

Good Practice of Doctoral Studies

The purpose of the good practice of doctoral studies of the University of Tartu ('the university') is to define the objectives and general principles of doctoral studies across the university to ensure high quality of doctoral studies. The good practice of doctoral studies is an advisory code of conduct for all parties of doctoral studies.

I. General principles

1. A doctoral student is a student who has all the rights and duties of students. An external doctoral student is a person who, while following a doctoral curriculum, has the duties of students and the rights provided for in the bylaws of the university. A doctoral student and an external doctoral student (below jointly referred to as the 'doctoral student') must be considered and treated as a junior researcher and a colleague.
2. A doctoral student's research, creative, study and development activities and work with students must be supervised and supported. In addition to high-level supervision and teaching, the university:
 - 2.1. encourages co-supervision through which it is possible to make supervision more effective at the university, combine different disciplines and promote cooperation between universities and with the business sector;
 - 2.2. ensures the counselling and support services to the parties of doctoral studies in accordance with the specifics of doctoral studies;
 - 2.3. in the event of disagreements between the parties of doctoral studies, ensures the mechanisms for their impartial settlement.
3. The university's supervisor is a professionally competent researcher who is well familiar with the university and the international research system and possesses characteristics and competences required for supervision. When appointing a supervisor for a doctoral student, the supervisor's existing workload at all study levels, the prior effectiveness of supervision and the ability to finance the research of the supervised persons must be taken into account. When appointing new doctoral students to be supervised, it is also taken into account that the total number of doctoral students to be supervised would allow ensuring the best possible quality of supervision for each supervised doctoral student.
4. The most important quality guarantee of doctoral studies is cooperation based on the mutual trust and respect of the doctoral student and the supervisor(s), which clearly defines the tasks, responsibilities, expectations and needs of all parties of doctoral studies.
5. The parties of doctoral studies conclude a PhD study agreement that, among other topics, sets out more specific principles of cooperation.

II. Objectives of doctoral studies

6. The university enables a doctoral student to acquire, above all, the following:
 - 6.1. the skill of conducting scientific research;
 - 6.2. teaching and supervision skills;

- 6.3. the skill of management, teamwork and drawing up projects (incl. funding applications);
- 6.4. the experience in promoting the specialisation;
- 6.5. the knowledge of legal protection of intellectual property;
- 6.6. the skill of writing research articles.

III. Advisory code of conduct for parties of doctoral studies

III.1. Advisory code of conduct for doctoral student

7. The doctoral student's priority is completing the curriculum within the standard period of study and dedication to the research related to doctoral studies. To achieve that, the doctoral student:
 - 7.1. at the beginning of doctoral studies, gets to know the structure and principles of work of the university and the regulations regarding doctoral studies as well as the employees whom the doctoral student will work with in the course of studies;
 - 7.2. actively takes advantage of the opportunities created at the university for doctoral studies, incl. the assistance of the supervisor(s), counselling services, material and technical resources, and is proactive and independent in planning and conducting their studies and research;
 - 7.3. participates in the doctoral seminars, conferences and other events of the university or doctoral school and, through them, seeks opportunities to introducing their research to and engage in academic discussion with other doctoral students and researchers;
 - 7.4. actively looks for and uses additional support measures and funding opportunities for writing the doctoral thesis;
 - 7.5. submits materials calling for feedback (plans, conference statements, articles, etc.) to the supervisor(s) with the proper formatting, in the agreed form and within the agreed term;
 - 7.6. informs the supervisor(s) and third parties participating in doctoral studies (the funder, industry partner, party commissioning the research, etc.) regularly about the progress of their research, incl. about changes in the time of completing the research (or its stages), topic or contents of the thesis or a longer period of absence. The doctoral student immediately informs them about any circumstances that influence or impede the completion of the curriculum, the research or the performance of other tasks related to doctoral studies;
 - 7.7. in case of difficulties in contacting or communicating with the supervisor(s), immediately informs the programme director, the head of the institute or the dean about the problems and, if addressing the programme director, head of the institute or the dean did not yield any results, the specialist in charge of doctoral studies at the Office of Academic Affairs and actively looks for constructive solutions;
 - 7.8. is responsible for the quality of their research based on the principles of intellectual property protection, data protection and (research) ethics, and other principles described in the European Charter for Researchers;
 - 7.9. gathers, systemises and preserves all materials related to the doctoral studies and research;

- 7.10. asks the supervisor(s), fellow doctoral students and other researchers connected with the research for feedback on their research and takes it into account when planning further activities;
 - 7.11. completes the basic training in teaching and supervision and participates in teaching as a teaching assistant in bachelor's or master's studies. If this is the first teaching experience of the doctoral student, it will be done under the supervision of an experienced member of the teaching staff;
 - 7.12. supervises at least one bachelor's or master's thesis. If this is the first time the doctoral student supervises a thesis, it will be done under the supervision of an experienced member of the teaching staff;
 - 7.13. reviews at least one bachelor's and one master's thesis. If this is the first time the doctoral student reviews a thesis, it will be done under the supervision of an experienced member of the teaching staff;
 - 7.14. ensures the confidentiality of the information needed for the doctoral studies, research or the performance of other tasks or the information for professional purposes, which becomes available in the course of these activities;
 - 7.15. actively participates in activities that promote research;
 - 7.16. uses only licensed software;
 - 7.17. creates and updates their account in the Estonian Research Information System (ETIS).
8. The doctoral student has the right to:
- 8.1. get information needed for doctoral studies and research, incl. use the university's resources (databases, specialised literature, archives, laboratories, etc.) to that end;
 - 8.2. make proposals to the supervisor(s) and other relevant employees of the university to improve doctoral studies and resolve any occurring problems as well as point to problems in following legal instruments related to doctoral studies;
 - 8.3. participate in meetings where the studies or research of the doctoral students or issues related to other duties of the doctoral studies are discussed;
 - 8.4. refuse to perform additional tasks if these are not related to the doctoral studies and research and if their volume, frequency and/or nature would impede the performance of the main tasks of the doctoral student;
 - 8.5. refer to problems related to research ethics, incl. express reasoned suspicions of plagiarism;
 - 8.6. apply for a change of the (co-)supervisor and/or the appointment of a co-supervisor if the (co-)supervisor does not perform their duties or is not sufficiently competent in the topic of the doctoral thesis;
 - 8.7. apply for a change of the topic of the doctoral thesis when it becomes evident that the (co-)supervisor is not sufficiently competent in the approved topic, the resources required for research are insufficient, etc.

III.2. Advisory code of conduct for supervisor

and, depending on the agreement specified in clause 9.15 on the division of work, also for the co-supervisor

9. The supervisor's priority is to support the doctoral student in every way (not limited to research) to contribute to the successful completion of the doctoral studies within the standard period of study. To achieve that, the supervisor:
 - 9.1. ensures the availability of the materials, accessories and funds needed for the doctoral student's research, and creates a supporting and inspiring environment;
 - 9.2. if the research topic and its funding are related to a fixed-term project, explains to the doctoral student upon signing the PhD study agreement the possible consequences of the extension of studies and/or failure to submit the doctoral thesis by the prescribed time;
 - 9.3. guides and advises the doctoral student in the choice of courses;
 - 9.4. supports the doctoral student in applying for scholarships and grants;
 - 9.5. creates opportunities for the doctoral student to communicate with the international community of researchers of the specialisation based on the research needs of the doctoral student;
 - 9.6. gives feedback to the doctoral student within the agreed time limit if the doctoral student has submitted materials by the prescribed time;
 - 9.7. gives recommendations as to which conferences and seminars to attend and which scientific journals to focus on when writing articles;
 - 9.8. accepts the doctoral student as an independent junior researcher and ensures that the supervisor is referred to as an author in the publications relating to the doctoral student's research only to the extent of the supervisor's actual substantive participation;
 - 9.9. advises the doctoral student, incl. in particular if there is an external contractual partner, in matters of intellectual property, involving experts, where necessary, and advises and inspects the doctoral student in following the principles of research ethics;
 - 9.10. immediately reacts to a suspicion of plagiarism, informing the dean and the head of the institute of that, where necessary;
 - 9.11. recommends that the doctoral student involve bachelor's and master's students in research and helps the doctoral student to do that, so that students of different levels of higher education can personally participate in research;
 - 9.12. guides and inspects the doctoral student in following safety requirements arising from research and provides the doctoral student with means needed for complying with the safety requirements;
 - 9.13. involves or advises other teaching staff to involve the doctoral student in teaching within the limits of their specialisation, making sure that the volume of additional tasks given to the doctoral student does not prevent the performance of their main tasks;
 - 9.14. if necessary, involves an experienced member of teaching or research staff to supervise the additional tasks (teaching, supervision of a bachelor's or master's thesis, etc.) given to the doctoral student;
 - 9.15. if the doctoral student has (a) co-supervisor(s), agrees on the division of work with the co-supervisor(s);

- 9.16. immediately informs the doctoral student if their progress or the level of their work is not sufficient and draws up a plan of supportive activities jointly with the doctoral student (and the co-supervisor(s)) and, if necessary, involves the head of the institute, the specialist in charge of doctoral studies at the Office of Academic Affairs and/or other employees from or outside the university;
 - 9.17. immediately informs the programme director, the head of the institute and/or the dean if any circumstances that prevent the progress of the doctoral student in studies and/or research become evident;
 - 9.18. based on time limits, cooperates with the doctoral student (and the co-supervisor(s)) in drawing up the doctoral student's individual plan and verifying the implementation of that, developing research, preparation for progress review and adjustment of work plans;
 - 9.19. keeps themselves informed about the internal and external regulations on doctoral studies;
 - 9.20. regularly undertakes self-improvement in supervision skills, taking into account the feedback received from doctoral students.
10. The supervisor has the right to:
- 10.1. make proposals to the doctoral student and to the co-supervisor(s) and other relevant employees of the university to improve doctoral studies and resolve problems that occur as well as point to problems in following legal instruments related to doctoral studies;
 - 10.2. refuse to give feedback on the materials submitted by the doctoral student if these were not submitted by the deadline or in the agreed form, and refuse to proofread these materials;
 - 10.3. receive advice and assistance from the university in resolving conflict(s) with the doctoral student;
 - 10.4. request that the faculty council release them from the supervision of the doctoral student if the doctoral student has knowingly breached the PhD study agreement, failed to perform their duties or knowingly violated or failed to follow the rules provided for in the Study Regulations;
 - 10.5. by agreement with the doctoral student, request that the council of the relevant structural unit appoint (a) co-supervisor(s) to the doctoral student;
 - 10.6. by agreement with the doctoral student, apply to the council of the relevant structural unit for a change of the research topic of the doctoral student, if necessary.

III.3. Advisory code of conduct for review committee

11. When assessing the progress of the doctoral student, the review committee supports the purposeful development of the further studies and research of the doctoral student. To achieve that, the committee:
 - 11.1. examines the materials (incl. the feedback given by the doctoral student and the supervisor(s)) submitted by the doctoral student for progress review before the review meeting;
 - 11.2. when reviewing the doctoral student's work and assessing the doctoral student's progress in studies and research, relies on the materials submitted by the doctoral student for progress review (incl. the feedback given by the doctoral student and the supervisor(s)), not on the personal characteristics of the doctoral student or the supervisor(s), etc.;

- 11.3. if necessary, discusses at the review meeting the controversies detected in the feedback given by the doctoral student and/or the supervisor(s) and, if necessary, informs the programme director, the head of the institute or the dean about problems and, in cooperation with the parties of doctoral studies, takes actions required for resolving these problems;
- 11.4. makes recommendations to the doctoral student and the supervisor(s) for the successful defence of the doctoral thesis;
- 11.5. if necessary, ensures the confidentiality of the materials submitted for progress review (for protecting the personal data, a state secret, a trade secret or other classified information included in the research of the doctoral student) and declares the review meeting closed with regard to the doctoral student.

III.4. Advisory code of conduct for council awarding doctoral degrees

12. With the transparency of its activities and its objective and justified decisions, the council awarding doctoral degrees ('the council') ensures the trustworthiness of the doctoral degrees awarded at the university. To achieve that, the council:
 - 12.1. when allowing the doctoral thesis to be defended, making an assessment at the defence meeting of the doctoral thesis and making other decisions, follows unambiguous rules and criteria provided for in the Procedure For Awarding Doctorates, the rules of procedure of the council, the corresponding course syllabus of the doctoral thesis in the Study Information System, and the established rules of procedure;
 - 12.2. when making an assessment, relies on the fulfilment of the formal requirements, substantive quality and the criteria for the defence (academic debate) of the doctoral thesis, not on the personal characteristics of the person applying for the degree or those of the supervisor(s), etc.;
 - 12.3. when selecting opponents and reviewers, relies on the criterion of professionalism and the principle of prevention of a conflict of interests;
 - 12.4. in a timely manner and exhaustively explains to the reviewers and opponents their role, the meaning of allowing a thesis to be defended and the procedure for defence;
 - 12.5. takes the duty to state the reasons of its decision seriously, indicating all substantive and formal circumstances that influenced the decision.
13. The decision of the council to "allow the thesis to be defended" or "not to allow the thesis to be defended" respectively means that the doctoral student "deserves a doctoral degree in the event of the successful defence of the thesis" or "does not deserve a doctoral degree for this thesis". By allowing the thesis to be defended, the council certifies that it declares the doctoral thesis to be in compliance with the substantive and formal requirements established for a research paper and the applicant for a doctorate to be worthy of the doctorate, unless the council must revise its initial assessment due to circumstances that become evident at the defence (e.g. plagiarism or fraud or very poor defence).