

Academic Degrees Law of the PRC

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Chapter I — General Provisions

Article 1 — This Law is enacted in accordance with the Constitution for the purposes of regulating degree conferral, protecting the lawful rights and interests of degree applicants, ensuring the quality of degrees, cultivating a new generation capable of shouldering the great task of national rejuvenation, building China into a strong country in education, science and technology and talent, and serving the building of China into a modern socialist country in all respects.

Article 2 — The state implements a degree system. Degrees are divided into bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctoral degrees, including academic degrees, professional degrees and other types, and are conferred according to discipline categories, professional degree categories and the like.

Article 3 — Degree work upholds the leadership of the Communist Party of China, fully implements the state's educational policy, practices core socialist values, carries out the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, follows the laws of education, upholds fairness, impartiality and openness, upholds the unity of academic freedom and academic norms, promotes innovation and development, and improves the quality of autonomous talent cultivation.

Article 4 — Chinese citizens who uphold the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system, study in institutions of higher education or scientific research institutions, or receive education through other means prescribed by the state, and meet the corresponding academic requirements, academic levels or professional levels, may apply for corresponding degrees in accordance with this Law.

Article 5 — Institutions of higher education and scientific research institutions that have obtained, upon approval, the qualifications to confer degrees in the corresponding disciplines or specialties are degree-conferring institutions, and the disciplines and specialties in which they confer degrees are degree-conferring programs. Degree-conferring institutions may confer corresponding degrees in accordance with this Law.

Chapter II — Degree Work System

Article 6 — The State Council shall establish a degree committee to lead degree work nationwide.

The degree committee under the State Council shall have one chairperson and several vice-chairpersons and members. The chairperson, vice-chairpersons and members shall be appointed and removed by the State Council, with a term of office of five years for each term.

The degree committee under the State Council shall establish expert groups responsible for degree review and evaluation, quality supervision, research and consultation, and other work.

Article 7 — The degree committee under the State Council shall establish an administrative office within the education administrative department under the State Council to undertake its daily work.

The education administrative department under the State Council shall be responsible for relevant work concerning degree administration nationwide.

Article 8 — The people's governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government shall establish provincial degree committees, which shall, under the guidance of the degree committee under the State Council, lead degree work within their respective administrative areas.

The education administrative departments of the people's governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government shall be responsible for relevant work concerning degree administration within their respective administrative areas.

Article 9 — Degree-conferring institutions shall establish academic degree evaluation committees, which shall perform the following duties:

- (1) deliberating on the implementation measures and specific standards for degree conferral of the institution;
- (2) deliberating on matters such as the addition and cancellation of degree-conferring programs;
- (3) making resolutions on the conferral, non-conferral or revocation of corresponding degrees;
- (4) studying and handling disputes over degree conferral;
- (5) accepting complaints or reports related to degrees;
- (6) deliberating on other matters related to degrees.

Academic degree evaluation committees may establish several sub-committees to assist in their work, and may entrust the sub-committees with performing corresponding duties.

Article 10 — An academic degree evaluation committee consists of the persons in charge with senior professional and technical posts and teaching and research personnel of the degree-conferring institution, and its members shall be an odd number of not fewer than nine. The chairperson of the academic degree evaluation committee shall be served by the principal administrative person in charge of the degree-conferring institution.

Resolutions of the academic degree evaluation committee shall be made by way of meetings. When deliberating on the matters listed in items (1) through (4) of paragraph 1 of Article 9 of this Law or other major matters, meetings shall be attended by two-thirds or more of all members. Matters for resolution shall be voted on and adopted by a majority of all members.

Article 11 — The composition, term of office, division of duties and working procedures of the academic degree evaluation committee and its sub-committees shall be determined and published by the degree-conferring institution.

Chapter III — Degree-Conferring Qualifications

Article 12 — Institutions of higher education and scientific research institutions applying for degree-conferring qualifications shall satisfy the following conditions:

- (1) adhering to the socialist direction of running schools and carrying out the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education;
- (2) conforming to the needs of national and local economic and social development and higher education development plans;
- (3) possessing teaching staff, facilities and equipment and other teaching and research resources and school-running levels commensurate with the degree-conferring qualifications applied for;
- (4) other conditions prescribed by laws and administrative regulations.

The degree committee under the State Council and provincial degree committees may, in accordance with the preceding paragraph, formulate specific provisions on the conditions for applying for corresponding degree-conferring qualifications.

Article 13 — Institutions of higher education that implement undergraduate education in accordance with law and satisfy the conditions in Article 12 of this Law may apply for qualifications to confer bachelor's degrees. Institutions of higher education and scientific research institutions that implement undergraduate and graduate education in accordance with law and satisfy the conditions in Article 12 of this Law may apply for qualifications to confer master's and doctoral degrees.

Article 14 — Qualifications to confer bachelor's degrees shall be examined and approved by provincial degree committees and filed with the degree committee under the State Council.

Qualifications to confer master's degrees shall be examined by provincial degree committees and submitted to the degree committee under the State Council for approval.

Qualifications to confer doctoral degrees shall be examined by the education administrative department under the State Council and submitted to the degree committee under the State Council for approval.

Expert review shall be organized when examining degree-conferring qualifications.

Article 15 — Applications for degree-conferring qualifications shall be submitted within the time limits prescribed by the degree committee under the State Council and provincial degree committees.

The units responsible for examining and approving degree-conferring qualifications shall make resolutions within ninety days from the date of accepting an application and make them public. The period for public announcement shall be not less than ten working days. Where there is any objection during the period for public announcement, review shall be organized.

Article 16 — Qualified degree-conferring institutions may, upon approval by the degree committee under the State Council, autonomously conduct examination for the addition of master's and doctoral degree-conferring programs. Autonomously added degree-conferring programs shall be submitted to the degree committee under the State Council for approval. The specific conditions and measures shall be formulated by the degree committee under the State Council.

Article 17 — The state shall, based on the needs of economic and social development for various types of talent, optimize the discipline structure and the layout of degree-conferring programs, and strengthen the building of basic disciplines, emerging disciplines and interdisciplinary disciplines.

The degree committee under the State Council may, according to the major needs of the state and the needs of economic development, scientific and technological innovation, cultural inheritance and safeguarding the people's lives and health, separately prescribe conditions and procedures for the establishment and layout of relevant degree-conferring programs and degree conferral.

Chapter IV — Conditions for Conferring Degrees

Article 18 — Degree applicants shall uphold the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system, abide by the Constitution and laws, and observe academic ethics and academic norms.

Where degree applicants study in institutions of higher education or scientific research institutions, or receive education through other means prescribed by the state, and meet the corresponding academic requirements, academic levels or professional levels, the degree-conferring institutions shall confer corresponding degrees on them according to the conditions in Articles 19 through 21 of this Law respectively.

Article 19 — Where a person receives undergraduate education, passes the prescribed course assessments or completes the corresponding credits, and passes the review of graduation links such as the graduation thesis or graduation design, indicating that the degree applicant has reached the following levels, a bachelor's degree shall be conferred:

- (1) having a good command of the basic theories, specialized knowledge and basic skills in the discipline or specialty field;
- (2) having the preliminary ability to engage in academic research or undertake professional practice.

Article 20 — Where a person receives postgraduate education for a master's degree, passes the prescribed course assessments or completes the corresponding credits, completes academic research training or professional practice training, and passes the degree thesis defense or the prescribed practice results defense, indicating that the degree applicant has reached the following levels, a master's degree shall be conferred:

- (1) having a solid command of the basic theories and systematic specialized knowledge in the discipline or specialty field;
- (2) academic degree applicants shall have the ability to engage in academic research work, and professional degree applicants shall have the ability to undertake professional practice work.

Article 21 — Where a person receives postgraduate education for a doctoral degree, passes the prescribed course assessments or completes the corresponding credits, completes academic research training or professional practice training, and passes the degree thesis defense or the prescribed practice results

defense, indicating that the degree applicant has reached the following levels, a doctoral degree shall be conferred:

- (1) having a solid and comprehensive command of the basic theories and systematic and in-depth specialized knowledge in the discipline or specialty field;
- (2) academic degree applicants shall have the ability to independently engage in academic research work, and professional degree applicants shall have the ability to independently undertake professional practice work;
- (3) academic degree applicants shall have made innovative achievements in the field of academic research, and professional degree applicants shall have made innovative achievements in the field of professional practice.

Article 22 — Degree-conferring institutions shall, in accordance with the conditions in Articles 18 through 21 of this Law, in light of their own academic evaluation standards, adhere to a scientific evaluation orientation, and, on the basis of fully soliciting the opinions of relevant parties, formulate and publish specific standards for the conferral of degrees in each discipline and specialty.

Chapter V — Procedures for Conferring Degrees

Article 23 — Educated persons who conform to this Law may submit application materials in accordance with the requirements of the degree-conferring institution and apply for corresponding degrees. Fresh graduates of non-degree-conferring institutions may, upon recommendation by the institutions from which they graduate, apply for degrees from relevant degree-conferring institutions.

A degree-conferring institution shall, within sixty days from the deadline for applications, examine and decide whether to accept an application and notify the applicant.

Article 24 — For applications for bachelor's degrees, the academic degree evaluation committee shall organize examination and make a resolution on whether to confer the bachelor's degree.

Article 25 — For applications for master's or doctoral degrees, the degree-conferring institution shall, before organizing the defense, send the degree applicant's degree thesis or practice results to experts for review.

Where, upon expert review, an applicant conforms to the provisions of the degree-conferring institution, the applicant shall enter the defense procedure.

Article 26 — Degree-conferring institutions shall organize master's and doctoral degree defense committees according to disciplines and specialties. A master's degree defense committee shall consist of not fewer than three members. A doctoral degree defense committee shall consist of not fewer than five members, of whom not fewer than two shall be experts from outside the degree-conferring institution.

Degree theses or practice results shall be sent to the members of the defense committee for review before the defense, and the members of the defense committee shall perform their duties independently and responsibly.

The defense committee shall organize the defense according to prescribed procedures, form a resolution on whether the degree applicant passes the defense, and announce it on the spot. The defense shall be voted on and passed by two-thirds or more of all members. Except where the content involves state secrets, the defense shall be held publicly.

Article 27 — Where a degree thesis defense or practice results defense is not passed, the applicant may, with the consent of the defense committee, make revisions within a prescribed period and re-apply for defense.

Where the doctoral degree defense committee considers that the degree applicant has not reached the level of a doctoral degree but has reached the level of a master's degree, and the degree applicant has not yet obtained a master's degree in that discipline or specialty from the institution, the committee may, with the consent of the degree applicant, make a resolution recommending the conferral of a master's degree and submit it to the academic degree evaluation committee for approval.

Article 28 — The academic degree evaluation committee shall, on the basis of the resolution of the defense committee and upon examination of the degree application, make a resolution on whether to confer the master's or doctoral degree.

Article 29 — Degree-conferring institutions shall, according to the resolutions of the academic degree evaluation committee on the conferral of bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, publish the list of persons to whom degrees are conferred, issue degree certificates, and submit degree conferral information to the provincial degree committee. The provincial degree committee shall file the degree conferral information of its administrative area with the degree committee under the State Council.

Article 30 — Degree-conferring institutions shall keep the application materials and archives such as degree theses and practice results of degree applicants; doctoral degree theses shall be deposited with the National Library and relevant professional libraries simultaneously.

Classified degree theses, practice results and degree conferral processes shall be subject to strengthened confidentiality management in accordance with confidentiality laws, administrative regulations and relevant state confidentiality provisions.

Chapter VI — Degree Quality Assurance

Article 31 — Degree-conferring institutions shall establish their own degree quality assurance systems, strengthen quality management of the entire process of enrollment, cultivation and degree conferral, disclose relevant information in a timely manner, accept public supervision, and ensure the quality of conferred degrees.

Article 32 — Degree-conferring institutions shall appoint teachers, researchers or professionals with good character and relatively high academic levels or strong practical ability as supervisors for graduate students, and establish mechanisms for selection, assessment, supervision and dynamic adjustment.

Graduate student supervisors shall serve as models for students, perform the duties of fostering virtue through education, care for and cherish students, and guide students in conducting relevant academic research and professional practice, observing academic ethics and academic norms, and improving their academic or professional levels.

Article 33 — Doctoral degree-conferring institutions shall, based on cultivating high-level innovative talent, strengthen the building of doctoral degree-conferring programs, and increase support for the cultivation and management of doctoral students, so as to improve the quality of conferred doctoral degrees.

Doctoral student supervisors shall conscientiously perform their duties in cultivating doctoral students, strictly check key cultivation links, and strengthen guidance throughout the process to improve cultivation quality.

Doctoral students shall diligently study and practice, conscientiously prepare degree theses or practice results, and ensure compliance with academic norms and innovation requirements.

Article 34 — The education administrative department under the State Council and provincial degree committees shall, within the scope of their respective duties, regularly organize experts to conduct quality assessments of approved degree-conferring institutions and degree-conferring programs. Where it is confirmed through quality assessment that the quality of conferred degrees cannot be ensured, correction within a prescribed time limit shall be ordered; where the circumstances are serious, the original approving unit shall revoke the corresponding degree-conferring qualifications.

Where a degree-conferring institution that autonomously conducts examination for the addition of master's and doctoral degree-conferring programs fails to meet the prescribed standards for graduate cultivation quality, or where there are serious problems in degree quality management, the degree committee under the State Council shall revoke its autonomous examination qualification.

Article 35 — Degree-conferring institutions may, according to the needs of their disciplines and specialties, apply to the original approving unit for cancellation of corresponding degree-conferring programs.

Article 36 — The education administrative department under the State Council shall strengthen informatization building, improve the degree information management system, and provide information services to society in accordance with law.

Article 37 — Where a degree applicant or degree recipient has any of the following circumstances during the pursuit of the degree, the degree-conferring institution shall not confer the degree or shall revoke the degree, upon resolution of the academic degree evaluation committee:

- (1) the degree thesis or practice results are determined to involve academic misconduct such as ghostwriting, plagiarism or fabrication;
- (2) stealing or fraudulently using another person's identity, substituting for another person to obtain admission qualification, or obtaining admission qualification or graduation certificate by other illegal means;
- (3) other serious illegal conduct during the pursuit of the degree for which a degree shall not be conferred in accordance with law.

Article 38 — Where a degree is conferred or a degree certificate is issued in violation of this Law, the education administrative department shall declare the certificate invalid and handle the matter in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Education Law of the People's Republic of China.

Article 39 — Where a degree-conferring institution intends to make a decision not to confer a degree or to revoke a degree, it shall inform the degree applicant or degree recipient of the content, facts, reasons and basis of the intended decision, and hear their statements and defenses.

Article 40 — Where a degree applicant has objections to the academic evaluation conclusions made by relevant academic organizations or personnel in the process of expert review, defense, results determination and the like, the applicant may apply to the degree-conferring institution for academic review. The degree-conferring institution shall, within thirty days from accepting the academic review application, reorganize experts to conduct review and make a review decision, which shall be final. The measures for academic review shall be formulated by the degree-conferring institution.

Article 41 — Where a degree applicant or degree recipient refuses to accept the non-acceptance of a degree application, the non-conferral of a degree or the revocation of a degree, the applicant or recipient may apply to the degree-conferring institution for review, or request the relevant organs to handle the matter in accordance with law.

Where a degree applicant or degree recipient applies for review, the degree-conferring institution shall conduct review and make a review decision within thirty days from accepting the review application.

Chapter VII — Supplementary Provisions

Article 42 — The military shall establish a degree committee. The military degree committee shall, in accordance with this Law, be responsible for administering the degree work of military academies and scientific research institutions.

Article 43 — Honorary doctoral degrees may be conferred on individuals who have made outstanding contributions in academic or specialized fields, or in promoting scientific education and cultural exchange and cooperation, or who have made significant contributions to world peace and human development.

Degree-conferring institutions that have obtained qualifications to confer doctoral degrees may, upon deliberation and approval by the academic degree evaluation committee and approval by the degree committee under the State Council, confer honorary doctoral degrees on individuals who satisfy the conditions in the preceding paragraph.

The specific measures for the conferral and revocation of honorary doctoral degrees shall be formulated by the degree committee under the State Council.

Article 44 — Degree-conferring institutions shall confer corresponding degrees on overseas individuals who apply for degrees in accordance with the conditions such as the academic requirements, academic levels or professional levels and the relevant procedures prescribed by this Law.

Where a degree-conferring institution confers degrees overseas, the relevant provisions of this Law shall apply.

Where overseas educational institutions confer degrees within the territory of China, they shall abide by the provisions of relevant Chinese laws and regulations.

The recognition of degree certificates issued by overseas educational institutions shall be handled strictly in accordance with relevant state regulations.

Article 45 — This Law shall come into force on January 1, 2025. The Regulations on Academic Degrees of the People's Republic of China shall be repealed simultaneously.

Disclaimer: This is an unofficial English translation of the Academic Degrees Law of the People's Republic of China, prepared for general information and reference only. It is not an official translation and has no legal effect. In the event of any discrepancy, the original Chinese text shall prevail. For legal advice or matters requiring official interpretation, please consult a qualified professional.