

# Regulations for the Degree of PhD

# 2016

The present Regulations come into force on 12 February 2016 and replace the previous set dated 10 July 2009.



<b>Art. 1. Scope<sup>1</sup></b>	The present Regulations set out the conditions, procedures, and the competent authorities responsible for awarding the doctoral degree of the Faculty of Communication Sciences.	3
<b>Art. 2 Degree title</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Faculty awards the degrees of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dottore in Scienze della comunicazione (Dr. sc. com.);</li> <li>Dottore in Lingua, letteratura e civiltà italiana (Dr. philol. it.).</li> </ol> The titles may be extended to include reference to a possible specialization. </li> <li>The degree of Doctor attests that its holder is the author of a personal and original research of high academic distinction.</li> <li>The title is awarded to the candidate who has satisfied all the requirements of the doctoral programme and successfully defended their thesis in an oral examination.</li> </ol>	
<b>Art. 3 Bodies and their remit</b>	<p>The bodies responsible for the PhD are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Thesis Director;</li> <li>• The Graduate Studies Committee;</li> <li>• The Board of Examiners [Jury].</li> </ul>	
<b>Art. 4 Graduate Studies Committee</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Graduate Studies Committee comprises at least three tenured professors and/or Assistant Professors of the Faculty.</li> <li>The Graduate Studies Committee is appointed by the Faculty Council for a two-year mandate, renewable, allowing for the different subject areas.</li> <li>The Graduate Studies Committee designates its coordinator from among its members.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>If required, the Graduate Studies Committee may hold a virtual meeting.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>	
<b>Art. 5 The Thesis Director</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Thesis Director must be a tenured professor, an assistant professor, adjunct or a titular professor in the Faculty. They shall monitor and direct the research, and guarantee that the work conducted under their supervision fully meets the internationally recognised academic standards. <i>Docenti-ricercatori (maître d'enseignement et de recherche, MER)</i> can take on the role of Thesis Director according to the conditions defined in the Ph.D. study programs.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>	

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

**Art. 5<sup>bis</sup>****The Thesis Co-director\***

1. The Thesis Co-director is optional.
2. The thesis co-director can be: a full or associate professor of the Faculty; an assistant professor, adjunct professor or titular professor of the Faculty; a *docente ricercatore* (MER) of the Faculty; or a lecturer from another Faculty or University with an equivalent title or the qualification to direct PhD theses. It is possible to be nominated and maintain the position also in case the person is retired. The request for appointment of a Thesis Co-director and his/her acceptance is first made by the Graduate Studies Committee and then by the Faculty Council. It must be requested at least 6 months before the nomination of the Board of Examiners. The Thesis Co-director can be part of the works of Board of Examiners, but has no right to vote.
- 3.
- 4.

**Art. 6****The Board of Examiners**

1. The Board of Examiners (Jury) shall consist of at least four professors: the Thesis Director, a professor of the Faculty and two external professors.
2. The Faculty Council selects the members, on the advice of the Thesis Director, with the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee.
3. The Board of Examiners (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 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. To be admitted to the status of PhD student, the candidate must have obtained a Master final score of no less than 8/10. It is also possible to ask for a special admission (admission "su dossier")
3. Once admitted to the programme, the candidate is regularly matriculated with PhD status in the Faculty, regardless of whether they are a member of USI staff. Their matriculation expires on the last day of the month in which they have delivered the definitive version of their 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 Graduate Studies Committee an application including at least the following documents:
  - CV;
  - Degree diplomas;
  - A personal statement;
  - At least one reference letter;
  - A preliminary outline of the research project approved and signed by the Faculty professor that will serve as Thesis Director;
  - The application documents needed for the enrolment must be signed by the Faculty professor that will serve as Thesis Director.

2. Candidates who have successfully passed the first selection stage shall be invited to attend an interview in the presence of the professor responsible for the position together with a second professor, preferably a member of the Graduates Studies Committee. The interview may be held by tele-conference. After the interview, a written decision shall be sent to the candidate.
3. The Thesis director, in agreement with the PhD student, 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 final decision about the admission of the candidate to the status of PhD student, and the formal nomination of the Thesis Director (or of the Direction College), are done by the Faculty Council based on the opinion expressed by the Graduates Studies Committee.
5. The Guidelines for the individual PhD programmes (Art. 9) may establish 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 (PhD study programme).

**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 three such papers (and additional requirements can be stated in the PhD study programme).

**Art. 11****Topic and duration**

1. The topic of the thesis must be connected to one of the subject areas covered by the Faculty.
2. From the day of his admission to the status of PhD student, the candidate is granted 12 semesters to complete and defend their thesis. The thesis can not be defended before 6 semesters from the admission.
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 they advise against an extension, this will be referred to the Graduate Studies Committee.

**Art. 12****Language**

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

### **Art. 13 Monitoring progress**

1. The doctoral student shall report, according to the format and schedule defined in the PhD study programme, on progress made in their research work. The Thesis Director shall respond with a written assessment, copied to the coordinator of the Graduate Studies Committee.
2. Should the Thesis Director deem that the candidate's progress in research or 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 they fail to satisfy the terms and conditions for participating in the PhD degree programme or obtaining the relative qualification, in particular if:
  - a. 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;
  - b. 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.
  - c. Irreconcilable differences were to arise between Thesis Director and the doctoral student, to which no solution was found for the latter to continue their course of study under the guidance of a different supervisor.
  - d. In other circumstances provided 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 that allows the doctoral student to pursue their 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 the Thesis Director deems that the thesis may reasonably be accepted and defended, they forward it to the other members of the Board of Examiners (Jury) and organises a preliminary discussion. The same may be requested by the PhD student, in case of disagreement with the Thesis Director; this request shall be addressed to the Graduate Studies Committee.
2. The preliminary discussion shall involve only the members of the Board of Examiners (by videoconference if need be).
3. Instead of the preliminary discussion, the Thesis Director might find it more appropriate to ask each member of Board of Examiners (Jury) to draft a written evaluation of the thesis. In this case, too, the PhD student may still request of the Graduate Studies Committee that s/he be invited to attend a preliminary discussion.

4. Further to the preliminary discussion or to the written evaluation, the Board of Examiners may put forward that the thesis:
  - a. Be accepted for discussion;
  - b. Accepted for discussion subject to obligations;
  - c. Rejected.

Should a thesis be accepted for the defence subject to obligations, 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 Board of Examiners. 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.

5. 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 defence.

### **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 their 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. If the thesis is accepted, the Board of Examiners (considering both the first oral or written evaluations, and then the oral presentation) rates the thesis on the following scale: *legitime, cum laude, magna cum laude, summa cum laude*. *Summa cum laude* can be granted only in case of unanimous decision by the members of the Board of Examiners.
5. In case of acceptance, the Board of Examiners may still request changes and revisions of the final draft.
6. In case of deferral, the Board sets the terms and conditions for the second discussion.
7. In case of rejection, the PhD student is excluded from PhD studies.

### **Art. 17 Award of PhD Degree**

1. The candidate is awarded a PhD degree only after they have delivered the original of their 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 the 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. It is signed by the President, by the Faculty Dean, and by the Thesis Director.

<b>Art. 18 The thesis protected by copyrights</b>	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.
<b>Art. 19 Publication</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>2. If the author chooses not to publish their thesis, the Faculty 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.</li> </ol>
<b>Art. 20 Differences and litigation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Should conflicts arise between a PhD student and their Thesis Director, which cannot be settled in their context, the two parties may refer the matter to the coordinator of the Graduate Studies Committee, who intervenes in its mediating capacity.</li> <li>2. If the conciliation process fails, the Graduate Studies Committee settles the issue, after hearing the parties. The Committee's decision is notified in writing to the parties.</li> <li>3. The decisions of the Graduate Studies Committee may be appealed. 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.</li> </ol>
<b>Art. 21 Substitutions</b>	The Graduate Studies Committee in its overseeing capacity endeavours to ensure that the student can carry on with their work also if the Thesis Director is for some reason unable to fulfil their obligations.
<b>Art. 22 Fees</b>	Fees are determined in accordance with Art. 16 of the Regulations for admission and matriculation at USI.
<b>Art. 23 Enforcement</b>	The present Regulations come into force on 12 February 2016 and replace the previous set dated 10 July 2009. It is applicable to all students registered for a PhD degree in and after the academic year 2015-2016, except for articles 02, 20 and 21, which come into effect immediately and apply to all matriculated PhD students.

Art. 5bis point 2 modified with decision of the UC on the 13.12.2019 and 05.02.2020.  
 Art. 5 point 1 modified with decision of the CdF on the 14.12.2022 and of the Senate on the 16.02.2023.



Università  
della  
Svizzera  
italiana



Faculty  
of  
Communication,  
Culture  
and Society

Regulations  
for the  
Degree of PhD