



MBARARA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DUAL AND JOINT PhD DEGREE POLICY

Approval Level 1	Directorate of Research & Graduate Training Board	Approved
Approval Level 2	University Policies Committee	Approved
Approval Level 3	University Top Management	Approved
Approval Level 4	Finance, Planning & Development Committee of Council	Approved
Approval Level 5	Legal, Rules & Privileges Committee	Approved
Approval Level 6	University Council	Approved

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Approval

This policy has been approved on the 24th day of June the year 2022

Signed



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Professor Celestino Obua
VICE CHANCELLOR



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Dr. Warren Naamara
CHAIRPERSON, MUST COUNCIL

Abbreviations/Acronyms

DRGT	Directorate for Research and Graduate Training
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
MUST	Mbarara University of Science and Technology
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
VC	Vice-Chancellor

Definitions

Quality Assurance Committee	The University Quality Assurance Committee
Agreement	A written and signed agreement between MUST and partner higher education institutions that are approved by the relevant delegate.
Agreement sponsor	The person with overall responsibility for the Dual and Joint Agreement is the Dean or Director
Credit recognition agreement	An agreement between MUST and a partner higher education institution establishes a framework for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally recognizing the previous academic attainment of students from the partner institution; and • Allowing students to receive credit towards, or reduced volume of learning in a specified degree at the University.
Dean	As appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean of a Faculty; University school; Head of School or Institute.
Dual PhD Degree (Cotutelle) degree	Two combined PhD degree programs, one offered at MUST and the other at a partner institution, which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme starts with the joint supervision of the PhD research, and the major content of the PhD is research with a few core or elective courses. • The programme is initiated by the individual supervisors of the PhD research with a final enactment of an agreement. • Each institution to remain as a separate entity granting sufficient flexibility and institutional independence to implement and award the PhD Degree. • Two award certificates are given independently by partnering institutions
Dual degree agreement	An agreement between MUST and a partner higher education institution establishes the framework for a dual degree.
Faculty	As appropriate, any of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a relevant faculty; or • a University school
Graduate Studies Committee	Directorate of Research and Graduate Training Board at MUST or Graduate Studies Committee or Board at Partner Institution.
Joint PhD	A Doctor of Philosophy degree that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shares candidature between MUST and one or more partner institutions; • produces a single thesis;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has examination at the coordinating institution as per its established procedures; and • is jointly awarded by MUST and the partner institution(s)
MUST	Mbarara University of Science and Technology
Pathway agreement	<p>An agreement between MUST and partner institutions which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides for one-way recognition and transfer of credits from one institution to the other; and • results in the accelerated conferral of two degrees (Dual) or one degree (Joint)
Principal agreement	An agreement initiated by PhD supervisors and is between MUST and Partner higher education institution establishes the terms upon which the two institutions will offer joint or Dual PhD degrees by research programs, for which each candidature will be governed by a separate, subordinate student agreement.
Student agreement	A PhD supervision agreement between supervisors for each particular student signed by supervisors and vice-chancellors of partnering institutions

FOREWORD

Since its inception, Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) has thrived on international collaborations and partnerships through student and staff exchanges. Several research and training collaborative projects have been undertaken especially for Masters's and PhD programs. This trend has drastically increased in the recent past and has necessitated processes and procedures that make this training more formally conducted.

The MUST strategic plan emphasises strengthened international collaborations and partnerships as a way of increasing the University's visibility. The Dual and Joint PhD degrees policy is therefore timely and relevant to the ongoing training processes at MUST. The policy offers guidance on how dual or joint PhD degree training will be implemented and how the award will be managed. As MUST, we have set all the quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that this policy is well implemented, monitored and evaluated. MUST have the requisite infrastructure and management organisation to ensure that the policy is well implemented. The policy gives MUST a clear direction of formal engagements in dual and joint PhD training for the current and future generations. This will promote MUST positioning on the global scene.

I am grateful to the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, the Internal Policy Development Committee, the Senate and University Council for the good work they have done in putting together and approving this policy respectively.

SUCCEED WE MUST

PROFESSOR CELESTINO OBUA

VICE-CHANCELLOR

1.0 Introduction

World over, Universities in the global north and south are increasingly investing time and effort in staff and student exchange programs. This has been instrumental in promoting international partnerships and collaborations which are instrumental for institutional visibility. The dual or joint degree programmes entail degrees obtained after a joint or concurrent study programme and they include Dual degree programmes and Joint degree programmes. Each of the two-degree programs is easily customized and grants students the flexibility in determining their areas of study. Additionally, joint degrees give students greater access to resources, professors and opportunities than they would have in a single program.

2.0 Policy Context and Problem Statement

2.1 Problem Statement

Despite the increased collaborations and partnerships between MUST and its partners, no policy guides the implementation of Dual and Joint degree awards. This is more vivid with the increasing demand for joint and dual PhD degree programmes by international partners and collaborators. There have been several MUST staff and students who have undertaken collaborative programs such as PhD sandwich programs without clear guidelines and processes to guide their training and awards. This, therefore, necessitates a policy to address the existing gap and the increasing demand.

2.2 Policy Context and Scope

- i) This policy applies to:
 - (a) the University, staff, students and affiliates; and
 - (b) all dual and joint degree arrangements undertaken in partnership with another higher education institution.
- ii) This policy does not apply to inter-institutional agreements that do not:
 - (a) have an educational or research training component;
 - (b) establish dual or joint award programs; or
 - (c) contain credit-sharing arrangements for courses.

3.0 Policy Statement and Justification

Except to the extent that a contrary intention is expressed, this policy binds the University, staff, students and affiliates, and:

- (a) contributes to the improvement of education about the National Development Plan;
- (b) specifies the principles for establishing dual and joint PhD degree programs;
- (c) establishes a framework to align dual and joint PhD degree programs with MUST's educational and research strategies and standards; and
- (d) supports MUST's values of Excellence, Innovativeness, Professionalism, Teamwork and Respect for Diversity.

This policy is premised on the increasing collaborative PhD training between MUST and her partners. It is also justified by the increasing demand to have formal processes and guidelines that protect MUST as an institution, partners and trainees. The policy also gives a reference point for the resolution of any disputes or conflicts that may arise during joint and dual PhD training between MUST and her partners.

4.0 Policy Goal and Objectives

4.1 Goal

In establishing dual and joint PhD degree programs, MUST aim at providing students with a unique learning experience through tailored study pathways; support research collaboration and academic excellence through engagement with other leading higher education institutions; and increase the University's international presence through its global engagement and student recruitment strategies.

4.2 Objectives

- i) Increase internationalisation at the institutions.
- ii) Stimulate multinational collaboration on teaching at a high level.
- iii) Develop study and research alternatives to emerging needs.
- iv) Improve educational and research collaboration.
- v) Offer students an expanded and innovative arena for learning and employability.
- vi) Increase competence at partner institutions through cooperation and implementation of a best practice system.
- vii) Increase the institution's ability to change in step with emerging needs.
- viii) Contribute to tearing down cultural barriers, both personal and institutional levels.

5.0 Policy Environment and Legal Framework

5.1 Legal Framework

The policy is in compliance and must be read and applied alongside the following Laws of Uganda;

- a) Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001 as Amended in.
- b) National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) Quality Assurance Framework for Universities and the Licensing Process for Higher Education Institutions.
- c) NCHE Benchmarks for conducting Postgraduate Programmes in Uganda.

5.2 Related Policies and Documents

- a) MUST Financial and Accounting Manual.
- b) MUST Postgraduate Handbook.
- c) MUST Intellectual Property Policy.
- d) The University Research Policy.
- e) Guidelines for Online Research Proposal and Thesis Defense.
- f) Accredited Curricula.

- g) It May also be governed by the policies of the partner institution if the relevant delegate is satisfied it has similar outcomes and intentions to those of MUST, particularly about research integrity and academic honesty.

6.0 Implementation Framework

6.1 Responsibilities and Administration of the Policy

- i) The Vice-Chancellor shall oversee the implementation of the policy.
- ii) The University Secretary is responsible for ensuring that the University's responsibilities in this policy are met and that all revenues are distributed by this policy.
- iii) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) and Academic Registrar will be responsible for the admission of students and assurance of the overall academic quality.
- iv) The Directorate of Research and Graduate Training shall be responsible for the coordination of teaching and research supervision activities.
- v) The office of the Faculty Dean and Head of Department shall be responsible for the actual teaching and supervision of students under their respective programs.
- vi) The University Auditor shall carry out periodic independent audits into the implementation of this policy.

6.2 Students' responsibilities

- i) Submitting an application to both institutions and providing all necessary information required in the admission process;
- ii) Paying any financial requirements to MUST and the partner institution during the period of candidature;
- iii) Covering travel, living, health insurance and other expenses of participating in the pathway agreement arrangement;
- iv) Complying with the rules, policies, and other requirements of the coordinating institution among the partnering institutions.

6.3 Responsibilities of Partner Institutions and Award of Degrees

- i) Each partner institution admits the student in accordance with the criteria set by the institutions
- ii) Partner institutions agree on appeal procedures,
- iii) The coordinating institution agreed upon in the student agreement is responsible for the practical aspects of admission,
- iv) The coordinator awards a common letter of acceptance of the student to a joint or dual degree programme before the expiry of his academic programme. The arrangement shall be effective at the date of admission to the PhD programme (where needed, retrospectively only for the pioneer student group/cohort).

- v) A student who has satisfied the applicable PhD degree requirements will be separately awarded a degree from each institution for Dual degree or jointly awarded a degree with a joint certificate after independently examining the PhD thesis for a joint degree.
- vi) The program(s) must be consistent with standards established in the NCHE Quality Assurance Framework for Universities and the Licensing Process for Higher Education Institutions (2014).
<https://businesslicences.go.ug/uploads/documents/Quality-Assurance-Framework-for-Universities.pdf>
- vii) The credit recognition provisions in the pathway agreement must meet the recognition of prior learning requirements established in the MUST Postgraduate Handbook.

6.4 Dual PhD degrees

- i) Doctor of Philosophy award program may either be research based or research with some courses offered:
 - a) The PhD candidate is jointly enrolled at two universities, and spends time at each university.
 - b) The PhD candidate is jointly supervised by staff at both institutions and upon successful completion of the program, the candidate graduates from both Universities with a Doctor of Philosophy.
 - c) An individual student's agreement for joint academic supervision, regulation of the partners' responsibilities, doctoral thesis evaluation and defence is reached
 - d) the student is enrolled at both universities and fees are payable at one, the dates of initial enrolment may be different at the two universities.
 - e) The admission requirements for each university are fully respected.
 - f) Both Universities appoint at least one of its staff as the supervisor and these supervisors jointly guide the student's research program.
 - g) At the conclusion of the research, a single but same thesis is prepared that is submitted for independent examination by both universities.
 - h) Each university's examination process is fully complied with including an oral viva voce examination.
 - i) Each university makes its own decision about the award of the degree, including a grade or mark if that is the practice
 - j) If successful at each university, the candidate can attend a graduation ceremony at both universities and will receive a testamur (degree certificate) from each university independently
 - k) must be established by way of an inter-institutional agreement in accordance with this policy.
 - l) h) be accredited by the NCHE or the relevant body governing the Partner Institution.

- ii) The credit recognition provisions in the dual degree agreement must meet the recognition of prior learning requirements.

Note: Dual degree agreements and pathway agreements differ from credit recognition agreements in that the framework established in the former expressly addresses the award of both the relevant University degree and the partner institution degree, whereas the latter only addresses the award of the University degree.

7.5 Dual Degree Renewal of Agreement

- i) The Faculty Dean or Institute Director shall submit a pathway agreement renewal proposal to the Vice-Chancellor through the Director DRGT and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) for approval six months before the expiration of the agreement. The proposal must:
 - (a) Specify the number of past:
 - (i) in bound students; and
 - (ii) outbound students.
 - (b) Include a projection of the number of prospective:
 - (i) inbound students; and
 - (ii) outbound students.

8.0 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

8.1 Dual PhD Degrees

- i) Dual PhD degree programs must meet the educational excellence requirements for award courses at MUST.
- ii) Student experience in a dual degree will be:
 - (a) Measured through surveys and other appropriate instruments each time a course is offered; and
 - (b) reported as directed by the Dean.
- iii) Deans shall annually report to their Faculty Boards on activities carried out under dual PhD degree agreements.
- iv) Faculty Boards shall consider the Dean's report and forward it, with appropriate recommendations and comments to DRGT Board.
- v) The Director DRGT shall collate Faculty Annual reports and provide a single report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) who shall in turn report to Senate. The report shall:
 - (a) Specify the number of past:
 - (i) Dual PhD degree enrolments;
 - (ii) Dual PhD degree completions;
 - (iii) inbound students; and

- (iv) outbound students.
- (b) include a projection of the number of prospective:
 - (i) Dual PhD enrolments;
 - (ii) inbound students; and
 - (iii) outbound students.
- vi) The Graduate Training Board and Quality Assurance Committee must:
 - (a) review the academic quality of new postgraduate dual PhD degree program course and research proposals;
 - (b) make recommendations to the Senate about the quality of new dual degree program course and research proposals;
 - (c) review amendments to existing PhD courses and research of dual degree programs' implementation to ensure the maintenance of high standards in teaching and learning and the student experience;
 - (d) make recommendations to the Senate regarding proposals to amend existing PhD dual degree programs; and
 - (e) consider reports provided to the Board/Committee and make recommendations to the Senate.
- vii) The University Senateshall:
 - (a) consider and approve the recommended new dual degree program proposals;
 - (b) in relation to proposed dual degree programs, consider relevant strategic initiatives and viability considerations.
- viii) Strategic initiatives to be taken into account include:
 - (a) The University Strategic Plan;
 - (b) Faculty strategic plans;
 - (c) MUST's country or region specific engagement strategies;
 - (d) Whether the institutional partner has an existing strategic research partnership with MUST;
 - (e) MUST's student recruitment strategies; or
 - (f) Other strategic considerations as determined by MUST Senate.
- ix) Viability considerations to be taken into account include:
 - (i) The educational and financial viability of the program;
 - (ii) Projected enrolment numbers of the program; and
 - (iii) Consideration of other degree (Non-Dual PhD degree) offerings within the relevant discipline.

8.2 Joint Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Degrees by Research

- (1) MUST may establish a joint Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program with another higher education institution if:

- (a) The proposal to establish a joint PhD program specifies:
- (i) strategies for ensuring reciprocity of inbound and outbound students (where the arrangement is established on an exchange basis);
 - (ii) the rationale for establishing the joint program;
 - (iii) strategic objectives of the partnership;
 - (iv) proposed benchmarks or tangible benefits to MUST of the arrangement;
 - (v) an estimate of the resources required to establish and maintain the joint program;
 - (vi) the scope of the arrangement, including whether the proposed agreement is University-wide or Faculty-specific;
 - (vii) an analysis of how MUST's PhD program aligns structurally with the partner institution's PhD program; and
- (b) the principal agreement meets the requirements specified in clause 6.2.
- (2) MUST may offer a joint PhD with more than one partner institution, with the approval of the Senate.
- (3) MUST and the partner institution PhD students should enter into a student supervision agreement which:
- (a) Documents the framework for the joint degree program; and
 - (b) provides for the issue of a single testamur, with both institutions' logos, upon completion.
- (4) If a partner institution is unable to issue a joint testamur, the MUST Senate may approve a principal agreement which provides for the issue of a separate testamur by each institution.
- (5) Except in partnerships described in sub clause 6.0(4), upon successful completion and conferral of award of the joint Doctor of Philosophy, one testamur with the logo of both institutions will be provided to the candidate.
- (6) Candidates for a joint PhD will have their thesis submitted and examined according to the established procedures at one university using a procedure agreed upon by both partner institutions award a single joint certificate for the bi-lateral thesis. The joint character of the degree must be confirmed in the certificate.

8.3 Principal agreements

- (1) There must be a formal students' agreement for the provision of joint PhDs before students are permitted to participate in the relevant program.
- (2) The principal agreements must specify the requirements for:
 - (a) Reciprocity of students;
 - (b) minimum time periods students shall spend at each institution;
 - (c) content and form of testamurs;
 - (d) managing intellectual property;
 - (e) tuition fee structure and basis for calculation;
 - (f) admission requirements of each institution; and

- (g) any regulatory requirements applicable under the law governing either institution.

Note: This includes but not limited to the NCHE Quality Assurance Framework for Universities and the Licensing Process for Higher Education Institutions.

8.4 Student agreements

- (1) MUST and the partner institution must enter into a separate student agreement, subordinate to and consistent with the relevant principal agreement, for each candidate undertaking the program.
- (2) The Director, Research and Graduate Training with guidance from Faculty Dean or Institute Director shall recommend each student agreement (that can be amended according to the specific case) to Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs) for further consideration and approval by the Vice Chancellor before the candidate commences.
- (3) Each student agreement must specify:
 - (a) Student obligations including a statement that “s/he shall be responsible for her/his health insurance;”
 - (b) tuition fees and other financial arrangements;
 - (c) the student’s intellectual property rights;
 - (d) the student’s attendance pattern and indicative dates of travel;
 - (e) joint supervision arrangements;
 - (f) the language of the thesis and examination;
 - (g) the earliest and latest permissible thesis submission date;
 - (h) the institution that will conduct the examination;
 - (i) the examination procedures which will apply;
 - (j) location of the examination;
 - (k) type of examination; and
 - (l) graduation procedures.
- (4) Student agreements must be registered and maintained by Archives and Records Management.

8.5 Quality assurance and responsibilities

- (1) The principal and student agreements must be documented in a form approved by the Senate.
- (2) Joint PhD programs must meet the thesis requirements of MUST and the Partner Institution.
- (3) The DRGT Board and Quality Assurance Committee shall:
 - (a) review the strategic alignment and viability of new joint PhD principal agreements; and
 - (b) provide a recommendation to Senate as to whether or not the Joint PhD principal agreement should be approved.

- (4) Consideration of strategic alignment include taking into account:
 - (a) the University Strategic Plan;
 - (b) Faculty strategic plans;
 - (c) country or region-specific engagement strategies of the University;
 - (d) whether the institutional partner has an existing strategic research partnership with the University;
 - (e) the University's Student Recruitment strategies; or
 - (f) other areas of strategic fit as determined by Senate.
- (5) The Faculty Dean/ Institute Director shall submit an agreement renewal proposal to the Vice Chancellor through the Director DRGT and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs) six months before the expiration of a student's agreement. The proposal must:
 - (a) Specify the number of:
 - (i) Joint PhD enrolments;
 - (ii) Joint PhD completions;
 - (iii) inbound students; and
 - (iv) outbound students.
 - (b) Include a projection of the number of prospective:
 - (i) Joint PhD enrolments;
 - (ii) inbound students; and
 - (iii) outbound students

9.0 Communication and Interpretation of the Policy

- i) The communication of this policy is vested in the authority of the Vice Chancellor.
- ii) The University Council shall determine and approve the policy and its review.
- iii) The University Council's definition, interpretation, application of these rules and the decision on any policy matter shall be final.

10.0 Funding

- (1) These are sponsored students therefore Tuition and Functional Fees shall be paid by the Agency funding the student.
- (2) MUST Staff Supervision Allowance shall be paid by the Funder.
- (3) The Funding Agency shall cater for students' welfare including health insurance while at MUST or a partner university.