Quality Assurance Plan

Doctoral School of Economics, University of Szeged

From September 1, 2021

I. Basic principles of quality assurance Doctoral School of Economics at the University of Szeged:

1) The coordination of quality assurance tasks for doctoral training is carried out by the Doctoral School Council (hereinafter referred to as DSC) and its chairperson. Operational coordination and control tasks are coordinated by the Doctoral School (hereinafter referred to as DS) based on the chairperson's proposal and the DSC's approval. The quality assurance officer shall perform his or her duties on the basis of the annual quality assurance plan approved by the DSC.

2) Quality assurance tasks are divided partly among the teachers, researchers, and supervisors responsible for training, and partly among the staff responsible for administrative tasks, educational organization, and student affairs.

3.) The DSC develops and adopts a quality improvement strategy for a period of at least three years. The development of the strategy, with the involvement of the staff of the Doctoral School, is the responsibility of the quality assurance officer. Based on the proposal of the quality assurance officer, the DSC reviews and evaluates the status and tasks of quality assurance each academic year. This primarily includes the review of training, assessment, research, publications, domestic and international academic relations and projects, the organization of education, and the administrative aspects of all of these, based on the analysis of the relevant documents.

4.) Based on the annual quality assurance review report, the DSC develops and adopts an operational action plan. At the same time, it decides on any necessary modifications or additions to the quality development strategy on a rolling basis.

5.) In operating its quality management (quality control, quality assurance, and quality improvement) system, the DS strives to apply the following principles:

a. *The principle of openness, transparency, and continuous documentation*. Accurate documentation related to doctoral training and the provision of comprehensive information to the professional and scientific community at every stage of the doctoral training and research process are fundamental requirements. Documentation is prepared for all decision points related to doctoral training. Checking the documentation is a fundamental task of the quality management system. (At the same time, it is important that the documentation be rational, i.e., that the administrative burden on staff involved in doctoral training not increase during the development, operation, and further development of the quality management system.) Keeping the professional and scientific community informed creates the primary conditions for transparency, relationship building, external control, and the utilization of results.

b. *The principle of professional control, feedback, and benchmarking*. The DSC regularly monitors and evaluates the work of doctoral students, teachers, researchers, supervisors, administrative staff, and senior staff, and provides continuous feedback on the quality of their work. An important element of quality management is the continuous monitoring of doctoral

training in similar foreign and domestic workshops and the academic performance of doctoral students studying in them. It is also essential to publish experiences and utilize elements that can be adapted to the work of DS.

c. *The principles of quality focus, scientific innovation, and practical applicability*: It is important to continuously improve the activities of both students and teachers and to develop a commitment to quality. The DS aims to ensure that students, teachers, administrative staff, and senior staff continuously raise their standards for themselves and their environment, while at the same time integrating humility towards science into their value system and making initiative and creativity one of the cornerstones of their thinking. Doctoral dissertations are required to achieve new scientific results. At the same time, the fundamental goal is that the choice of topics for dissertations and the results of research should help to formulate answers to socio-economic questions, i.e., where this requirement is applicable, the results should be applicable in practice.

d. *The principle of compliance with scientific ethical requirements and the protection of intellectual property*. The DS strives to fully comply with and enforce the principles of scientific ethics in all of its training, research, administrative, and management activities. It applies the resolutions of the Scientific Ethics Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in its work processes and enforces the regulations of the Faculty of Economics regarding plagiarism. The development of the quality management system must also contribute to ensuring that doctoral training and research, as well as administrative and management activities at the DS, are always in full compliance with the efforts and provisions of the European Union and the Republic of Hungary aimed at protecting intellectual property.

e. *The principle of individual responsibility and efficiency*. Although the establishment and operation of a scientific school is a team effort, it can only be successful if there is a clear understanding of who is responsible for what in the training and research process, and if the internal division of labour allows for scientific individuality, uniqueness, and personal responsibility. Scientific individuality – and the development of scientific individuality – is a sine qua non of the work carried out at the DS. At the same time, doctoral training is not a cheap activity and the resources available to the DS are limited. Therefore, the controlled and efficient use of the latter is a very important framework condition and requirement. In order to concentrate its available resources in a reasonable and effective manner, the DS must ensure that students are able to conduct their studies under the guidance of the most knowledgeable instructors in the given field and at the best-equipped research facilities. Therefore, cost-effectiveness must also be pursued in doctoral training. This includes the requirement to continuously monitor costs and analyse the cost/benefit ratio.

II. Main elements and areas of the quality management system:

1.) Elements of quality assurance during admission to the DS:

- Defining the conditions for application and participation in the training and reviewing them annually, taking into account experience (minimum requirement: a university degree with good grades and a C-level intermediate language exam in at least one language).

- Development of an evaluation scoring system for the entrance exam and updating it as necessary based on experience.

2.) Continuous renewal of the training topics and subject content

- Continuous maintenance of the doctoral training topics, presentation of the latest scientific results during the training

- Regular renewal of the content of the subjects

- Annual evaluation of both the curriculum and the content and renewal of the teaching materials by the Doctoral School Council.

3.) Evaluation of students' academic work

- Each subject is assessed by means of an examination. It should be noted that one of the important forms of assessment used during the training is the "homework assignment," or essay, the basic purpose of which is to develop and improve doctoral students' skills in literature processing, written analysis, evaluation, modelling, and expression. Another form of assessment is the presentation, which aims to develop oral expression skills. Of course, other forms of assessment also have a place in the system

- Another fundamental element of assessment is the *research forum*, the purpose of which is for doctoral candidates to report on their research results to other doctoral candidates and experienced teachers and researchers. The DS organizes the research forum every spring semester, starting in the first academic year. All candidates write a scientific paper for the research forum and give a presentation on their research topic and the research and analysis work they have done in connection with it. The study and the presentation, agreed upon with the supervisor, must also be submitted in writing. The presentation is followed by an academic discussion, which begins with the opinion of an invited student opponent. The research forum is led by a leading instructor of the doctoral program, and the candidate's supervisor also participates if possible. Starting in the sixth semester, students write a 45-60 page (3-4 sheets) study on their research topic for the research forum, reviewing the international literature from a theoretical and methodological perspective.

- The *complex exam* is a key element in the evaluation of students' academic work. At the end of the training and research phase of the program and as a prerequisite for beginning the research and dissertation phase, students must pass a comprehensive exam that measures and evaluates their academic and research progress. The prerequisite for admission to the comprehensive exam is the completion of the "training and research phase" of the doctoral program (first four semesters) and the acquisition of all "training credits" required by the doctoral school's training plan (except for those preparing for a doctoral degree individually, whose student status is established by applying for and being accepted to the comprehensive examination). The comprehensive examination must be taken publicly before a committee. The examination committee shall consist of at least three members, at least one-third of whom shall not be employed by the institution operating the doctoral school. The chair of the examination committee shall be a university professor or professor emeritus or a lecturer or researcher holding the title of Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. All members of the examination committee shall hold an academic degree. The supervisor of the doctoral candidate taking the examination may not be a member of the examination committee. The comprehensive examination consists of two main parts: in one part, the candidate's theoretical knowledge is assessed ("theoretical part"), and in the other part, the candidate's scientific/artistic progress is assessed ("dissertation part"). In the theoretical part of the comprehensive examination, the candidate takes an exam in at least two subjects/topics, the list of which is included in Appendix 5. In the second part of the comprehensive exam, the candidate gives a

presentation on their knowledge of the literature, reports on their research results, and presents their research plan for the second phase of their doctoral training, as well as the schedule for completing their dissertation and publishing their results. The supervisor evaluates the candidate in writing in advance. The members of the examination committee evaluate the theoretical and dissertation parts of the examination separately on a scale of 0-5. The comprehensive examination is successful if the majority of the committee members consider both parts of the examination to be successful, award at least 3 points to each part, and the average score is at least 3. A report containing a written evaluation of the comprehensive examination shall be prepared. The results of the exam must be announced on the day of the oral exam. If the theoretical part of the exam is failed, the examinee may retake the exam once during the given exam period for the subject(s) that were not passed. If the dissertation part of the exam is failed, it cannot be retaken during the given exam period.

- Students' work should also be supported by facilitating their participation in domestic and international scientific conferences and by monitoring their performance at these forums, i.e., by reviewing and evaluating the submitted studies, posters, and presentations. The supervisor is responsible for this work. The supervisor summarises their assessment for each individual in their semester/annual reports.

- In order to prevent and filter out *plagiarism*, all homework assignments, studies prepared for research forums, theses submitted for workplace discussion and public defence are subject to online verification, which is managed by the DS secretary.

4.) Quality assurance requirements to be enforced during the defence

- *Publication requirements*. An important tool for quality assurance is that the candidate must have a sufficient number and quality of publications, as determined by the DSC's scoring system, by the time of the defence. The condition for admission to the workplace defence is the fulfilment of the minimum publication requirements set by the DSC. The Doctoral School Council will assess the suitability of the publications as a condition for admission to the workplace defence for each candidate.

- *Workplace discussion*. A doctoral candidate may be admitted to the public defence of their doctoral thesis if they have previously defended their thesis in a so-called "workplace discussion" and have complied with the comments and suggestions received there in connection with their thesis. The procedure and rules for workplace defence are the same as for public defence. At the workplace defence, two qualified experts recognized in the field must be invited as reviewers, at least one of whom must be "external" (i.e., not employed by the faculty), and the chair must be a university professor or habilitated associate professor. The workplace defence is organized by the secretary of the DSC, a memorandum is prepared, and an attendance sheet is drawn up, indicating the academic qualifications of those present (the participation of at least seven academically qualified persons is required at the workplace defence) and whether those present recommend the submission of the thesis: without changes, with minor changes, or with thorough revision (in the latter case, the thesis may be submitted for public defence no earlier than 6 months after the workplace defence).

- *Proof of proficiency in two modern foreign languages*. The first foreign language may be English, German, or French. Proof of language proficiency requires at least an intermediate C type – intermediate B2 level, general language, complex – state-recognized language exam or equivalent certificate. The other language requires at least a basic C type state language exam.

- Standardizing the evaluation criteria for theses during the defence is an important task of quality assurance. Renowned experts in the field should be invited to evaluate the dissertations.

5.) Quality assurance requirements for instructors and supervisors

- Only members of the doctoral school or instructors/researchers with academic qualifications accepted by the GTDT may serve as supervisors. The maximum number of doctoral candidates assigned to a single supervisor is determined by the council.

- Each semester, the supervisor shall submit a written report to the Doctoral School Council on the progress of doctoral students.

- Only instructors with academic qualifications may teach at the doctoral school.

- Student evaluations of the work of instructors shall be conducted each semester and for each subject.

6.) Quality assurance requirements related to infrastructure conditions

- The DS, with the help of the Faculty, provides accommodation (office and computer) for full-time doctoral students participating in doctoral training. For students enrolled in correspondence and individual programs, the DS shall provide at least one room with a computer, as needed.

- The development of the literature supply is a priority task of the DS.

7.) Quality assurance tasks related to the coordination of the training process

- Regulation of the tasks and powers of the chair and members of the DSC, the heads of the workshops, the secretary of the doctoral school, and the quality assurance officer.

- Regulation of cooperation between the DS and the workshops and institutes hosting doctoral students, and regular evaluation of work processes.