

## **Good practice of doctoral studies**

The purpose of the good practice of the doctoral studies (hereinafter the good practice of doctoral studies) of the University of Tartu (hereinafter the University) is to define the goals and general principles of doctoral studies in the University in order 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 candidate is a student who has all the rights and duties of students and an external doctoral candidate is a person who, upon completing a doctoral curriculum, has the duties of students and the rights provided for in the legal instruments of the University. A doctoral candidate and an external doctoral candidate (hereinafter doctoral candidate) 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 studies, the University:
  - 2.1. encourages co-supervision through which it is possible to make supervision more effective in 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 competencies required for supervision. Upon appointing a supervisor for a doctoral candidate, the supervisor's existing workload at all stages of study, the prior effectiveness of supervision and the ability to finance the research of the supervised persons must be taken into account. Upon appointment of new doctoral candidates to be supervised, it is also taken into account that the total number of doctoral candidates to be supervised would allow for ensuring the best possible quality of supervision for each supervised doctoral candidate.
4. The most important quality guarantee of doctoral studies is cooperation based on the mutual trust and respect of the doctoral candidate and the supervisor(s), which clearly defines the tasks, responsibilities, expectations and needs of all the parties of doctoral studies.
5. The parties of doctoral studies conclude a doctoral studies contract that, among other things, sets out more specific principles of cooperation.

## **II. Objectives of doctoral studies**

6. The University enables a doctoral candidate 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 advocating 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 candidate***

7. The doctoral candidate' priority is to complete the curriculum within the standard period of study and dedication to the research related to the doctoral studies, thereby the doctoral candidate:
  - 7.1. at the beginning of the doctoral studies, examines the structure and principles of work organisation of the University and the rules of doctoral studies as well as gets familiar with the employees whom the doctoral candidate will meet in the course of the studies;
  - 7.2. actively takes advantage of the opportunities for doctoral studies created in the University, incl. the assistance of the supervisor(s), counselling services, material and technical resources, and is proactive and independent in planning and completing 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 of opportunities of introducing their research and academic discussion with other doctoral candidates and researchers;
  - 7.4. actively looks for and uses additional support measures and funding opportunities for writing the doctoral thesis;
  - 7.5. submits to the supervisor(s) materials calling for feedback (plans, conference statements, articles, etc.) with the proper layout, in the agreed form and within the agreed term;
  - 7.6. informs the supervisor(s) and third parties participating in doctoral studies (the financier, business partner, party commissioning the research, etc.) regularly about the progress of their research, incl. about changes in the time (stages) of completion, topic or contents of the thesis, a longer period of absence and immediately inform the aforementioned persons about any circumstances that influence or impede the completion of the curriculum, research or the performance of other tasks relating to the doctoral studies;
  - 7.7. in the event of difficulties in contacting or communicating with the supervisor(s), immediately informs the programme manager, the head of the institute or the dean about the problems and, if addressing the programme manager, head of the institute or the dean did not give any results, the specialist-in-charge of 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, systematises and preserves materials relating to the doctoral studies and research;
  - 7.10. asks the supervisor(s), fellow doctoral candidates and other researchers relating to the thesis for feedback about their research and takes it into account upon planning further activities;
  - 7.11. completes basic training in teaching and supervision and participates as an assistant teacher in conducting teaching (if the doctoral candidate gains their first teaching experience, it will be done under the supervision of an experienced teacher) in bachelor's or master's studies;
  - 7.12. supervises at least one bachelor's or master's thesis (if it is the doctoral candidate's first time to supervise a thesis, it will be done under the supervision of an experienced teacher);
  - 7.13. reviews at least one bachelor's and one master's thesis (if it is the doctoral candidate's first time to review a thesis, it will be done under the supervision of an experienced teacher);
  - 7.14. ensures the confidentiality of the information required for the doctoral studies, research or the performance of other tasks or information for official purposes, which becomes available in the course of the former;
  - 7.15. actively participates in activities that popularise science;
  - 7.16. uses only licensed software;
  - 7.17. creates and updates their account in the Estonian Research Information System (ETIS).
8. The doctoral candidate has the right to:
- 8.1. receive information required 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 the doctoral studies and resolve problems as well as point to problems in following legal instruments pertaining to doctoral studies;
  - 8.3. participate in meetings where the studies or research of the doctoral candidate or issues relating to other duties of the doctoral candidate are under discussion;
  - 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 candidate;
  - 8.5. refer to problems relating to research ethics, incl. express reasoned suspicions of creative theft;
  - 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 section 9.15 regarding the division of supervision, also for co-supervisor**

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

- 9.16. immediately informs the doctoral candidate if their progress or the level of the work performed is not sufficient and draws up a plan of supportive activities jointly with the doctoral candidate (and the co-supervisor(s)) and, if necessary, involves the head of the institute, the specialist-in-charge of the Office of Academic Affairs and/or other employees from or outside the University;
  - 9.17. immediately informs the programme manager, the head of the institute and/or the dean if any circumstances that prevent the progress of the doctoral candidate in studies and/or research become evident;
  - 9.18. based on time limits, cooperates with the doctoral candidate (and the co-supervisor(s)) in drawing up the doctoral candidate's individual plan and verifying the implementation thereof, developing research, preparation of evaluation and adjustment of work plans;
  - 9.19. keeps themselves informed about the University's internal and external rules of doctoral studies;
  - 9.20. regularly undergoes training in supervision skills and thereby takes into account the feedback received from doctoral candidates.
10. The supervisor has and, depending on the agreement specified in section 9.15 regarding the division of supervision, also the co-supervisor has the right to:
- 10.1. make proposals to the doctoral candidate and to the co-supervisor(s) and other relevant employees of the University to improve the doctoral studies and resolve problems as well as point to problems in following legal instruments pertaining to doctoral studies;
  - 10.2. refuse to give feedback to the materials submitted by the doctoral candidate if these were not submitted within the prescribed time limit 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 candidate;
  - 10.4. request that the council of the faculty refuse to supervise the doctoral candidate if the doctoral candidate has knowingly breached the contract of the doctoral studies, 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 candidate, 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 candidate, if necessary.

### ***III.3. Advisory code of conduct for evaluation committee***

11. Upon making an assessment of the progress of the doctoral candidate, the evaluation committee supports the purposeful development of the further studies and research of the doctoral candidate, thereby:
  - 11.1. before the evaluation meeting, examines the materials (incl. the feedback given by the doctoral candidate and the supervisor(s)) submitted by the doctoral candidate for evaluation;
  - 11.2. upon evaluating the doctoral candidate and assessing the doctoral candidate's progress in studies and research, relies on the materials submitted by the doctoral candidate for evaluation (incl. the feedback given by the doctoral

- candidate and the supervisor(s)), not on the personal characteristics of the doctoral candidate or the supervisor(s), etc.;
- 11.3. if necessary, discusses at the evaluation meeting the controversies detected in the feedback given by the doctoral candidate and/or the supervisor(s) and, if necessary, informs the programme manager, the head of the institute or the dean about problems and, in cooperation with the parties of the doctoral studies, takes actions required for resolving the problems;
  - 11.4. makes recommendations to the doctoral candidate and the supervisor(s) for the successful defence of the doctoral thesis;
  - 11.5. if necessary, ensures the confidentiality of the materials submitted for evaluation (for protecting the personal data of the doctoral candidate, a state secret or a trade secret or other classified information) and declares the evaluation meeting closed with regard to the doctoral candidate.

#### ***III.4. Advisory code of conduct for defence council***

12. With the transparency of its activities and the objectiveness and reasonableness of its decisions, the council awarding doctorates (hereinafter the defence council) ensures the trustworthiness of the doctoral degrees awarded in the University, thereby:
  - 12.1. upon 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 course syllabus of the doctoral thesis in the Study Information System, and the established rules of procedure;
  - 12.2. upon 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. upon selection of 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 authorising the defence of the doctoral thesis and the procedure for defence;
  - 12.5. takes the duty to state the reasons of its decision seriously, indicating all the substantive and formal circumstances that influenced the decision.
13. The decision of the defence council to “allow to be defended” or “not to allow to be defended” respectively means the assessment “deserves a doctorate in the event of the successful defence of the thesis” or “does not deserve a doctorate for this thesis”. By allowing the thesis to be defended, the defence council certifies that it declares the doctoral thesis to be 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 defence council must revise its initial assessment due to circumstances that become evident in the defence (e.g. a creative theft or fraud or very poor defence).