

Università  
della  
Svizzera  
italiana

Faculty  
of  
Biomedical  
Sciences

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# PhD Study Regulations

# 2017

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pursuant to the Regulations for the Degree of PhD  
12.5.2017



**Art.1  
Activities**

1. The doctoral studies are structured in two parts: extension of studies in basic or clinical sciences, organization of individual research and study activities ultimately leading to the writing of the doctoral thesis.
2. Study and research activities include:
  - Attending doctoral courses, seminars and symposiums organised by the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences or other Institutes affiliated to USI;
  - Writing a doctoral thesis in one of the official languages of Switzerland or in English in agreement with the Thesis Director.

**Art. 2  
ECTS**

1. Each doctoral student, prior to consigning the doctoral thesis, shall earn a minimum of 15 ECTS through doctoral courses (s. Art. 3 and 4. of the present Regulations)
2. The attendance to doctoral courses and the related acknowledgement of ECTS is possible only after the formal admission to the PhD programme in accordance with Art. 8 of the PhD Regulations approved on May 12th 2017 by the University Council.

**Art. 3  
PhD  
courses**

1. The Faculty or its affiliated Institutes organise for its doctoral students a series of courses generally in English language, structured as follows:
  - a. Common courses (General skills)
  - b. Intracurricular courses (Specific skills)

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

2. The following definition regarding ECTS applies in general:

| Courses  | Description  |
|--|--|
| Internal Seminars / Conferences / Courses          | PhD students are required to participate in at least 20 of the 30 seminars during the 3 years (10 seminars per year = 1 ECTS). In general 1 whole day course = 0.5 ECTS  |
| National / International Seminars                  | Conferences duration: a whole day counts as 0.5 ECTS   |
| Journal club                                       | Presenting and discussing at least two relevant papers (2 presentations incl. preparation and discussion = 1 ECTS). Max. 3 ECTS from journal club for entire PhD programme   |
| Presenting in National / International conferences | Poster or presenting in national/international conferences (1 presentation = 0.5 ECTS)   |
| National / International courses                   | Of at least 2 days. The courses and relevant ECTS shall be approved in advance by the Thesis Director (doctoral courses organised by other Institutes affiliated to USI or other Universities). In general 2 days = 1 ECTS if not already defined  |
| Teaching activity                                  | For doctoral students at 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> year (ECTS shall be defined in advance by the Thesis Director; usually 1 ECTS = 28 hours of teaching).   |
| Exam   | If deemed necessary, by the end of the first year the Thesis Director may suggest an exam to evaluate the basic knowledge acquired by the PhD student. In general 4 ECTS for passed exam.  |
| Online courses                                     | Online courses offered by official universities or similar institutes which award ECTS are valid, if approved upfront by the GSC. If no specific amount of ECTS is mentioned, the equivalency 1 ECTS = 28 hours overall shall be applied. Online courses are usually approved if complementary to existing USI and/or Swiss courses. A maximum of 5 of the PhD ECTS can be done with online courses. |

#### Art. 4 General skills

1. In order to achieve a minimum of 5 ECTS each doctoral student, in agreement with the Thesis Director, may choose among the courses indicated in the list of PhD courses.
2. Courses must be chosen within the first year of doctorate. Modifications in itinere are possible in agreement with the Thesis Director.
3. The choice of the courses is based on the level of preparation previously acquired by the doctoral student, in relation to the selected programme and to the specific subject in which the doctoral student will conduct his research.

#### Art. 5 Specific skills

1. In order to achieve a minimum of 10 ECTS each doctoral student, in agreement with the Thesis Director, may choose among the intracurricular courses indicated in the list of PhD courses.
2. Courses must be chosen within the first year of doctorate. Modifications in itinere are possible in agreement with the Thesis Director.
3. The choice of the courses is based on the level of preparation previously acquired by the doctoral student, in relation to the selected programme and to the specific subject in which the doctoral student will conduct his research.
4. ECTS will be defined with the Thesis Director in agreement with the Graduate Studies Committee.

#### Art. 6 Mandatory courses

1. Mandatory courses are courses that the Faculty considers relevant for each doctoral student.

#### Art. 7 Information and course registration

1. The information about the registration to doctoral courses and the dates of seminars and symposiums is provided via e-mail and posted on the USI website, under the section "PhD programmes". It is the responsibility of the individual doctoral student to keep up to date.
2. Registration to individual PhD courses shall be made according to the indications given in the course programme.

#### Art. 8 Definition of internal and external doctoral student

1. The internal doctoral student is defined as a student formally enrolled in the PhD programme of the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences who has an USI employment contract as "PhD student assistant" with the USI Faculty of Biomedical Sciences or with an Institute affiliated to USI (IRB, IOR).
2. The external doctoral student is defined as a student formally enrolled in the PhD programme of the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences who has an employment contract with a clinical institution (EOC, CCT, CLM) or another institution recognised by USI.
3. For administrative purposes both categories shall be regarded as equivalent.

#### Art. 9 Internal doctoral students: course attendance

1. Before the delivery of the thesis a minimum of 15 ECTS shall be acquired by attending General skills courses for an amount of 5 ECTS and Specific skills courses for an amount of 10 ECTS.
2. Each course exam given at the Faculty, if passed, awards the relative ECTS. To pass each course exam, doctoral students are expected to attend at least 85% of classes, in addition to passing the final exam, as appropriate. The evaluation is: Pass / Not Pass. If not passed, the exam can be repeated.

**Art. 10  
External doctoral  
students: course  
attendance**

1. External doctoral students shall attend the same courses and acquire the same number of ECTS as internal doctoral students.
2. It is however possible, under specific circumstances, to request a waiver for paragraph 1 and ask to attend doctoral courses organised by other Faculties or Universities to acquire the remaining ECTS. The request duly motivated shall be issued by the doctoral student in agreement with the Thesis Director within the first year from enrolment.

**Art. 11  
PhD courses  
attended in other  
Universities**

1. It is possible to earn ECTS by attending doctoral courses organised by other Universities or Institutes affiliated to USI. In order for the ECTS to be acknowledged, the doctoral student shall submit the certificate for participation. The certificate must indicate the number of ECTS conferred and/or the number class hours.
2. If the certificate fails to mention the number of ECTS, or if these do not comply with USI standards concerning the ECTS/class hours' ratio, the following rules shall apply:
  - 1.5 ECTS for 14 class hours;
  - 3 ECTS maximum per week, regardless if total attendance exceeded 28 class hours.

**Art. 12  
Monitoring  
doctoral  
activities**

1. The progress made in research is verified
  - within the first year of work with the Thesis Director and the mentor;
  - within the second year by means of a mid-term review with the Thesis Director, the mentor and an external expert.
2. During the first year doctoral students are required to present in oral and written form the activities carried out during the year. The report shall feature training activities (including any reported course assessments and number of gained ECTS), participation in scientific events and shall provide a description and the progress of the doctoral student's research.
3. During the mid-term review the doctoral student is required to present the progress of his research, the results achieved, future goals and any publication.
4. The passing of the review is mandatory. 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. 13, Art. 14 of the PhD Regulations (approved by the University Council on 12 May 2017).

**Art.13  
Board of  
Examiners (Jury)  
of the thesis**

1. Ex Art. 6 of the PhD Regulations approved by the University Council on 12 May 2017, the Board of Examiners includes at least three Professors: the Thesis Director, a Faculty Professor or a Group Leader of a research Institute affiliated to USI appointed by a Faculty Professor, and at least one external expert.
2. The Jury Professor can be a Full Professor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Titular, Honorary or Emeritus Professor or also a Lecturer with extensive knowledge of the subject. Requirement for an external Professor or Lecturer to be appointed is to hold a PhD title. It is not necessary that the Professor has the "habilitation".
3. The external Professor or expert is a Professor or expert who has not collaborated in any way in the research and the writing of the doctoral student's thesis, and has no academic publication, working relationship or kinship with the same doctoral student. Also, a Professor or Lecturer that is part of an externally funded project in which the doctoral student is involved cannot be appointed as external Professor.
4. The Board of Examiners meets on the day of the oral defence on one of the USI campuses or on one of its affiliated Institutes. However, it is possible that the external Professors participate to the oral defence via videoconference.

**Art. 14  
PhD  
Thesis**

1. The doctoral student shall write the PhD thesis in one of the official languages of Switzerland or in English, in agreement with the Thesis Director.
2. The PhD thesis may take the form of a monograph or consist of a number of academic works (cumulative thesis).
3. The form (monograph or cumulative) of the thesis is established by explicit agreement between the doctoral student and the Thesis Director. In particular, upon consignment of the thesis, the PhD coordinator shall be informed on the form of the thesis.
4. The cumulative thesis shall contain single scientific papers (hereinafter referred to as "papers"). It shall include at least one accepted article of which the doctoral student is first author, a comprehensive introductory chapter including a presentation of the topics covered in the various articles, a discussion of the relevant literature and a concluding synthesis integrating the different results obtained.

**Art. 15  
PhD degree:  
specialisations**

1. In application of Art. 2.1 of the PhD Regulations the following majors are possible:
  - Immunology and Cell Biology
  - Cancer Biology
  - Neurosciences / Human Neurosciences
  - Cardiovascular /Human Cardiovascular
  - Drug Sciences
  - Public Health
  - Computational Biomedicine

**Art. 16  
Obtaining  
the PhD title**

1. In application of Art. 17 of the PhD Regulations approved by the University Council on May 12th 2017, the doctoral student who has successfully defended the thesis is required to submit:
  - a. to the Deanery of the Faculty (for internal filing): a digital copy (PDF format) of the final version of the thesis;
  - b. to the Lugano University Library (for the public archive):
    - an electronic based document containing a copy of the full text of the thesis (in one file) in PDF format;
    - a text file (RTF or TXT) containing the title and summary of the thesis in different languages (up to a maximum of three, including English), as well as the keywords considered suitable to describe the content of the thesis;
    - the document "Deposit agreement".

**Art. 17  
Visiting  
student**

1. Visiting students are required to be enrolled as doctoral students in another University for at least two semesters in order to be admitted as such to USI. A visiting student remains enrolled in his home University where he pays the relevant fees. (see also Art. 22 and 23 of the "Regulations for admissions and matriculations at Università della Svizzera italiana " issued on 14 April 2000").
2. The admitted visiting student shall be supervised by a Group Leader of a research Institute affiliated to USI, a Full, Assistant, Aggregate or Titular Professor of the Faculty who confirms to act as tutor and supervisor of the visiting student's research.
3. The duration of the visiting period is normally 6 or 12 months.
4. Visiting students may attend, free of charge, any PhD course given during the semester at the Faculty.

**Art.18  
Controversy**

In case of controversy, due to differences between the Italian and English version of the present Regulations, the text of the Italian version shall prevail.

**Art. 19  
Joint PhD thesis  
supervision**

1. Doctoral students may conduct their PhD thesis in collaboration with other Universities in accordance with USI under a joint supervision. The present Regulations may be adapted to the Regulations of the affiliated University in agreement with the Graduate Studies Committee.
2. In order for a doctoral student to conduct a PhD thesis in collaboration with another University, a cooperation contract must be signed by both Universities determining all details regarding this particular cooperation. USI and its partner Institutes have no obligation to pay an additional salary. The following details must be covered in the contract:
  - Enrolment date
  - Duration of cooperation
  - Fees (only payable at 1 university) / other financials (e.g. salary)
  - Main responsible
  - How the working time will be divided between the 2 Universities
  - Where the thesis will be defended and in which language, which university will be responsible for archiving / publication etc.
  - Which regulations the PhD programme will follow
  - Insurance of the PhD student
  - Diploma
  - Official contact person (member of Faculty) of each University.

**Note**

Amended with ratification of the CdP of 10.05.2021.



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