

Università
della
Svizzera
italiana

Faculty
of
Biomedical
Sciences

Regulations for the Degree of PhD

2017

Approved by the University Council at 12.5.2107



- Art 1.
Scope**
1. The present Regulations set out the conditions, procedures, and the competent authorities responsible for awarding the doctoral degree of the Faculty of Biomedicine.
- Art 2.
Degree title**
1. The Faculty awards the degrees of:
 - PhD in Immunology and Cell Biology;
 - PhD in Cancer Biology and Oncology;
 - PhD in Neurosciences / Human Neurosciences.
 - PhD in Cardiovascular / Human Cardiovascular Science
 - PhD in Drug Sciences
 2. The degree of Doctor of ... attests that its holder is the author of a personal and original research of high academic distinction.
 3. The title is awarded to the candidate who has satisfied all the requirements of the doctoral programme and successfully defended his thesis in an oral examination.
 4. The title(s) may be extended to include reference to a possible specialisation.
- Art 3.
Bodies and their remit**
1. The bodies responsible for the PhD are:
 - The Thesis Director
 - The Graduate Studies Committee
 - The Board of Examiners [Jury].
 - The Mentor

¹ The terms of masculine gender used in these regulations always refer also to the corresponding feminine term.

**Art 4.
Graduate
Studies
Committee**

1. The Graduate Studies Committee comprises at least three tenured professors and/or Assistant Professors of the Faculty.
2. The Graduate Studies Committee is appointed by the Faculty Council for a two-year mandate, renewable, allowing for the different subject areas.
3. The Graduate Studies Committee designates its coordinator from among its members.
4. The Graduate Studies Committee reaches its decisions on the basis of a simple majority of the persons entitled. In the event of a draw, the coordinator's vote prevails.
5. The Graduate Studies Committee is invested with the tasks defined in the present Regulations and with any other issue connected with the objectives of the present Regulations or other Regulations of the University, at the request of the Faculty Council.
6. Each member of the Graduate Studies Committee can delegate certain defined tasks to a "Institutional delegate"

**Art 5.
The Thesis
Director**

1. The Thesis Director must be a tenured professor, an assistant professor, adjunct or a titular professor or a PD in the Faculty or a Group Leader of an research Institute affiliated at USI with a PhD degree or equivalent and a capacity to get competitive and peer-reviewed grant. A Thesis Director has to be approved by the Graduate studies committee. He shall monitor and direct the research, and guarantee that the work conducted under his supervision fully meets the international-ally recognised academic standards.
2. The Graduate Studies Committee may authorise joint supervision of a thesis, namely one assured by two Professors from different Faculties and/or Universities, provided that relations between the two Faculties and/or Universities are regulated by ad-hoc agreements and/or guidelines.

**Art 5a.
The Mentor**

1. The mentor is a full professor, assistant professor, adjunct professor or a titular professor of the Faculty or a Director of a laboratory of an institute, affiliated to USI. They support the student throughout their studies and interfere in case of conflict between the PhD student and the Thesis director.
2. Upon proposal from the Thesis director, the Graduates Studies Committee assigns a mentor to the PhD student.

**Art 6.
The Board
of Examiners**

1. The Board of Examiners (Jury) shall consist of at three professors: the Thesis Director, a professor of the Faculty or a Group Leader of an research Institute affiliated at USI appointed by a professor of the Faculty and at least one external expert.

2. The Faculty Council selects the members, on the advice of the Thesis Director, with the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee.
3. The Jury designates a chairperson from among its members. The thesis Director is not eligible to chair the Board of Examiners.
4. In case of joint supervision, the Board shall be composed in accordance with the appropriate agreements and/or regulations.

**Art 7.
Admission
Requirements**

1. The following may be admitted to the status of PhD student: holders of a Master's degree or of a Licentiate degree (under the previous higher degrees system) from a Swiss university, or holders of a Swiss or foreign degree recognised as equivalent by the Graduate Studies Committee.
2. Once admitted to the programme, the candidate is regularly matriculated with PhD status in the Faculty, regardless of whether he is a member of USI staff. His matriculation expires on the last day of the month in which he has delivered the definitive version of his thesis.

**Art 8.
Admission
procedure
to the PhD
programme**

1. Unless otherwise directed by a competition notice, the candidate for the PhD degree submits to the Committee an application including at least the following documents:
 - CV
 - degree diplomas
 - a personal statement
 - at least one reference letter.
2. Candidates who have successfully passed the first selection shall be invited to attend interview in the presence of the Thesis director responsible for the position together with either a second professor, preferably a member of the Graduates Studies Committee or as a presentation of the project at the respective laboratory. The interview may be held by video-conference. Further to the interview, a written decision shall be sent to the candidate.
3. The Thesis director, in agreement with the PhD student and the mentor, defines an individual course of study. This is sent to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval, within 12 months of the candidate's admission to PhD status.
4. The individual course of study prescribes doctoral-level courses certified by exams or other certifications forms for a total value of at least 15 ECTS. If necessary, the course of study may additionally require some complementary exam papers.
5. The Guidelines for the single PhD programmes (art. 9) may lay down specific admission procedures departing from the existing provisions.

**Art 9.
Doctoral
programmes**

1. The Faculties may set up doctoral programmes, with course subjects and related examinations run by the Faculty itself or by other academic institutions.
2. The Faculty defines the content of each programme, the way it is run and its mandatory nature, in an ad-hoc set of Guidelines.

**Art 10.
Content
of the thesis**

1. The thesis is a paper that presents the findings of a research project characterized by originality and considerable academic value.
2. With the Faculty's authorisation, the thesis may also be 'cumulative', that is to say integrate individual separate academic papers; in this case, it shall consist of at least one accepted article and the doctoral student shall be first author.

**Art 11.
Topic and
duration**

1. The topic of the thesis must be connected to one of the subject areas covered by the Faculty or the Academy.
2. From the day of his admission to the status of PhD student, the candidate is granted 12 semesters to complete and defend his thesis. The PhD program can be completed in no less than 6 semesters.
3. In the event of maternity or paternity, or for serious health problems, the doctoral candidate is entitled to extend said duration by a maximum of one year.
4. Granting an extension is a matter for the Thesis Director; if he advises against an extension, this will be referred to the Graduate Studies Committee.

**Art 12.
Language**

1. The doctoral student writes and discusses his thesis in one of the Swiss national languages or in English, in agreement with the Thesis Director.

**Art 13.
Monitoring
progress**

1. The progress made in research is verified:
 - a. within the first year of working with the Thesis director and the mentor;
 - b. within the second year by means of a mid-term review with the Thesis director, the mentor and external expert.

The Thesis director informs the student of the review in written form and sends a copy to the coordinator of the Graduates Studies Committee.

2. Should the thesis director deem that the candidate's progress in his research or his knowledge is unsatisfactory, the Graduate Studies Committee, after hearing both parties, shall present to the PhD student a list of conditions to be met, and impose a deadline. Alternatively, in serious cases, the Board will initiate the dismissal procedure, described in art. 14.

**Art 14.
Dismissal and
replacement of
Thesis Director:
motives and
procedure**

1. A candidate may be dismissed if he fails to satisfy the terms and conditions for participating in the PhD degree programme or obtaining the relative qualification, in particular if:
 - At the end of the first or (at most) the second year the Thesis Director deems that the work carried out by the student falls short of fulfilling the criteria for obtaining the degree;
 - The doctoral programme includes courses assessed by examinations, which the PhD candidate has not passed, leading to the student's exclusion by virtue of the relevant Regulations.
 - Irreconcilable differences were to arise between Thesis Director and the doctoral student, to which no solution was found for the latter to continue his course of study under the guidance of a different supervisor.
 - in other circumstances contemplated in the present Regulations.
2. The procedure is instigated without delay, and with sufficient advance notice in relation to the termination of contract. This is notified in writing by the Graduate Studies Committee.
3. The Graduate Studies Committee, having heard the interested parties separately and/or jointly, tries where possible to find a solution which allows the doctoral student to pursue his PhD degree under a different thesis director. In all other cases, the Committee rules on the dismissal with due regard to the contractual period of termination.

**Art 15.
Eligibility
of the thesis**

1. When he deems that the thesis may reasonably be accepted and defended, the Thesis Director forwards it to the other members of the Jury and organises the final discussion.
2. Within one month, the members of the jury hand in a written evaluation, suggesting that the thesis should be
 - a. accepted for discussion;
 - b. accepted for discussion subject to obligations;
 - c. rejected.

Should a thesis be accepted for the viva subject to conditions, the Board indicates in writing the necessary adjustments to be made to the thesis, and agrees with the student the time needed for the revision work. Once the revision work has been done, with a brief description of the changes introduced, the text of the thesis is once again forwarded to the members of the Examiners Board. If on the other hand it is regarded as unacceptable, the PhD student will be granted six months to resubmit the thesis for a new evaluation. If the second draft were again met with a negative evaluation, the candidate would be excluded from the PhD degree.

3. The Graduate Studies Committee acknowledges the above assessments and the discharge of possible obligations, and decides on the eligibility of the thesis for the oral examination stage.

**Art 16.
Thesis
defended,
discussed,
and assessed**

1. The defence consists in an oral presentation and discussion lasting one hour at least, during which time the candidate expounds the subject of his thesis and is asked questions by the members of the Board of Examiners regarding the subject area studied.
2. The oral presentation and discussion of the thesis are public. The Board of examiners withdraws to deliberate in strict confidence on the evaluation.
3. After the defence, the Board of Examiners accepts, defers, or rejects the thesis.
4. In case of acceptance, the Board of Examiners may still request changes and revisions of the final draft.
5. In case of deferral, the Board sets the terms and conditions for the second discussion.
6. In case of rejection, the PhD student is excluded from PhD degree studies.

**Art 17.
Award of PhD
Degree**

1. The candidate is awarded his PhD degree only after he has delivered the original of his thesis as required by the Faculty, with due consideration for the changes and revisions requested by the Board of examiners.
2. The diploma shall mention author's name, academic title obtained, the exact title and the date of its public oral examination.
3. The degree diploma is issued by Università della Svizzera italiana and by the Faculty / Academy. It is signed by the President, by the Faculty Dean / Director, and by the Thesis Director.

**Art 18.
The thesis
protected by
copyrights**

1. The writer of the thesis is regarded as its author according to the existing law on copyrights and, as such, enjoys all the rights associated with it.

**Art 19.
Publication**

1. Once accepted by the Board of examiners, the thesis may be published. The modalities of publication, whether wholly or parts of it, are set by the respective Faculties.
2. If the author chooses not to publish his thesis, the Faculty / the Academy is entitled, as a non-profit operation and to promote the dissemination of the content of the thesis, to proceed to its publication and/or use some parts of it, if during the research phases it provided the author with financial or logistic support.

**Art 20.
Differences
and litigation**

1. Should conflicts arise between PhD student and his Thesis Director, which cannot be settled with the mentor, the two parties may refer the matter to the coordinator of the Graduate Studies Committee, who intervenes in its mediating capacity.
2. If the conciliation process fails, the Graduate Studies Committee settles the question, after hearing the parties. The Committee's decision is notified in writing to the parties.
3. The decisions of the Graduate Studies Committee may be appealed against. Grievances must be addressed to the Faculty Council no later than 15 days after notification. A further appeal may be lodged against the Faculty Council, with the Canton's Administrative Court. The Law on Administrative Procedure (24 September 2013) applies.

**Art 21.
Substitutions**

The Graduate Studies Committee in its overseeing capacity endeavours to ensure that the student can carry on with his work also if the Thesis Director is for some reason unable to fulfil his obligations.

**Art 22.
Fees**

Fees are determined in accordance with art. 16 of the Regulations for admission and matriculation at USI.

**Art 23.
Enforcement**

The present Regulations come into force on 1 June 2017. It is applicable to all students registered for a PhD degree in and after the academic year 2017-2018.

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