

QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN FOR DOCTORAL TRAINING AND THE AWARDING OF THE DOCTORAL DEGREE AT THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL IN ECONOMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED

The quality assurance plan is mainly based on the following documents:

- University of Szeged Regulations Governing the Doctoral Training Programmes and the Awarding of the Doctoral Degree
- Quality Assurance Guidelines for Doctoral Training and the Awarding of the Doctoral Degree at the University of Szeged
- quality assurance policies of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
- the Rules of Operation of the Doctoral School of Economics and Business Administration
- Quality Assurance Plan of the Doctoral School in Economics, previously renewed in 2021.

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Aims and principles of quality assurance

The most important objective of the Doctoral School in Economics quality assurance system is to continuously improve the quality of doctoral education, increase student and faculty satisfaction and well-being, and take advantage of internationalisation. The achievement of these objectives can be guaranteed by the current staffing conditions of the Doctoral School in Economics and by the well-developed and properly enforced regulations (primarily the Rules of Operation and the Training Plan) based on the requirements and guidelines of the Hungarian Doctoral Council, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee and the University of Szeged. The latter documents are referred to in several places in the Quality Assurance Plan without repeating the details.

In the design and implementation of quality assurance, in accordance with the University of Szeged's Quality Assurance Guidelines, we focus on raising the academic quality of training in a controllable and accountable manner, adopting a student-oriented approach and widening social access to doctoral training.

Key aspects:

- *The principles of quality focus, scientific innovation and practical applicability.* It is crucial to continuously improve the performance of lecturers and students and their commitment to quality. We consider it a core value to foster academic autonomy, critical thinking, initiative and creativity. Doctoral dissertations are required to achieve new scientific results. The choice of thesis topics and the research results must contribute to the formulation of answers to socio-economic questions, i.e., where this requirement is meaningful, they have a socio-economic impact.
- *The principles of openness, transparency and documentation.* Documentation is kept on all the critical decision points in doctoral training and is available to all participants in the work. The monitoring of this is a fundamental task of the quality management system. The continuous provision of information to the professional and scientific

community is a prerequisite for transparency, networking, external monitoring and the exploitation of results.

- *The principles of professional control, feedback and benchmarking.* The Council of Doctoral School monitors and regularly evaluates the work of doctoral students, lecturers, researchers, supervisor, administrative and management staff and provides continuous feedback on the quality of their work. Our objectives include regularly assessing and discussing student opinions and suggestions and initiating justified changes. An important element of quality assurance is the continuous monitoring of the academic performance of doctoral students in leading foreign and domestic workshops of similar profiles, the building of relationships and the use of experiences.
- *The principle of compliance with science ethical requirements and intellectual property protection.* The Doctoral School in Economics strives to ensure that the principles of scientific ethics are fully respected and enforced in all its training, research, administrative and management activities. In its work processes, it enforces the resolutions of the Science Ethics Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and observes the regulations of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration regarding plagiarism. The quality assurance system must also contribute to ensuring that doctoral training and research, as well as administrative and management activities at the Doctoral School in Economics, are at all times in line with European and national provisions on the protection of intellectual property.
- *The principle of individual responsibility and efficiency.* Although the design and running of a school of science is a team effort, it can only be successful if roles and responsibilities are clear and if the internal division of labour allows room for scientific personality, individuality and personal responsibility. The presence of academic personalities in doctoral training and the development of academic personalities in students is essential. However, this training is costly. Controlled and efficient use of the resources available, constant monitoring of costs and analysis of the cost/benefit ratio is important framework conditions and requirements. A Doctoral School in Economics should ensure that students can study under the best-qualified professors in the subject area, in the best-equipped research facilities, and a cost-effective manner.

2. Roles and responsibilities for quality assurance

A clear definition of roles and responsibilities is also crucial to quality assurance activities. The Head of the Doctoral School is responsible for the quality assurance of the Doctoral School. The work of quality assurance is coordinated and monitored by the Council of Doctoral School. The Council of Doctoral School appoints a Quality Assurance Referent to prepare the Quality Assurance Guidelines. Based on a proposal from the Quality Assurance Referent, it adopts the Quality Assurance Plan and reviews and evaluates the situation and tasks in this area every academic year. It will pay particular attention to training, assessment, research, publications, national and international academic contacts and projects, teaching organisation and administration. Based on a proposal from the rapporteur, the Council of Doctoral School shall discuss and adopt the annual quality assurance report of the Doctoral School, ensure that any justified changes are implemented and review the overall Quality Assurance Plan as necessary,

but at least every three years. The documents and decisions related to this work will be kept in electronic form in the Council of Doctoral School archives and available on Coospace.

In the regulatory, quality assurance and information management processes, the Doctoral School's lecturers and supervisors, as well as the doctoral students, can participate partly directly (through the evaluation system for lecturers and doctoral students, the annual meetings of supervisors, and individual suggestions, requests, complaints) and partly through representation (through the forums of the Council of Doctoral School, and the Doctoral Council of the Faculty, through the student representative). The Secretary of the Doctoral School plays a vital role in collecting and interpreting student opinions.

In matters concerning student status in doctoral studies, the responsibilities are defined in the doctoral and administrative regulations.

3. Regulation and documentation

The regulation and documentation of doctoral training processes is essential for achieving the objectives of the Quality Assurance Guidelines. The processes from the admission of the doctoral student to the award of the degree are regulated and documented in the Doctoral School in Economics' Rules of Operation and Training Plan. Information on all the processes, rules and documentation of doctoral training is made available to doctoral students through the Doctoral School's website, Coospace platform, printed information materials and personal information. These materials (in particular, the admission requirements and the Guide to Degree Awarding) will be reviewed at least every three years and updated as necessary.

The public documents of the Doctoral School in English and Hungarian are permanently available on the website of the Doctoral School in Economics in English and Hungarian.

II. MAIN ELEMENTS AND AREAS OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

1. Lecturers and supervisors of the Doctoral School

There are enhanced requirements for lecturers and supervisors in doctoral studies, in line with the recommendations of the Hungarian Doctoral Council and the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. The professional and academic requirements for core members, the Head of the Doctoral School and training programme directors, course supervisors and supervisors are laid down in the current Rules of Operation of the Doctoral School in Economics.

The Doctoral School's lecturers and supervisors are essentially full-time faculty staff who meet the compliance requirements. Only lecturers with an academic degree and sufficient experience may be responsible for a course and supervise a topic. Efforts are also made to involve young faculty members, who already hold an academic degree, in doctoral training in the first years as co-supervisors alongside experienced colleagues. This will ensure that the pool of contributors is continuously expanded and updated, while at the same time ensuring professional control and meeting quality standards. The selection of lecturers and supervisors is approved by the Council of Doctoral School and the Disciplinary Doctoral Council.

Although the training is predominantly based on internal resources, we also involve external experts in teaching and supervising in response to student needs and the need to raise standards. In order to expand international contacts, we attach particular importance to the recruitment of foreign colleagues, usually as co-supervisors. Their role is also essential in the dissertation review process.

External lecturers and supervisors not employed by the University may be invited - after careful consideration, to improve the quality of training and meet the needs of students' choice of subjects - if the Faculty's human resources are scarce in the given field. These professionals must meet the conditions set by the Doctoral School in Economics for internal staff in terms of academic degree and teaching/research activity. We strive to ensure that external colleagues are known and recognised experts in their field and pay particular attention to the need to maintain an active and regular relationship with the Doctoral School. In the case of external supervisors, it is advisable - although not essential, particularly in the case of long-term collaboration - that a faculty member as co-supervisor supports their work.

Lecturers and supervisors at the Doctoral School in Economics are expected to perform their work conscientiously, to a consistently high standard, and to demonstrate a level of research activity that, alongside their teaching, will lead them to be recognised by the Faculty and the wider academic community as eminent experts in their subject. This should be reflected in an appropriate number and quality of publications. The Council of Doctoral School will monitor the fulfilment of these conditions and comprehensively assess them in preparing the annual quality assurance report.

The termination of a supervisor's assignment may be initiated by the supervisor or the doctoral student if the subject of the previously selected research is changed or if there are obstacles to the continuation of the joint work by either party. The Head of the Doctoral School and its Secretary will actively assist in resolving any conflicts, finding a satisfactory solution for all concerned and appointing a new supervisor. The Head of the Doctoral School may also take the initiative of terminating the status of the supervisor if the quality of the lecturer's or external colleague's work falls significantly and persistently below the generally established standards. The termination, the change of supervisor and the recruitment of a new co-supervisor, shall be approved by the Disciplinary Doctoral Council on the recommendation of the Council of Doctoral School.

The Doctoral School reviews the topic descriptions annually, before and during the admissions process, when accepting or rejecting applicants' topic proposals.

The Doctoral School constantly reviews the number of trainers and supervisors (as well as core members) by individual decisions, which are linked to the necessary changes in the Training Plan and the choice of subjects for the students admitted.

2. The admission procedure

The admission requirements and the rules of the admission procedure ensure the quality-oriented selection of students. These elements are set out in the Rules of Operation of the Doctoral School in Economics.

An important part of the admission examination is an oral interview, in person or online, especially for foreign applicants, to assess their preparedness and professional intelligence, as well as their academic record, language skills and ideas for future doctoral work. The admission procedure is open-ended and is determined by the candidate's professional interests and achievements to date and by the research topic chosen.

The examination must be taken on the recommendation of the Council of Doctoral School before a committee of at least three members appointed by the Doctoral Council of the discipline. The chairman of the Committee shall be the senior lecturer of the Faculty; the secretary shall be the Secretary of the Doctoral School or the senior lecturer who replaces him; the members shall be lecturers holding an academic degree. The candidate's future supervisor may attend the admission interview with the right of deliberation. The Committee evaluates the

performance of the candidates, ranks them according to the marks obtained and recommends or rejects their admission. The Disciplinary Doctoral Council, on the recommendation of the Council of Doctoral School, takes the final decision.

The scoring system for admission is set out in the Doctoral School's Rules of Operation.

The experience of the admission process is evaluated by the Council of Doctoral School every academic year, and actions are defined (e.g. methods of informing interested MSc students and criteria for pre-screening foreign applicants). The experience is also summarised in the annual quality assurance reports of the Doctoral School in Economics.

3. The doctoral programme

The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration provides the human and material resources for the doctoral programme. The Doctoral School in Economics provides accommodation (office and computer) for full-time doctoral students and at least one computer room for correspondence and individual students. For their research, doctoral students have access to the entire infrastructure of the University, to the library of textbooks and journals, to the online databases and software packages available at the Faculty and the University Library, which we are constantly expanding, with the support of the Faculty.

The Doctoral School ensures the transfer of the most up-to-date theoretical and practical knowledge through teaching the subjects announced in the training programme and through the activities of the supervisors. The Council of Doctoral School monitors the quality of the teaching, the content and publication of the subjects, and the requirements for accountability. The topics of compulsory and eligible courses are constantly monitored by the Council of Doctoral School, and modified as necessary with the assistance of the lecturers.

Doctoral students will study in a transparent credit system, the details of which are set out in the Rules of Operation and Training Plan of the Doctoral School in Economics. The Doctoral School in Economics monitors doctoral students' progress at the end of each semester. One form of this is a subject-related examination, which may include "homework" or an essay, aiming to develop and improve the students' literary processing, analytical, evaluative, modelling and expressive writing skills. Another critical form of assessment is the bi-annual Research Forum, where each doctoral candidate gives a presentation on his/her research. The presentation is followed by a scientific debate in which the tutors lead the forum, and fellow students give their views. As the third form of accountability, students will report to their supervisor every six months on their research achievements and the progress of their studies.

The Doctoral School continuously documents data on student progress, including publications. Doctoral students are required to open and maintain their MTMT records. If any action needs to be taken on the progress, the Head of the School or the Secretary of the Doctoral School in Economics will notify the student or the supervisor. In addition to promoting quality work, the aim is to deal with individual problems personally to prevent drop-outs.

We believe it is crucial for students to regularly attend national and international academic conferences to test their performance, improve their oral and written expression and build broad professional contacts. Submitted papers, posters and presentations are reviewed in advance by the supervisor, which is also an integral part of the semester assessment. The Doctoral School in Economics supports conference applications from doctoral students from its budget (including participation fees, accommodation and travel expenses) and supports other trips abroad, such as participation in summer universities. Each year the Doctoral School itself organises an international PhD workshop. In order to promote publication activities, the best papers are also published in a Faculty publication after peer review. The Doctoral School in

Economics also helps students appear internationally by paying for language proofreading and other publication costs.

Plagiarism, intentional or negligent, is considered a serious ethical offence, in line with the Faculty's rules on plagiarism. Its prevention is the responsibility of both the student and the supervisor during the doctoral programme, and the peer review process for published papers helps to prevent this. If there is a suspicion of plagiarism in the case of term papers or papers prepared for a research forum, it is the responsibility of the lecturers concerned to investigate this. We plan to subject theses submitted for workplace discussion and public defence to online checking under the guidance of the Secretary of the Doctoral School in Economics if the plagiarism detection software provided by the Klebelsberg Library at the University of Szeged is available.

The student review system for lecturers also covers doctoral training. The procedure, methods, rules and the consideration of information generated by student reviews are set out in the relevant Faculty regulations. The Doctoral School in Economics endeavours to conduct a student evaluation of the work of its lecturers each semester and for each subject. Individual indications and complaints from students are received by the administrator of the Doctoral School in Economics, the necessary action is taken by the Head or Secretary of the Doctoral School, and the doctoral student is informed of the action taken.

More broadly, we believe that creating a safe learning environment in doctoral education is important. The most critical element of this is to address the challenges arising from the diversity of students' backgrounds and cultures and to prevent conflicts, misunderstandings, offensive language, etc., between students, possibly in their relationships with tutors, supervisors, and, if such situations arise, to help resolve them. The management and the Secretary of the Doctoral School have a pivotal role to play in this, in accordance with the Faculty's policies and procedures.

4. A comprehensive exam

A key element in assessing students' progress is the comprehensive exam at the end of the training and research phase. One of the conditions for passing the examination is the acquisition of at least 90 credits in the first four semesters of doctoral studies and all the "training credits" provided for in the Training Plan of the Doctoral School (except for students preparing for their degree individually, whose student status is established by accepting the complex examination). The other condition is the fulfilment of the minimum publication requirements, which are detailed in the Training Plan.

The comprehensive exam rules are detailed in the Rules of Operation of the Doctoral School in Economics. Accordingly, the examination must be taken in public, in front of a board. The examination board comprises at least three members, at least one-third of whom must not be employed by the institution operating the Doctoral School. The chairperson of the examination board shall be a university professor or a Professor Emeritus or Doctor of Science, and all members shall hold a scientific degree. The Disciplinary Doctoral Council, on the recommendation of the Council of Doctoral School, elects the Committee.

The comprehensive exam consists of two main parts: one part assessing the candidate's theoretical knowledge ("theoretical part") and the other part assessing the candidate's academic progress ("dissertation part"). In the theoretical part, the student will take an exam in at least two subjects/subject areas, the list of which is set out in Annex 5 to the Rules of Operation. In the dissertation part, the doctoral student shall present a lecture on his/her knowledge of the literature, report on his/her research results, outline his/her research plan for the second phase

of doctoral studies and the timetable for the preparation of the dissertation and the publication of the results. The supervisor will give the candidate a preliminary written assessment. The members of the Committee mark the two parts separately, and a written evaluation report is drawn up.

5. Doctoral Degree process

In addition to submitting the first draft of the dissertation, the requirements for publication and foreign language skills must be met before the degree procedure can be started. The candidate must have a sufficient number and quality of publications by the time of the defence, as determined by the scoring system adopted by the Council of Doctoral School, and must have fulfilled the minimum requirements. They must also provide evidence of knowledge of two foreign languages through a state-recognised language examination or equivalent. The exact requirements are set out in the Doctoral School in Economics' Rules of Operation and Training plan. The Secretary of the Doctoral School will verify compliance before the start of the examination procedure.

A doctoral candidate may only be admitted to the public defence of their thesis if they have previously defended the draft of the thesis in a preliminary defence and revised it by the comments and suggestions received there. The procedure and rules for the preliminary defence are the same as for the public defence. At the preliminary defence (also), two qualified experts recognised in the field must be invited to act as opponents, at least one of whom must not be employed by the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. The chairperson shall be a qualified academic with a degree in the subject matter. The preliminary defence shall be organised by the Secretary of the Council of Doctoral School, a note shall be taken, and an attendance sheet shall be prepared to indicate the academic qualifications of those present (a minimum of 7 academically qualified participants is expected) and whether they recommend that the thesis be submitted: without changes, with minor changes or with a major revision. The final version will be placed in the University Repository of Degree Theses.

The content and format of the thesis and the accompanying thesis proposal are specified in the Doctoral School in Economics' Rules of Operation. The responsibility for ensuring that the thesis content is adequate lies primarily with the thesis supervisor, the preliminary defence contributors (prefaces) and the referees. The Disciplinary Doctoral Council, on the recommendation of the Council of Doctoral School, appoints the public defence committee and the two formal opponents at the time of submission of the thesis. The opponents recommend the acceptance or rejection of the thesis, and the committee members evaluate the student's performance with a score between 0 and 5. The average of these scores determines the grade for the degree, in accordance with the University of Szeged's Regulations Governing the Doctoral Training Programmes and the Awarding of the Doctoral Degree.

Preliminary defence and public debate follow long-established and well-established rules, and there is no reason to review them regularly.

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