Doctor of Medicine
by
Special Regulations

Notes for the Guidance of Candidates
and
Regulations for the Degree

April 2012
Eligibility

You are eligible to apply to take the MD by Special Regulations if you meet the following criteria:¹

(a) You hold a medical qualification giving you provisional or full registration with the General Medical Council

(b) You hold a primary degree of the University of Cambridge

(c) Your proposed MD work will be undertaken outside Cambridge (i.e. elsewhere in the UK or overseas)²

¹ You are advised to consult the full Regulations at the end of this document.
² If you intend to work in Cambridge you must apply under the standard regulations for the MD degree and become a registered student of the University of Cambridge.

How to apply

You should email the following documents to the MD Committee Administrative Secretary, Dr Anne Dunbar-Nobes, at ad470@medschl.cam.ac.uk:

(a) an application on the approved form (see last page)
(b) curriculum vitae
(c) a description of the proposed work (your proposal):

Your proposal should contain sufficient information to enable the Committee, or experts approached by the Committee, to assess the suitability of the proposed work for an MD dissertation. Sufficient information can usually be provided in a proposal of 2,000–3,000 words (excluding references); all pages must be numbered. As well as relevant background information describing the significance of the proposed work, it is helpful to include, where relevant:

(i) a clear statement of the hypothesis to be tested and/or the scientific rationale of the study
(ii) methods to be used (with references to previously published methods and a brief description of new methods)
(iii) number of experiments to be undertaken, or number of subjects to be studied (in epidemiological investigations, information about the population from which subjects are drawn)
(iv) statistical methods of analysis of results
(v) ethical considerations (see below)
(vi) the place where work is to be carried out
(vii) how much of the work is to be done personally and how much with the help of others (specify the nature of any help)
(viii) if the work is not entirely independent under whose supervision or with whose collaboration it is to be done
(d) a brief abstract of the proposal

This should not exceed 250 words and should include a summary of the research to be undertaken, information as to where it will be carried out and who the main collaborators and supervisor will be. This will be used by the Committee for quick reference whenever the proposal is under consideration at Committee meetings.

(e) a letter from your Adviser assuring the MD Committee of his/her acceptance of the role of adviser

The fee

The fee for the MD by Special Regulations is a one-off payment of £1,866, which covers the entire programme. Should your application be unsuccessful, all but £500 will be returned to you. Should you fail to submit your dissertation for examination within the maximum of 6 years allowed, you will be withdrawn from the programme and no refund will be payable.

You should send a cheque for £1,866, made payable to the ‘University of Cambridge’, to Higher Degrees Office (MD), The Clinical School, Box 111, Addenbrooke’s Hospital, Cambridge CB2 0SP.

Approval of proposed work

Having considered the proposal, the MD Committee, through the Assessor, may approve the work, suggest modifications or advise that the proposal is not suitable.

The process of approval of your proposal by the MD Committee and its referees is designed to be helpful to candidates in completing their dissertation. For this reason you are urged to apply for approval as early into your research project (preferably at the planning stage) as possible. This will enable problems identified by the Committee and its referees to be considered before your work is too far advanced.

Please note that the refereeing process can take some time. Because the University does not appoint a formal supervisor (it is your responsibility to identify a suitable supervisor in your host institution) the MD Committee regards this initial stage as essential in sorting out any potential problems with the proposed work and usually seek the advice of expert referees. Candidates are expected to respond positively to any criticisms made by these referees before approval to proceed can be granted.

Following approval of the proposal, you are granted a maximum of six years in which to carry out the research and submit a dissertation for examination.
Your status in the University

You should note that, 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.

The adviser / supervisor

You are required to identify a specific adviser at the time of developing the proposal. The adviser should agree 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 dissertation and reading drafts.

You are requested to show a copy of this guidance to the proposed adviser, who is asked to write a brief letter of assurance of acceptance of this role; this letter should be provided to the Committee when submitting the proposal.

The dissertation

Standard required

The dissertation 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 dissertation 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 dissertation 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 dissertation 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 dissertation must be submitted **within 6 years** of being granted approval to proceed, unless given special permission by 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 dissertations should not normally exceed 60,000 words (excluding references, captions and notes), and that many excellent dissertations are much shorter than this.

It is suggested that the dissertation 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 dissertation 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**: dissertations 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 dissertation

Three copies of the dissertation should be submitted in a soft binding, together with three loose-leaf copies of the summary. These should be sent or delivered to the Degree Committee, Faculty of Clinical Medicine, Higher Degrees Office, The
Clinical School, Box 111, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, CB2 0SP. The candidate should retain a copy of the dissertation for his/her own use at the Act.

**Examination procedure**

In the first instance, the Degree Committee will refer each dissertation 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 dissertation 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 Secretary of the Board of Graduate Studies, who 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 dissertation. If the Examiners do not agree in their recommendations or if for any other reason the Degree Committee or the Board of Graduate Studies 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 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 dissertation 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 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 Board of Graduate Studies. 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 dissertation.

**Corrections following the Act**
The Board of Graduate Studies will give you a **maximum of 12 months** to complete any corrections following the Act and to submit your corrected dissertation 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 Board of Graduate Studies.

**Hardbound corrected dissertations**

Before the degree can be finally approved, you are required to submit 2 hardbound copies of the corrected dissertation to the Board of Graduate Studies 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 dissertation should state: ‘A dissertation submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine of the University of Cambridge’ followed by the dissertation 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, 4 Mill Lane, Cambridge.

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

**Conferment of the degree**

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

**Prizes**

All dissertations examined in each academical year are considered by the MD Committee for the award of the following prizes:

- Raymond Horton-Smith Prize
- Sir Lionel Whitby Medal
- Ralph Noble Prizes
- Sir Walter Langdon-Brown Prize
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 dissertation 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 dissertation or a revised dissertation, 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;
(f) 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 dissertation 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 dissertation and the general field of knowledge within which it falls.

By special permission of the M.D. Committee, candidates may submit with the dissertation 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 dissertation, 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 dissertations, 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 dissertation which are claimed as original. They shall also be required to declare that the dissertation 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 dissertation, apart from quotations, shall be written in English. The Degree Committee shall have power to specify a maximum length for dissertations, 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 dissertation 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 Secretary of the Board of Graduate Studies, who 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 dissertation 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 dissertation. If the Examiners do not agree in their recommendations or if for any other reason the Degree Committee or the Board of Graduate Studies 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 of Graduate Studies. Each additional Examiner so appointed shall make an independent report on the dissertation 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 dissertation 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 Secretary of the Board of Graduate Studies 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 Board of Graduate Studies 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 dissertation 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 Board of Graduate Studies, 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 dissertation, the Degree Committee are of the opinion that a candidate’s dissertation is not of the requisite standard for the degree, they may recommend to the Board of Graduate Studies that the candidate be permitted to submit a revised dissertation. 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 dissertation 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 dissertation) their resolution to that effect, with the names of those present and voting on either side, shall be communicated to the Board of Graduate Studies, 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 Board of Graduate Studies in respect of her or his own candidature.

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

22. All the dissertations 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 dissertation (Regulation 10): £45.
- To an Examiner for examining and reporting on a dissertation and for taking part in the conduct of an oral examination (Regulation 12): £135.
- 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.
Application for MD by Special Regulations

Name: ..............................................................................................................

Title of proposed research: ................................................................................
......................................................................................................................

Your Cambridge degree(s): ...........................................................

Your Cambridge College: ...........................................................

Date of award of Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (e.g. MBBS or MB BChir) ..........
or Date of award of Bachelor of Medicine ......................
   Date of award of Bachelor of Surgery ..................

Name of awarding institution: ...........................................................................

With this application form I also submit (i) a detailed outline of the work on which my dissertation will be founded, (ii) a brief abstract, (iii) my curriculum vitae, and (iv) a letter from my adviser/supervisor. (Please send all documents as email attachments to: ad470@medschl.cam.ac.uk).

Under separate cover I am sending a cheque for the fee of £1,866 made out to ‘University of Cambridge’. I understand that my application will not be processed until payment has been received. (Send to: Higher Degrees Office (MD), The Clinical School, Box 111, Addenbrooke’s Hospital, Cambridge CB2 0SP, UK.)

I declare that I am not currently registered for any other higher degree at Cambridge or elsewhere and that the dissertation will be specially written for the purpose of the Cambridge MD degree.

Date.....................................   Signed...........................................................

Your preferred address for postal correspondence: ...........................................
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Tel no: (daytime)..............................................................................................

Email address ..................................................................................................

Address at which the work for this dissertation will be carried out:
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Name(s) of your supervisor(s)/advisor(s): ...................................................................