

Università  
della  
Svizzera  
italiana

Faculty  
of  
Communication  
Sciences

PhD  
Study Programme

2020/2021

2020/  
21



- Art. 1.  
PhD  
Activities**
1. The doctoral studies in communication sciences at USI are structured in three main parts: extension of studies in the field of communication sciences; preparation to academic research in both qualitative and quantitative fields; organisation of individual study activities ultimately leading to the writing of the doctoral thesis.
  2. Study and research activities include:
    - Attending doctoral courses, seminars, workshops and symposiums organised by the Faculty or other scientific institutions;
    - Writing a doctoral thesis.
- Art. 2  
ECTS**
1. Each doctoral student, prior to consigning the doctoral thesis, shall earn a minimum of 15 ECTS through doctoral courses.
  2. The attendance to doctoral courses, Winter/Summer Schools and/or Thematic Schools, and the related earning and acknowledgement of ECTS, is possible only after the formal admission to the PhD programme in accordance to Art. 8 of the PhD Regulations of 2016.
- Art. 3  
PhD  
courses**
1. The Faculty organizes a series of courses, generally in English language, for its doctoral students, structured as follows:
    - Mandatory courses, divided into Foundations and Methods;
    - Recommended courses;
    - Elective courses.
  2. Mandatory courses, Foundations, are the following:
    - Philosophy of science (1.5 ECTS, up to 14 class hours);
    - Traditions of communication sciences (1.5 ECTS, up to 14 class hours);
    - Legal and ethical aspects of research (3 ECTS, up to 28 class hours).
  3. Mandatory courses, Methods, are the following:
    - Quantitative methods (3 ECTS, up to 28 class hours);
    - Qualitative methods (3 ECTS, up to 28 class hours).
  4. Recommended courses are the following:
    - Academic teaching (3 ECTS, up to 28 class hours);
    - Research policy and grant proposal writing (3 ECTS, up to 28 class hours).
  5. Elective courses are organised during the entire academic year by both the Graduate Studies Committee and the individual Faculty institutes. They are categorized in: Theory, Methods, and Skills.
- Art. 4  
Mandatory  
courses,  
Foundations**
- Mandatory courses, Foundations, are to be attended in the Faculty, taking classes it organises each year.

**Art. 5  
Mandatory  
courses,  
Methods**

1. In order to attend the mandatory course in Quantitative methods, each doctoral student, in agreement with the Thesis Director, may choose between these options:
  - Basic course in Quantitative methods offered by the Faculty at the Master level;
  - Intermediate course in Quantitative methods offered by USI at the PhD level during the USI Summer School in Social Science Methods;
  - Advanced course in Quantitative methods offered by USI through Winter/Summer schools or by other Universities. The choice of these courses is based on the level of preparation previously acquired by the doctoral student.
2. In order to attend the mandatory course in Qualitative methods, each doctoral student, in agreement with the Thesis Director, may choose between these options:
  - Course in Qualitative methods offered by USI at the PhD level during the USI Summer School in Social Science Methods;
  - Course in Qualitative methods offered by USI through Winter/Summer Schools or by other Universities.

The choice of these courses shall be made in relation to the specific subject in which the doctoral student will conduct her/his research.

**Art. 6  
Recommended  
courses**

Recommended courses are courses that the Faculty considers relevant for each doctoral student, and attendance to which is suggested.

**Art. 7  
Information  
and course  
registration**

1. The information about registration to mandatory, recommended and elective courses, and related schedules and course syllabus, is provided via e-mail. This information is posted also on the USI website, under the section "PhD doctoral courses". It is the responsibility of the individual doctoral student to keep up to date.
2. Registration for individual PhD courses shall be made on the dedicated USI web platform.

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

The internal doctoral student is defined as a formally enrolled PhD student who also has an USI employment contract as "PhD student assistant." The external doctoral student is defined as a formally enrolled PhD student without an USI employment contract as "PhD student assistant".

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

1. Attendance to mandatory courses, Foundations and Methods, for a total of 12 ECTS, shall occur during the first two years from the date of enrolment in the PhD programme. The remaining 3 ECTS (to acquire the minimum 15 ECTS ex Art. 3 of this study programme) can be obtained through recommended and elective courses organized by the Faculty, but also through Winter/Summer Schools and doctoral courses organized by other Faculties and/or Universities. The remaining 3 ECTS shall be earned prior to consigning the PhD thesis.

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.

**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 and when duly motivated, to request a waiver for par.1 and ask to attend Winter/Summer Schools or Thematic Schools organized by the Faculty, for a total amount of 12 ECTS. The remaining 3 ECTS (to acquire the minimum 15 ECTS ex Art. 3 of this study programme) can be acquired by attending doctoral courses offered by the Faculty or other Universities. The request for exemption, 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 also possible to earn optional ECTS by attending courses and doctoral Winter/Summer Schools or Thematic Schools organized by other Universities. In order for the ECTS to be acknowledged, the doctoral student shall submit the certificate of participation, including indication of having passed any form of examination, by e-mail message to the address of Gestione Dottorato (gestione-dottorato.com@usi.ch). 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.
3. It is possible to attend online PhD courses offered by Universities, in agreement with the PhD thesis Director. In that case, if a final exam has to be passed, the exam can be taken at the University that offers the course, or at USI in presence of a professor or a post-doc assistant who monitors the exam. The doctoral student must inform the Graduate Studies Committee of the date and hour of the exam at least two weeks in advance of the exam.

**Art. 12  
Annual  
activity  
report**

1. All doctoral students, internal and external, that on the 30th of September are enrolled in the PhD for at least six months, and that by the 30th of September have not yet submitted their PhD thesis, are required to submit the activity report under Art. 13 of the PhD Regulations of 2016.
2. The report shall be submitted once a year, in the period between the 1st and the 30th of September, in electronic format, to the Graduate Studies Committee (gestione-dottorato.com@usi.ch), and shall include a description of the activities carried out during the previous year. The report shall feature training activities (including any reported course assessments), participation in scientific events, and shall provide a description and the progress of the doctoral student's

research (including details on any article under review, accepted or published).

3. The annual report shall be submitted by the doctoral student only once it has been approved and signed by the Thesis Director.
4. In case the report is not submitted by the aforementioned deadline, the doctoral student receives a reprimand after 2 weeks and is urged via email to submit the report. In case in the following 2 weeks the report is not yet submitted in the required forms, the doctoral student is summoned by the Coordinator of the Graduate Studies Committee. If in the next 2 weeks the doctoral student does not provide information, nor submit the annual report, nor during the meeting provides persuasive motivations explaining why the report has not been submitted, the doctoral student is excluded from the PhD programme with decision of the Graduate Studies Committee under Art. 14 of the PhD Regulations of 2016.

**Art. 13  
Intermediate  
assessments**

Each Institute Director, at least once per semester, organises a PhD seminar (open to all professors, tutors, post-doctoral assistants, and doctoral students of the Faculty) at which doctoral students present their work in progress. Each doctoral student is expected, in the course of his/her studies, to present his/her work: once at the end of the first year of enrolment, and the second towards the conclusion of his/her research project.

**Art. 13<sup>bis</sup>  
Modification of  
the research  
topic**

Each doctoral student is admitted to the PhD with a research topic approved by the Graduate Studies Committee and by the Faculty. In case the candidate, in agreement with his/her thesis Director, wants or has to change the research topic in a substantial way, the modification has to be communicated to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval. The request for a research topic modification has to be communicated as soon as possible and at least 1 year prior to handing in the thesis

**Art. 14  
Board of  
Examiners  
(Jury) of the  
thesis**

1. Ex Art. 6 of the PhD Regulations 2016, the Board of Examiners of the thesis includes at least four professors: the Thesis Director, a Faculty member, and two external professors.
2. Eligible external professors are: full professors, associate professors, assistant professors, aggregate professors, titular, honorary, or emeritus professors, or also lecturers with extensive knowledge of the subject. The requirement for an external professor or lecturer to be appointed to the Board of Examiners is to have a PhD title. It is not necessary that the professor has the "habilitation". In exceptional cases, member of the Jury can be also a university professor, without a PhD among their title, but member of a University that can award PhD titles.
3. The external professor is a professor who has had no contractual relation of professorship or lectureship with USI during the 3 academic years following the date of appointment on the Board of Examiners. Also, the external professor is a professor who has not contributed in any way in the research and/or the writing of the doctoral student's thesis, and has no academic publication, working

relationship or kinship with the same 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. However, it is possible that one or both of the external professors participate to the oral defence via tele/ video-conference.

**Art. 15  
Thesis grade**

1. Ex Art. 16 of the PhD Regulations 2016, the Board of Examiners awards (taking into account both the preliminary oral or written evaluations, and the presentation and discussion of the thesis) one of the following four honours: *legitime*, *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, *summa cum laude*. The distinction *summa cum laude* can only be conferred by unanimous vote of the Board of Examiners. In the event of a tie, the vote of the president of the Board of Examiners prevails.
2. Ex Art. 5bis of the PhD Regulations 2016, the thesis Co-director can participate in the discussions of Board of Examiners, but without voting rights.
3. In the case of a cumulative thesis (Art. 16) in which the Director of the thesis is co-author of one or more academic papers, s/he shall submit a written evaluation of the thesis, but cannot express a vote for the final grade.

**Art. 16  
Forms of  
PhD thesis**

1. The PhD thesis may take the form of a monograph or consist of a number of academic works, hereinafter "papers", (cumulative thesis).
2. 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.
3. The cumulative thesis shall contain: at least three papers submitted to academic journals, or presented at academic conferences, with peer review (approved or under review. Duly justified exceptions are subject to approval by the Graduate Studies Committee). A comprehensive introductory chapter including a presentation of the topics covered in the various articles. A discussion of the relevant literature. A concluding synthesis integrating the different results obtained. The introduction, discussion and conclusion chapters of thesis must consist of no less than 30 pages in total.
4. In the case of a cumulative thesis, the Thesis Director shall pay particular attention to the following points:
  - The role of the doctoral student in each of the articles, if they are the work of more than one author;
  - At which stage of the publishing process are the articles;
  - The level and quality of the journals/conferences to which the papers were submitted or by which they were published.
5. In the case of a cumulative thesis and papers with multiple authors, in at least 2 of these papers the doctoral student shall be first author.
6. In the case of a cumulative thesis and papers with multiple authors, and if the authors are doctoral students at the Faculty, the paper can be included only once in the thesis of one of the doctoral students

(that of the first author). The paper may be included in the PhD thesis of more than one doctoral student, but in this case it shall not be considered for the minimum count of 3 papers required for a cumulative thesis.

**Art. 17  
PhD degree:  
specialisations**

In application of Art. 2.1 of the PhD Regulation 2016, the titles of PhD in Communication Sciences / Lingua, letteratura e civiltà italiana may be completed with the mention of a specialisation. The request for an indication of a specialisation, subject to agreement with the Thesis Director, shall be sent by e-mail to gestione-dottorato.com@usi.ch. The request can be made at the time of enrolment in the PhD, but must be submitted at least six months prior to the consignment of the thesis. The request is evaluated and approved first by the Graduate Studies Committee, then by the Faculty Council.

**Art. 18  
Obtaining the  
diploma**

In application of Art. 17 of the PhD Regulation 2016, the doctoral student who has successfully defended the thesis is required to submit:

1. to the Deanery of the Faculty (for internal filing): a printed copy in hard cover of the final version of the thesis;
2. to the Lugano University Library (for the public archive):
  - 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 "Approval of the final version of the thesis" (as appropriate) signed by the Thesis Director and the coordinator of the Graduate Studies Committee.

**Art. 19  
Visiting  
students**

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 at USI. A visiting student remains enrolled in his/her home University where s/he pays the relevant fees. (see also Art. 22 and 23 of the "Regolamento per le ammissioni e le immatricolazioni all'Università della Svizzera italiana del 14 aprile 2000").
2. The admitted visiting student shall be supervised by a full, assistant, aggregate or titular professor, or lecturer, who claims and confirms to act as tutor and supervisor of the visiting student's research.
3. Visiting students may attend, free of charge, any mandatory, recommended or elective PhD course given during the semester at the Faculty. Regular fees shall apply, however, for Winter/Summer Schools and/or Thematic Schools organized by the Faculty.
4. The duration of the visiting period is normally 6 or 12 months.

**Art. 20  
Controversy**

This PhD Study Program is translated into English from the original Italian text. In case of controversy, due to differences between the two texts, the text of the Italian version shall prevail.

Università  
della  
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Faculty  
of  
Communication,  
Culture  
and Society

PhD  
Study  
Programme