included in the thesis are of sufficient quality,
  - (ii) that the candidate is of sufficient academic standing.
6. Candidates proposing to submit a thesis by publication shall additionally provide a list of the works proposed to be included, details of their publication, and a statement on whether any part of the work to be submitted has previously been accepted for a degree in this University or elsewhere. A candidate who submits work that has been produced in collaboration shall state in respect of each item the extent of their own contribution. This statement must be certified by each of the senior and primary authors (where they are not the candidate) in the case of each piece of collaborative work submitted. The Board may appoint independent assessors to provide a report on the quality of the work.
7. Where permission is granted for submission of a thesis by publication, the Board may shorten the timescales for confirmation of status and submission for examination.
8. No person shall be admitted as a Probationer Research Student (or, in the case of candidates permitted to submit a thesis by publication, to the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine) unless they are also a member of a college, and unless the application for admission has the approval of their college. The Registrar shall forward the application to the candidate's college or to the college to which the candidate wishes to apply for membership, as appropriate; and admission by the Board shall be conditional upon admission by a college.

9. It shall be the duty of the Registrar to keep a Register of those admitted to the status of Probationer Research Student and to the status of Student for the Doctor of Medicine.
10. The Board may grant a student suspension from the Register up to a maximum of six terms following procedures determined by the Education Committee by regulation.
11. The Board may deprive a student of their status following procedures determined by the Education Committee by regulation.
12. Exceptionally, it shall be open to a candidate whose name has been removed from the Register of Students to apply to the Board for reinstatement to the Register as a Probationer Research Student. The application should have the support of their college and supervisor, and such reinstatement fee as may from time to time be prescribed by Council should be paid. Permission for reinstatement to the Register of Students may be granted by the Board provided that:
  - (i) the candidate holds full registration with the UK General Medical Council;
  - (ii) typically, the candidate holds a contract of employment at Specialty Trainee grade 1 or above with the University of Oxford, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, or another organisational unit of the NHS approved by the Board for this purpose, or in a Primary Care setting within Oxfordshire;
  - (iii) no more than twenty-four months have passed since the student's name was removed from the Register; and
  - (iv) the number of terms the candidate spent with the status of a Probationer Research Student did not exceed ten terms.
13. It shall be open to a candidate whose name has been removed from the Register of Students to apply to the Board for reinstatement as a Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine. The application should have the support of their college and supervisor, and such reinstatement fee as may from time to time be prescribed by Council should be paid. Permission for reinstatement to the Register of Students may be granted by the Board provided that:
  - (i) the candidate holds full registration with the UK General Medical Council;
  - (ii) typically, the candidate holds a contract of employment at Specialty Trainee grade 1 or above with the University of Oxford, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, or another organisational unit of the NHS approved by the Board for this purpose, or in a Primary Care setting within Oxfordshire,
  - (iii) no more than twenty-four months have passed since the student's name was removed from the Register; and
  - (iv) the number of terms the candidate spent with the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine did not exceed twenty-seven terms (this limit includes any time spent with the status of Probationer Research Student before admission to the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine), or twelve terms in the case of a candidate permitted to submit a thesis by publication.

14. In exceptional circumstances, a candidate who is not able to apply for reinstatement within the provisions above may make an application to Council's Education Committee for reinstatement to the Register of Students as a Probationer Research Student or as a Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine as appropriate. Such candidates must meet the requirements for reinstatement by the Board and in addition must provide a statement explaining why it is reasonable for the Education Committee to permit their reinstatement and outlining the circumstances that have prevented an earlier application for reinstatement. For such applications, the Education Committee will consider the length of time since the candidate's name was on the Register of Students, the seriousness of the causes for the delay, and the views of the student's department, supervisor and college.

### **§3. Requirements of Probationer Research Students**

1. Students holding the status of Probationer Research Student shall be required to pursue their course of study for a minimum of four terms, and a maximum of eight terms, prior to an application for transfer of status, save where prior work has been recognised by the Board as part of the work for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine, in which cases the minimum shall be one term. No student may apply to the Board for the appointment of examiners unless their supervisor has certified that the student has fulfilled the requirements laid down by the Board.
2. Any student may, with the permission of the Board, alter the subject of research approved by the Board, provided that the conditions of suitability set out in §2. cl. 1 of these regulations continue to be met. In such cases the date of the student's admission for all the purposes of this section shall remain unchanged, unless the Board shall determine otherwise.
3. A student may hold the status of Probationer Research Student for up to eight terms, including the term in which they were admitted.
4. A candidate whose first application for transfer to DM status is not approved shall be permitted to make one further application and shall be granted an extension of time for one term if this is necessary for the purposes of making the application.
5. Subject to the approval of the student's college and the Board, and for good cause, a student may be permitted to hold the status of Probationer Research Student (prior to the first application for transfer of status) for a further one to four terms. A first application for transfer of status must have been submitted and assessed within the twelve-term limit of PRS status. Any application outside those limits (other than in cl. 4 above) must be approved by or on behalf of Education Committee.
6. A Probationer Research Student shall cease to hold such status if:
  - (i) (a) they have not gained admission to another status within eight terms of admission to the status of Probationer Research Student, and  
(b) they have not been given approval under cl. 5 above to hold Probationer Research Student status for a further one to four terms;
  - (ii) they have failed to gain admission to DM status after the two transfer applications allowed under cl. 4 above;

- (iii) the Board shall in accordance with the provisions set down in the General Regulations Governing Research Degrees §5, and after consultation with the student's college and supervisor, have deprived the student of such status;
- (iv) the Board shall in accordance with §1. cl. 2 of these regulations remove the student's name from the Register of Students.

#### **§4. Admission to the Status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine**

1. The following may be admitted to the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine:
  - (i) a member of the University who, having held the status of Probationer Research Student under the provisions of these regulations, has successfully completed the relevant qualifying test for admission to DM status prescribed in clauses 6 to 14 of this section;
  - (ii) a candidate permitted to submit a thesis by publication under §2. cl. 5 of these regulations.
2. Candidates qualified under cl. 1 (i) of this section may apply for admission as Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine to the Board through the Registrar. Such applications shall be accompanied by:
  - (i) a statement from the supervisor containing their view of the proposed subject for a thesis and of the readiness of the candidate to undertake advanced research. A supervisor may delay an early application in the interests of the student, but must enable students to apply for their assessment within the prescribed time limits;
  - (ii) a statement of support for the application from the candidate's college;
  - (iii) a statement of the subject of the proposed thesis and details of the manner in which the candidate proposes to treat it;
  - (iv) a statement confirming that the student has successfully completed any required research integrity training;
  - (v) a completed Training Needs Analysis detailing the skills training that they have undertaken and planned;
  - (vi) a report of no more than 5,000 words which should include an abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, any appendices, and future plans including a proposed timetable for completion. This is a maximum word limit, exclusive of tables and references. Candidates will not be penalised for submitting reports of shorter length, so long as they include sufficient material to merit admission. However, if the maximum word limit is exceeded the report may be returned to the candidate for amendment.
3. Applications shall be assessed by two assessors appointed by the Board, neither of whom shall normally be the candidate's supervisor. The process of assessment must always include an interview with the applicant. Upon completion of their assessment of the candidate's work, the assessors shall make a recommendation as to whether the application for transfer to DM status

should be granted. In each case the assessors shall make a reasoned written report to the Board in support of their recommendation.

4. The Board shall consider the candidate's application together with the material supplied in accordance with clauses 2 and 3 above. No application for transfer shall be granted unless the assessors shall have certified and the Board is satisfied that the candidate is capable of carrying out advanced research, and that the subject of the thesis and the manner of its treatment proposed by the candidate are acceptable; and unless the department under whose aegis the research is to be conducted has adequate facilities to enable the research to be undertaken.
5. Subject to the approval of the Education Committee, the Board shall have power to determine by regulation what other test or condition, if any, it may require before approving admission to DM status. The Board shall be empowered, without further authority, to require from the supervisor any further confidential report on an applicant's suitability to pursue research towards the DM.
6. It shall be the duty of the Registrar to submit any application made under these provisions to the Board, and to inform the candidate of the outcome as soon as may be.
7. A candidate whose first application for transfer to DM status is not approved shall be permitted to make one further application, following the procedures laid down in clauses 2-6 above, and shall be granted an extension of time of one term if this is necessary for the purposes of making the application.
8. An applicant who transfers to the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine shall be reckoned as having held that status from the time they were admitted to their previous status unless the Board shall determine otherwise.
9. The interview required under cl. 3 of this section shall be held in Oxford in a suitable university or college building, unless the Board gives special permission for it to be held at some other place. Such permission shall only be granted where the applicant and both the assessors have agreed in writing to the proposed arrangements.
10. Application may be made to the Board for special permission to hold the interview required under cl. 3 of this section using audiovisual electronic communication. Special permission may be granted for any or all of the applicant and assessors to take part in the interview using audiovisual electronic communication. The Board may approve the application where:
  - (i) the proposed arrangements are acceptable to both assessors and to the applicant, all of whom have agreed to them in writing;
  - (ii) it is content to bear any additional costs of the necessary arrangements;
  - (iii) the interview takes place according to the protocol approved by the Education Committee;
  - (iv) in the event of any technical or other problems, the validity of the process used to conduct the interview and to determine the outcome will be decided by the Proctors.

## **§5. Confirmation of Status as a Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine**

1. A candidate who has been admitted to the status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine must, not later than the eighteenth term or normally earlier than the sixth term after that in which they were initially admitted to the status of a Probationer Research Student, or the eighth and fourth terms respectively in the case of a candidate permitted to submit a thesis by publication, complete the assessment process prescribed by the Board for confirmation of their status as a DM Student. The Board may, for good reason, and with the support of the student's college, permit a candidate to defer for a maximum of three terms their application for confirmation of status. All Students for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine must have their status confirmed before making an application for the appointment of examiners. The Board strongly advises candidates to apply for confirmation of status a minimum of one term before they intend to submit their thesis.
2. Candidates applying for confirmation of their status shall submit their application to the Board, through the Registrar; and such applications shall be accompanied by:
  - (i) a statement from the supervisor containing their view of the candidate's progress towards confirmation of status. A supervisor may delay an early application in the interests of the student, but must enable students to apply for their assessment within the prescribed time limits;
  - (ii) a statement of support for the application from the candidate's college;
  - (iii) a statement confirming that the student has successfully completed any required research integrity training;
  - (iv) a completed Training Needs Analysis detailing the skills training that the student has undertaken;
  - (v) a full contents list for the thesis, including the milestones of any remaining work to be undertaken, and dates for the submission of draft chapters to the supervisor(s) for comment (or, in the case of a candidate permitted to submit a thesis by publication, a report of no more than 2,500 words on the work undertaken since registration, including a comprehensive outline of the research topic, details of progress made, and the anticipated timetable for submission of the thesis).
3. The Board shall, subject to the approval of the Education Committee, determine by regulation any other conditions which a student must fulfil before their status may be confirmed. The process of assessment must always include an interview with the candidate. Candidates shall be required to deliver a formal, oral presentation of their work. The presentation will be attended by two assessors who are deemed to have the appropriate expertise to comment on the content of the project. The assessors will be appointed by the candidate's department; neither assessor will have had direct supervisory involvement with the student. Following the presentation, the assessors will conduct an interview with the candidate.
4. The assessors will report to the Board on the candidate's suitability for confirmation of DM status. This report will be based on the information provided by the candidate in accordance with cl. 2 above in conjunction with their presentation and interview. In cases where confirmation of status is not recommended the assessors will attach a short written report detailing where the work submitted falls below the standard required.



5. A candidate whose first application for confirmation of their status is not approved shall be permitted to make one further application following the procedures laid down in this section normally within one term of the original application, and shall be granted an extension of time for one term if this is necessary for the purposes of making the application.
6. A Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine shall cease to hold such status unless it has been confirmed within eighteen terms of their admission to that status or within a maximum of twenty-one terms where deferral has been approved in accordance with cl. 1 of this section, or within eight and eleven terms respectively in the case of a candidate permitted to submit a thesis by publication.
7. The interview required under cl. 3 of this section shall be held in Oxford in a suitable university or college building, unless the Board gives special permission for it to be held at some other place. Such permission shall only be granted where the candidate and the assessors have agreed in writing to the proposed arrangements.
8. Application may be made to the Board for special permission to hold the interview required under cl. 3 of this section using audiovisual electronic communication. Special permission may be granted for any or all of the candidate and assessors to take part in the interview using audiovisual electronic communication. The Board may approve the application where:
  - (i) the proposed arrangements are acceptable to the assessors and to the candidate, all of whom have agreed to them in writing;
  - (ii) it is content to bear any additional costs of the necessary arrangements;
  - (iii) the interview takes place according to the protocol approved by the Education Committee;
  - (iv) in the event of any technical or other problems, the validity of the process used to conduct the interview and to determine the outcome will be decided by the Proctors.

## **§6. Requirements for Students for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine**

1. A Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine shall be required to pursue their course of study for a minimum of six terms, save where prior work has been recognised by the Board as part of the work for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine in accordance with §2, cl. 4 of these regulations, in which cases the minimum shall be three terms. No student may apply to Board for the appointment of examiners unless their supervisor has certified that the student has fulfilled the requirements for laid down by the Board.
2. If a Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine has held that status for twenty-four terms, or nine terms in the case of a candidate permitted to submit a thesis by publication, but has been prevented by exceptional circumstances from completing their thesis, the Board shall have power to grant an extension of time for a period or periods, not exceeding three terms in all. Applications for such extension of time shall be made through the Registrar not later than the term in which the student is due to apply for permission to supplicate.
3. A Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine shall cease to hold that status if:
  - (i) they have been refused permission to supplicate for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine; or

- (ii) the Board shall in accordance with §1, cl. 2 or cl. 5 of these regulations have deprived the student of such status; or
- (iii) they have been transferred under the relevant provisions to another status; or
- (iv) they have failed to submit their thesis within twenty-four terms or within such further extension of time as may have been granted by the Board.

## **§7. Examination of Students for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine**

1. A Student for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine who has fulfilled the requirements set out in §6 of these regulations and whose status has not expired may apply to the Board for the appointment of examiners and for leave to supplicate for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine.
2. Such applications should be made to the Board through the Registrar. They shall include:
  - (i) a certificate from the supervisor that the student has pursued their course of study in accordance with the provisions of §6 of these regulations;
  - (ii) a statement by the candidate of what part, if any, of the thesis has already been accepted, or is concurrently being submitted, for any degree or diploma or certificate or other qualification in this University or elsewhere;
  - (iii) a statement by the candidate that the thesis is their own work, except where otherwise indicated.
3. The supervisor shall consult with the candidate concerning possible examiners, and forward to the board the names of suggested examiners together with details of any special considerations which the candidate wishes to make known about any potential examiners.
4. The provisions of the General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (§7, clauses 4-13) regarding the examination of Students for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy shall apply, provided that, in all cases, 'Doctor of Medicine' shall be substituted for 'Doctor of Philosophy'. In addition to the criteria enumerated in §7, cl. 6 of the General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, examiners for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine must also include in their report a statement that:
  - (i) the thesis embodies original observations on either clinical or experimental material.
5. A candidate who has been granted permission by the Board to submit a thesis by publication may submit for examination a thesis comprised of a series of linked papers published at least twelve months before the date of submission. Submission of published works as a thesis in this manner shall be permitted only when there is evidence of outstanding quality and a substantial body of original research in the scientific papers intended for submission. A thesis by publication must conform to the following:
  - (i) papers should relate directly to the candidate's approved field of study;

- (ii) papers must be accompanied by a general introduction and a general conclusion and the thesis must form a continuous theme;
  - (iii) all matters of copyright must be addressed before a paper's inclusion;
  - (iv) multi-authored papers are acceptable if the candidate can both defend the paper in full and provide a statement of authorship, agreed by all authors, that certifies the extent of the candidate's own contribution. It is expected that the candidate will be a lead contributor, rather than a minor author, on at least some of the papers;
  - (v) there is no minimum, or maximum, number of papers that may be included and it will remain a matter for the examiners to conclude whether the contributions are equivalent to that which would be expected of a standard thesis by research.
6. The word limit for theses submitted for the Doctor of Medicine is 50,000 words. In exceptional circumstance, permission to exceed this limit may be requested from the Medical Sciences Board.

### **Explanatory Notes**

Following the University review of Higher Degrees, it was agreed that the then Doctor of Medicine be removed as a Higher Degree and referred to the Medical Sciences Division to determine its future. A completely revised Doctor of Medicine degree was developed and approved, as a flexible, variable-intensity doctoral-level programme, open to applications from medically qualified candidates registered with the UK General Medical Council, and holding a contract of employment at ST1 level or above with the NHS or a Primary Care setting geographically close to or within Oxfordshire. In furtherance of an important strategic priority for the Medical Sciences Division, the new DM will open up opportunities in support of clinical academic careers.