

BMU Graduate Education Policy 2023

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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	. 150
2.	Objective	. 150
3.	Policy Purpose	. 150
4.	Scope	. 150
5.	Policy statement	. 150
6.	Definitions	. 150
7.	Responsibilities	. 150
8.	Policy Implementation Procedure / Process	. 150
9.	Policy Implementation Date	. 150
10.	Revision / Modification	. 150

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Objective
- 3. Policy Purpose
- 4. Scope
- 5. Policy statement
- 6. Definitions
- 7. Responsibilities
- 8. Policy Implementation Procedure / Process Stages/steps under a separate sub-heading
- 9. Policy Implementation Date
- 10. Revision / Modification



BAQAI MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE EDUCATION POLICY

Version 3

2023

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VERSION – 3

1. SCOPE

This policy extend to all the Faculties/Departments of Baqai Medical University offering Ph.D. and/or M.Phil./ MS program(s).

2. PURPOSE

Doctor of Philosophy (or PhD) is the highest university degree, awarded in most disciplines. Those who qualify at this level are expected to serve highly consequential functions in the society, including in the fields of teaching and research. With in-depth training and immersion in a particular field of study, which includes making an original contribution to the area of study through the PhD dissertation, those holding PhD degrees are expected to have expertise in their area of study that they can utilize in teaching and further research, as well as in problem-solving and innovation to address important societal challenges.

MS/M.Phil. is the minimum requirement to proceed for a PhD program. It is like a launching pad from where a student started acquiring and understanding the importance and techniques of conducting research through extensive literature review. The experience, gained by a student from the MS/M.Phil. studies play a pivotal role in his journey towards a doctoral program where original contribution to the area of study is needed.

Based on the general guideline of the regulatory bodies issued for postgraduate programs, Baqai Medical University has formed this policy to ensure the uniform line of action of regulations related to the postgraduate programs (Ph.D. & M.Phil. / MS). The Board of Advanced Studies & Research (BASR) shall look into the matters of all such postgraduate programs under its umbrella. Postgraduate Medical Institute (PGMI) will provide necessary facilitation as per its approved ToRs. Any particular issue not covered in this policy shall be submitted to the BASR for necessary action.

3. DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION

This policy shall be effective from January 2024 (The Effective Date), and shall apply to all enrolled students (where applicable). Any additional requirements in this policy in comparison with the HEC's previously applicable policies on MS/MPhil/Equivalent & PhD Programs (2016 and 2021) shall apply from the Effective Date and shall not be retroactively applicable.

With any change/amendment being approved in the BASR and Academic Council meetings, the change shall be immediately incorporated into this policy and the version number should be changed accordingly (all such amendments or changes shall not in contradiction of HEC guidelines). The first digit of the version shall be changed for any initial revision made in any year. At the same time, the decimal shall proceed after that for any further modifications in that particular year, e.g., if any other changes are being made in the year 2023, the version number shall change in decimal like 'Version 3.1' or Version 3.2 and so on. If any change is made in the next year (2024), the version number shall change as a whole, e.g., 'Version 4.0', and after that, only the decimal will change in 2024.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the currently enrolled students may take advantage of the revisions in the approved policy, even if the student has enrolled before the effective date.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS TO AWARD MS/MPHIL/EQUIVALENT DEGREES (LEVEL 7)

4.1.1. Admission to an MS/ M.Phil. /Equivalent Degree Programs

- i. **Basic Academic Qualification:** Sixteen years of schooling or 4 year education (minimum 120 credit hours) after HSSC/F.A./ F.Sc. /Grade 12 or Equivalent shall be required for admission in the MPhil/MS/Equivalent program.
- ii. **Admission Test:** University is required to:
 - a) Conduct a rigorous admission test as an eligibility condition for admission to MS/MPhil/Equivalent programs, with a passing score of 50% OR
 - b) Accept the GRE/HAT General/Equivalent tests, with a passing score of 50%.
 - c) Interview: All applicants will be invited for an interview with the program's admissions committee, which may be conducted in person or online, this will be at the discretion of the said committee with the prior permission of the Vice Chancellor. Merit shall be calculated on aggregate score of University Admission Test/GRE/HAT General/Equivalent test and the Interview marks

iii. Intradisciplinary Qualifications

(Intradisciplinary refers to sub-disciplines occurring within one of the ten broad disciplines defined by UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-F-2013).

Consistent with best practices internationally, intradisciplinary admissions may only be allowed, if:

- a) The university Postgraduate Admission Committee allows, and
- b) The applicant has a strong interest in pursuing an MS/MPhil/equivalent degree in a different discipline.
- c) The applicant has passed GRE-Subject/equivalent test with minimum 50% marks in the discipline of admission and has taken 6-9 CH of deficiency courses of level 6.
- d) The admission committee is satisfied that the applicant's knowledge of primary area (level 6) has sufficiently prepared him or her to undertake the course of studies of the MS/MPhil/equivalent program (or, in the opinion of the admission committee, the preparation can be deemed satisfactory by taking a few additional courses after starting the program).
- e) The recommendations of Admission Committee shall be forwarded to Board of Advanced Studies & Research (BASR) for final approval

4.1.2. Coursework requirement for award of MS/ M. Phil./ Equivalent Degrees

For award of MPhil/MS/equivalent degree, candidates shall:

- i. For M.Phil., complete **24** credit hours of coursework along with a minimum of six (6) credit hours for research work/thesis.
- ii. For other Masters Program of two years duration, either need to complete 30 credit hours course work or complete 24 credit hours of coursework along with a minimum of six (6) credit hours for research work/thesis

4.1.3. Degree Completion Timeline

i. The MS/MPhil degree shall be awarded by the university not before the completion of 1.5 years or three (03) regular semesters and not after completion of four (04) years or eight (08) regular semesters, save exceptions mentioned at clause 4.3 (ii).

ii. In case a student is unable to secure an MS/MPhil within the prescribed timeframe and claims for extension in duration, the university may constitute appropriate authority and determine the causes of delay. In the event of force majeure (i.e., delay on account of circumstance beyond the control of student), the university may grant an extension in the period of award of MS/MPhil degree in accordance with the duration limiting factor(s) and shall also take corrective measures in case the delay is caused by process or administrative reasons.

4.1.4. Credits Transfer, Evaluation and Grading

- i. The credit transfer of coursework from other university/DAI/HEI to BMU is permissible subject to the recommendations of Postgraduate Equivalence Committee and final approval from the BAS&R
- ii. For evaluation of student's academic performance and award of grades, BMU Uniform Semester System Policy shall be followed
- iii. The transfer of research work is permissible, provided that the IREB & BAS&R accepts the research conducted at the parent university prior to the credit transfer.

4.2. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF DOCTORAL DEGREE (LEVEL 8)

4.2.1. Qualification

- i. Prior to admission into a PhD program, the student shall have been awarded MS/MPhil or equivalent degree as described in this policy OR
- ii. Students pursuing MS/MPhil studies and interested in continuing to PhD may be granted provisional admission upon satisfaction with the Admission Committee regarding Statement of Purpose and student's commitment to the PhD program, provided that confirmation of the admission shall be subject to the fulfillment of the following conditions within a period of one year from the date of provisional admission:
 - a. Award of MS/MPhil degree, as prescribed in this policy.
 - b. Clearance of the admission test, as prescribed in this policy.

4.2.2. Intra disciplinary Qualifications

(Intra disciplinary refers to sub-disciplines occurring within one of the ten broad disciplines defined by UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-F-2013).

Consistent with best practices internationally, intra disciplinary admissions may only be allowed, if:

- i. The university Postgraduate Admission Committee allows, and
- ii. The applicant has a strong interest in pursuing a PhD in a different discipline.
- iii. The applicant has passed GRE-Subject/Equivalent Test with minimum 50% marks in the discipline of admission and has taken 6-9 CH of deficiency courses of level 7.
- v. The admission committee is satisfied that the applicant's knowledge of the primary area (level 7) has sufficiently prepared him or her to undertake the course of study of the doctoral program (or, in the opinion of the admissions committee, the preparation can be deemed satisfactory by taking a few additional courses after starting the program).
- v. The recommendations of Admission Committee shall be forwarded to Board of Advanced Studies & Research (BASR) for final approval

4.2.3. CGPA

- i. For admission in PhD programs, a minimum CGPA of 3.0 (out of 4.0 in the semester system) or 60% (in the annual system) in the MS/MPhil/equivalent degree being considered for admission, is required, whether such degree was obtained from Pakistani or foreign universities.
- ii. If the CGPA/Percentage is not mentioned on the transcript, the candidate must produce equivalent weightage from the parent university.
- iii. The students having strong demonstrated interest in obtaining PhD degree, but their CGPA is below 3.00 (out of 4.0 in the semester system) or 60% marks (in the annual system) in the most recent degree obtained, may be admitted to a PhD program after fulfilling the following requirements:
 - a. Shall study additional courses of 9-12 CH of level 7 taking a zero semester at BMU and score minimum 3.00 out of 4.00 GPA, and
 - b. The admission committee is satisfied that the applicant's knowledge of primary area (level 7) has sufficiently prepared him or her to undertake the course of studies of the doctoral program.
 - c. These requirements shall be in addition to any other requirements set in this policy for admission to a PhD program.

4.2.4. Admission Test

i. BMU shall:

- a) Conduct the test equivalent to GRE/HAT General developed at the University, with the passing score of 60%. OR
- b) Accept a test equivalent to GRE/HAT General, conducted by testing bodies accredited by HEC, with a passing score of 60%.
- c) Interview: All applicants will be invited for an interview with the program's admissions committee, which may be conducted in person or online, this will be at the discretion of the said committee with the prior permission of the Vice Chancellor. Merit shall be calculated on aggregate score of University Admission Test/GRE/HAT General/Equivalent test and the Interview marks
- d) In addition to clause 4.2.4 (i), the university may conduct subject test for admission in PhD programs, if required.

4.2.5. Statement of Purpose

As part of the application for admission to PhD programs, applicants shall be required to submit a statement of purpose, which shall form an integral part of the application. The admissions committee shall use the information provided to ascertain the preparedness and interest of the candidate in pursuing doctoral studies, and whether the department has the requisite resources to train and supervise the doctoral candidate in the subspecialty in which the applicant is interested. A statement of purpose shall, at least, include the following:

- a) Title of the potential research proposal
- b) Clear articulation of the current understanding of the intended field and ideas for potential research
- c) Explanation of the intended impact of the proposed research
- d) The prospective candidates shall demonstrate passion and enthusiasm for the area of research.

4.2.6. Coursework and Residency Requirement

The following requirements shall be fulfilled before the award of a PhD Degree:

- a) The students shall complete the coursework of at least:
 - i. 18 credit hours if they are from the same discipline.
 - ii. The courses shall be offered through regular classes as per requirements of the program
 - iii. The courses shall preferably be of 800 level.
 - iv. PhD degree should be based on research, not only on credit hours.

4.2.7. Comprehensive Examination

- i. Following the completion of coursework, every PhD student shall be required to pass the comprehensive examination to be granted candidacy as a PhD researcher, with the provision that the student failing to pass the comprehensive exam, shall be allowed to retake the exam once.
- ii. The required coursework, comprehensive exam, and defense of synopsis/research proposals should be completed within the 1st six semesters of the registration into a PhD program. The responsibility in this regard rests collectively with the PhD student and the university. In case of noncompliance, the registration shall be cancelled and transcripts for completion of coursework may be issued to the student.
- iii. In an event of force majeure i.e., noncompliance on account of circumstances beyond the control of student, the university may consider the matter in accordance with the procedure prescribed at 4.2.12. (iv).
- iv. The following are the guidelines for conducting Comprehensive Examination:
 - a. The exam should be based on recapitulation of the conceptual knowledge of the discipline to which the student is admitted.
 - b. The exam shall cover the courses studied, preferably at the graduate level, conducted on one composite question paper.
 - c. The evaluation shall be on an aggregate basis, expressed in terms of pass/fail and shall not be graded. OR The evaluation shall be on the basis of BMU Uniform Semester System Policy/Assessment Policy/Evaluation Policy

4.2.8. Doctoral Dissertation

Each PhD researcher shall write a doctoral dissertation reflecting relevance, credibility, effectiveness, and legitimacy of the research. The dissertation must be an original and innovative contribution to knowledge that contributes to solving socioeconomic problems. To improve the quality of a doctoral dissertation, following regulations shall be followed;

4.2.8.1. Selection of Research Area

The research area of the PhD researcher shall:

- a) Correspond to the community needs at regional and local levels and comply with the priority national research agenda.
- b) Reflect the basic and pure research.
- c) Signify emerging areas of research that coincide preferably with sustainable development goals (SDGs)

4.2.8.2. Quality in Reporting

The quality of presentation and reporting in dissertation shall reflect the following characteristics:

- a) The document is well written.
- b) The contents are balanced, well organized, appropriately styled; clearly structured, and well cohered; and
- c) The document is free from grammatical and spelling errors and flawed terminology.
- d) Minor shortcomings such as inaccurate use of acronyms and clumsy looking sentence structure have been addressed.
- e) Research proposal must include a valid study design for data analysis
- f) Formatting shall be compatible with international standards.

4.2.8.3. Appropriateness of the Methods to the Aims of the Study

To achieve the research objectives, the alignment of the research approach and methods is necessary. Therefore, a PhD dissertation, at least, shall:

- a) Reflect a fair proportion of latest knowledge of contemporary techniques and methods in relation to study objectives.
- b) Contain detailed and easily comprehensible discussions regarding the applied methods and techniques.
- c) Justify the use of methods and techniques to achieve study objectives.
- d) Show evaluation of obtained results in relation with study objectives. And:
- e) The methods and techniques used should justify the results obtained.
- f) The obtained results should support the study objectives.

4.2.9. External Evaluation of PhD Dissertation

The PhD dissertation must be evaluated by:

a) At least two external experts who shall be:

- PhD faculty member from the world top 500 universities ranked by the Times Higher Education or QS World Ranking in the year corresponding to dissertation evaluation year OR
- ii. Pakistan-based Distinguished National Professors, Meritorious Professors from any national university; or professors from top universities ranked by HEC; or professors from any Pakistani University having a minimum H-Index 30 for Sciences and 15 for Social Sciences as determined by Web of Science. OR
- b) At least one external expert qualifying any one of the conditions mentioned at 'a'
 - Above if the PhD candidate publishes dissertation research in a peerreviewed journal that is classified by the HEC in category W for Sciences and X or above for Social Sciences.
 - ii. The following general guidelines shall, at least, be observed while selecting external evaluator as per HEC's criteria:
 - a) Relevance of Expertise: in the same or related fields as in the dissertation.
 - b) No Conflict of Interest: in personal, financial, or professional stakes in a particular decision or outcome.
 - c) Objectivity: capable of making unbiased evaluations.
 - d) Diversity: in terms of geography, culture, professional backgrounds etc.
 - e) Reputation: must be good in the field, with a track record of fair and thorough evaluations.
 - f) Availability: should have the time and availability to review the dissertation.
 - g) Professionalism: capable of conducting themselves in a professional and respectful manner throughout the evaluation and defense process (if applicable).
 - h) Communication: capable of providing clear and constructive feedback on the dissertation.
 - i) Confidentiality: capable of maintaining confidentiality and protecting the intellectual property of the dissertation.
 - j) Compatibility: well-versed with the research methodology, approach, and theories used in the dissertation.

4.2.10. Plagiarism, Similarity Test and Open Defense

- a) Under no circumstances shall a dissertation based on plagiarized research be acceptable. It is the primary responsibility of both PhD researchers and their supervisors to prevent plagiarism.
- b) For Plagiarism COPE guidelines must be followed.
- c) If a PhD dissertation is found to be plagiarized, it will be handled in accordance with the BMU Anti-Plagiarism Policy A similarity test, in accordance with the BMU Anti-Plagiarism Policy, must be conducted on the dissertation before its submission to the external experts by the student.
- d) An open defense of the dissertation is required after positive evaluation of the dissertation by committee members. In general, the following minimum principles and guidelines shall be ensured:

- i. Public Announcement: On the university website and other forums of communication, so that anyone interested can participate.
- ii. Neutral Chair: To ensure that defense was conducted fairly and in accordance with the rules and regulations.
- iii. Review Committee: To evaluate the dissertation and defense. iv. Presentation: of the dissertation by the PhD researcher
- iv. Question and Answer Session: To provide a basis for defense evaluation.
- v. Objective Evaluation: based on the quality of the research and the researcher's ability to defend.
- vi. Final Decision: expressed in the following terms:
 - Pass or
 - Pass with minor amendments or
 - Deferred for resubmission and re-defense or.
 - Fail (in exceptional circumstances and for the reasons to be recorded by the defense committee)

4.2.11. Research Publication

- a) For award of PhD degree, a PhD researcher shall be required to publish research articles meeting the following criteria:
 - i. At least:
 - a)One research article in W category journal or two research articles in X category journals, for Science disciplines
 - b) One research article in X category journal or two research articles in Y category journals, for Social Science disciplines
 - ii. The PhD researcher shall be the first author of these publications.
 - iii. The research article shall be relevant to the PhD research work of the PhD researcher.
 - iv. The article shall be published after approval of the research synopsis.
 - v. The article shall be published in a relevant research journal.

4.2.12. Degree Completion Timeline

- a) The PhD degree shall be awarded not before the completion of three years or six regular semesters and not after completion of eight years or 16 regular semesters, save exceptions mentioned at clause 4.2.12. (d)
- b) The completion date of PhD degree shall be reckoned with the date of notification of the award of PhD degree.
- c) The maximum duration shall be determined from the date of student enrollment un till the date of the completion notification of the PhD degree.
- d) In case a student is unable to secure a PhD degree within the prescribed timeframe and claims for extension in duration, the university may constitute appropriate authority and determine the causes for delay. In event of force

Majeure i.e., delay on account of circumstance beyond the control of student, the university may grant an extension in the period of award of PhD degree in accordance with the duration limiting factor(s) and shall also take corrective measures in case the delay is caused due to process or administrative reasons.

4.2.13. Credits Transfer, Evaluation and Grading

- a) The credit transfer of coursework from other university/DAI/HEI to BMU is permissible subject to the recommendations of Postgraduate Equivalence Committee and final approval from the BAS&R
- b) For evaluation of student's academic performance and award of grades, BMU Uniform Semester System Policy shall be followed
- c) The transfer of research work is permissible, provided that the IREB & BAS&R accepts the research conducted at the parent university prior to the credit transfer.

4.2.14. Award of Post Graduate Diploma/Certificate

A student who successfully completes coursework and passes the comprehensive examination but is unable to defend a PhD synopsis/research proposal or does not complete the required research for obtaining a PhD degree within the specified timeframe, may be considered for an Exit to Graduate Level Diploma/Certificate/or another Masters as per the offered graduate level program structure.

PART-II: GOVERERNING THE SYSTEMS OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH

5. GOVERNING THE RESEARCH SUPERVISION

5.1. Supervision of Doctoral Dissertation

5.1.1. Conditions to Supervise Doctoral Research

The following guidelines shall, at least, be observed while allocating a PhD supervisor. At the time of supervisor allocation, the supervisors:

- i. Shall be a PhD degree holder complying with the criteria and standards provided in this policy.
- ii. Must be relevant to the field of research in which the student intends to conduct research.
- iii. Should have NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST in personal, financial, or professional stakes.
- iv. Should have the time and availability to supervise PhD dissertation and give clear and constructive feedback.
- v. Should be capable of conducting themselves in a professional and respectful manner throughout the supervision process.
- vi. Should be capable of maintaining confidentiality and protecting the intellectual property of the dissertation.
- vii. Should, primarily, be a regular/adjunct faculty member of the supervisee's University/HEI/DAI

In addition to the aforementioned guidelines:

- viii. The research supervisor shall be allocated to a doctoral student from the date of enrollment.
- ix. It is mandated that the maximum supervisory load shall not exceed five PhD students, simultaneously. Further, fresh PhDs can supervise MS/MPhil and co-

Supervise PhD students, while a PhD faculty member, after two years of obtaining a PhD degree, can supervise one PhD student in 3rd year, two PhD students in 4th year and maximum up to 5 PhD students from 5th year onward, subject to fulfillment of other conditions provided in this policy.

- x. PhD research work completed under supervision is a shared property of supervisor and supervisee. All publications resulting from such research shall reflect the authorship of both parties and shall be subject to mutual consent.
- xi. The teacher to student ratio shall be 1:12, where a supervisor can supervise a total of twelve (12) MS/MPhil/PhD students at a time with no more than five (5) of these students being PhD students. Graduate teaching and supervision load shall be adjusted, accordingly.

5.1.2. Criteria to Be a PhD Supervisor

To be a PhD research supervisor, an individual shall meet the following requirements:

i. General Requirements:

- a) A PhD degree from an HEC recognized national/international university/degree awarding institute (DAI).
- b) The research supervisor shall be given opportunities to attend and qualify course(s) on MS/MPhil/PhD Supervision which should also have contents on research ethics, publications, patents, etc. Such courses may include certified self- paced MOOCS, or a course designed/offered by National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) or by a university in the following manner:
 - i. Basic level course: to supervise students of MS/MPhil/equivalent degrees.
 - ii. Advance level course: to supervise PhD researchers.

(The research supervisor shall be given opportunities to attend and qualify course(s) on MS/MPhil/PhD Supervision that may include

i. Basic level course: to supervise students of MS/MPhil/equivalent degrees.

- ii. Advance level course: to supervise PhD researchers designed by the University/MOOCS/NAHE.
- c) A regular/adjunct faculty member or researcher at a public or private university or DAI, or position of researcher or scientist at any R&D or public/private sector organization. However, in the case of a non-faculty PhD supervisor, who otherwise meets the criteria of being a PhD supervisor, shall be taken as an adjunct faculty member, for a period not less than the minimum time required to complete the student's PhD research, prior to assigning a PhD supervision. Such a person shall also provide an NOC from the parent organization.

ii. Publication Requirements:

A. Specific Requirements for Science and Technology:

For indigenous and foreign PhDs:

- a) Within the last 3 years after PhD: at least one research publications in W category journal. OR
- b) Within last 5 years after PhD: at least five research publications in X category journal.

B. Specific Requirements for Social Science and Business Education:

For indigenous and foreign PhDs:

 Within the last 3 years after PhD: at least one research publication in W category journal. OR Within the last 5 years after PhD: at least five research publications in X and Y category journal.

5.1.3. Determining relevance of faculty with subject/degree program

- a) Wherever required, the subject and supervisory relevance of faculty members shall be determined based on:
 - i. Qualifications including bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees.
 - ii. The research includes thesis/dissertation and published articles.
 - iii. Experience consisting of teaching and administrative domains.
 - b) To ascertain the relevance of the faculty in the related discipline to the program and supervision of theses, the university shall:

- i. Constitute a Relevance Assessment Committee (RAC)/equivalent body, with the approval of the Vice Chancellor.
- ii. The RAC shall consist of at least five (5) members:
- c) Respective Dean of the university b. Director QEC of the university
- d) Two External subject expert not less than a professor /Associate Professor Level
- e) Program Team/Assessment Team member who was involved in preparing self- assessment report of the program.
- c) The RAC shall submit a report with detailed reasons and rationale for the assessment decision.
- d) The Report shall be effective with the approval of relevant statutory bodies.

5.1.4. Supervisory Process

Refer to BMU Supervisory Manual

5.2. **PGMI**

- i. The head of the PGMI shall not be less than a Dean or equivalent position.
- ii. The PGMI shall serve as the secretariat of the Board of Advance Studies & Research (BAS&R). The board shall be responsible for the quality of all the graduate degree programs being offered by the university, as well as the research that shall be conducted under these programs.
- iii. The PGMI shall prepare a graduate Studies Prospectus, describing the complete process for award of a graduate degree and ensuring that the booklet shall be available for guidance of all graduate students.
- iv. The PGMI shall monitor and ensure that thesis/dissertation is progressing in accordance with the time prescribed in the booklet. It includes, but is not limited to, the timely approval of the research synopsis, evaluation of the research thesis/dissertation in accordance with the university guidelines as well as its submission, and finally the conduct of open defense.

5.3. Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships:

The university departments may offer Teaching and Research Assistantships to outstanding PhD enrolled students at various stages of their enrollment.

- Teaching assistantship provides an opportunity to PhD students to assist professors in preparing teaching and research materials for groups of students enrolled in their classes.
- ii. Research assistantships are paid fellowship stipends for outstanding research scholars for assisting a professor, who pays the research assistant out of the research grant s/he has received. The stipend varies based on the level of effort and budget available to the Principal Investigator.
- iii. University may have named scholarships to promote quality research by philanthropic donors based on priority themes and topics on the national research agenda.

6. PRACTICING THE ACADEMIC RESEARCH ETHICS

Refer to BMU Ethics Policy

7. MANAGING THE GRIEVANCES OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

Refer to BMU Grievance Policy

8. Requirements for Entering PhD Country Directory (PCD)

For inclusion in PCD, graduates and the University Focal Person are required to submit an online application following the prescribed procedure.