

The Quality Assurance Plan of the Doctoral School of Biology of ELTE Eötvös Loránd University (hereafter ELTE) follows the guidelines specified in the University Doctoral Regulations (UDR) document of the School of Sciences at ELTE.

The Doctoral School operates under the guidance of the Doctoral Councils of the School of Sciences (SoSDC) and of the University (UDC). Using the guidelines specified in its Quality Assurance Plan, the Doctoral School enforces the highest professional standards through all stages of the doctoral training (admission, doctoral studies, graduation).

The Quality Assurance Plan includes all the arrangements and defines all the institutions that ensure to continuous provision, review and verification of the requirements imposed for our students and instructors.

1. Announcement of PhD research topics

The Doctoral School Council (DSC) evaluates all proposed topics and only allows their formal announcement, if a firm intellectual and infrastructural background of the topic is guaranteed, and a high-quality doctoral dissertation can be realistically prepared with 3-4 years.

Active research and publication activity is a major requirement for all instructors. The instructors scientific output in the preceding 5 years should be significantly higher than minimal graduation requirements of the Doctoral School.

If an application is successful, and the applying student enrolls into the Doctoral School, the instructor becomes her/his official supervisor. All doctoral students have a supervisor, who is responsible for directing and assisting the research and studies of the candidate, and also help them to prepare for their graduation. A co-supervisor can help the supervisor, where appropriate.

One supervisor can oversee a maximum of three doctoral students who have not yet completed an Absolutorium.

2. Admission into the doctoral training program

Doctoral research topics are announced nation-wide on the www.doktori.hu homepage. Candidates should choose a topic of interest, and they can be admitted into the program after a successful admission hearing. Research topics are prescreened and approved by the DSC. It is the DSC's responsibility to ensure that the research topics follow the scientific progress of the field

Candidates for doctoral programs are interviewed by a committee of at least three members (for each program they apply for). The admissions committee will examine the candidates' professional background, their language skills and previous academic accomplishments, the quality of their diploma and previous performance during their university studies. The committee will also check the feasibility of the proposed research plan. This interview guarantees that only those candidates are admitted to the program, who have the necessary qualifications and training to successfully complete the program.

The DSC will make formal recruitment recommendations for the SoSDC.

3. The doctoral training

The DSC oversees the overall research topics of the Doctoral Programs and decides about the adoption of new courses or the renewal of old ones.

Core members, supervisors and instructors

The core members, supervisors and instructors of the Doctoral School are accomplished researchers with scientific degrees, whose scientific field of research is relevant to the topic of the Doctoral School. They are appointed by the SoSDC, based on the recommendation of the DSC. Information about the instructors will appear in the ODT datasheet of the Doctoral School.

The research of the doctoral candidates is overseen by their supervisor. The supervisor has the responsibility to provide the candidate with all the relevant information and knowledge necessary for the successful of the research program.

The credit system of the doctoral program

The doctoral regulations of the School provide the framework that oversees the requirements of the doctoral program. This will provide the necessary incentives for the doctoral students for continuous research and training. Students who fail to meet the required credit criteria can be excluded for the program, or required to pay for their expenses.

Courses

The Doctoral School Program Boards will review every academic year the list of offered courses. If necessary, the Board will require the instructors to update the thematics of certain courses. The Board also oversees the introduction of new courses, calling for changes when necessary. Doctoral students have the opportunity to enroll to courses offered outside the Doctoral School. Upon their certified completion, the respective Boards will decide about the credit value of these courses. The DSC will also encourage and facilitate the invitation of external experts from other Hungarian institutions or from abroad.

4. Research work

During the three years of their studies, the doctoral students are expected to conduct independent research. Each doctoral student should give at least one professional lecture per year, preferably at a foreign language meeting. The Doctoral School supports all the enrolled students to visit other universities/institutions (abroad) during their training, where the research conducted is relevant to the student's own research interests.

5. Monitoring

Every year, doctoral students report on their work to programme committees of the Doctoral School. Students present their scientific results, publications and future plans in the presence of their supervisors in a public lecture.

6. Publication requirements of the PhD degree

Submission of the dissertation is conditional on the candidate having at least two publications - including at least one of which the candidate is the first (and preferably not co-first) author - related to the topic of the dissertation, published in an English-language, peer-reviewed journal. The publications' cumulative impact factor should be at least 2, except for those research areas where the average impact factor of specialist journals is significantly lower. The 10 programs of the Doctoral School of Biology encompass extremely diverse research fields, including those where some respected scientific journals have no impact factor. In such cases, publications in scientific journals recommended by the relevant program council and approved by the Doctoral School of Biology may form the basis of the doctoral process. If the candidate commences the degree process in the 6th semester of the doctoral program, as a PhD student, then he or she must have the publications related to the topic of the dissertation and specified by the doctoral school, even when applying with a thematic outline.

7. Graduation procedure

Requirements for graduation

The detailed requirements for the graduation procedure are set out in the UDR and its faculty-specific chapter. Requests for the initiation of the doctoral degree process will be discussed in detail by the respective Program Board. The candidate's supervisor must make a written statement recommending initiation of the process and submission of the dissertation.

Program Boards regularly review and, if necessary, revise course syllabuses. Doctoral dissertations will be reviewed by an internal and an external opponent - deviation from this rule is possible only in very duly justified cases, with the approval of the respective program committee. The defense is public, and the dissertation and the thesis can be viewed before the defense on the Doctoral School's website.

Before submission, the dissertation will be evaluated by the respective Program Committee of the Doctoral School of Biology, choosing one of the following options:

1. If initiated by the program leader in agreement with the supervisor, a public debate of the dissertation may be held at the candidate's workplace before submission. In the debate, the dissertation is evaluated by an opponent with at least a doctoral degree. The debate course and opinions regarding the modification of the dissertation shall be recorded in the minutes, to which the opponent's report should be attached. In case of major revision of the dissertation, a second round of workplace debate should be organised.
2. The supervisor of the program evaluates the thesis with the expert invited by the program committee taking into account the faculty-specific evaluation criteria.
3. After the dissertation has been submitted, the members of the Evaluation Committee will receive the dissertation and the thesis booklet in print as well as in electronic form. The identity of the opponents are not public until the submission of their reports. The members of the jury receive the opponents' reports when both have been submitted, and they shall receive the candidate's responses electronically one week before the defense at the latest. When the defense is announced, the dissertation and the thesis booklet will be published on the www.doktori.hu page, which the doctoral school's website also points to.

The dissertation sent to the reviewers cannot be modified subsequently. If the Evaluation Committee objects to professionally incorrect claims or does not accept any parts of the theses, then the relevant part of the minutes is attached to the dissertation (also in electronic form), and the dissertation will be published (in the library, repository) with this supplement.

8. Concluding remarks

Annual reports

The Doctoral School is required to review its own operations on an annual basis. As the result of this review a report should be prepared for the UDC about the financial, educational, research and further scientific aspects of the program. As part of their annual report, in accordance with its quality assurance policy, the UDC will make an assessment about the quality of the Doctoral School.