Doctoral regulations of the Université catholique de Louvain

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Special provisions specific to the CDSS: Health Science doctoral committee: "Medical Sciences, Public Health, Dentistry, Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Motor Skills"

(4 pages)

SPECIFIC RULES

Abbreviations: CA, *comité d'accompagnement* (supervisory panel); CDD, *Commission Doctorale du Domaine* (subject-specific doctoral committee); CP, *Commission de Proximité* (local committee); EDT, *Ecole doctorale thématique* (Graduate School).

Under the "Landscape" Decree, uniform regulations have been drawn up by the Academy for Research and Higher Education (ARES) concerning the formation of examination boards responsible for conferring doctoral degrees.

Under their own rules, universities specify the practical arrangements for organizing PhD examination boards, as well as all other aspects relating to doctoral studies.

1/ Entry requirements

The doctorate entry requirements are specified in Article 115 § 1 of the "Landscape" Decree and in Section 2.2.2. of the UCLouvain doctoral regulations.

2/ Doctoral training

Doctoral training is defined in a flexible and specific way, based on the needs of doctoral students and their academic record. The doctoral training programme is proposed by the doctoral student in close collaboration with his/her supervisor(s) and the members of his/her CA. The content of the doctoral training programme is approved by the CDD, which regularly assesses the student's progress and validates the activities he/she completes in this context.

The breakdown of the 60 credits of the doctoral training programme is as follows:

- 20 credits for thesis defence: mid-term evaluation, 5 credits; private defence, 10 credits; and public defence, 5 credits
- between 5 and 10 credits for training: attendance at high-level schools/colleges, conferences and scientific congresses, courses organized by the EDTs, UCLouvain and/or other institutions.
- 5 credits of transferable skills (scientific writing, research valorisation, leadership and management, career support); 1 credit is awarded for the mandatory training on scientific integrity : 4 modules of "Mind the Gap" (Good Academic Research Practices; https://mindthegap.vlir.be/). The obtained certificate must be sent to the PhD administrative coordinator, who will include it in the doctoral program's tracking documents.
- between 5 and 20 credits for scientific communication skills: developing and using scientific communication skills by drafting and presenting scientific proposals, articles and papers
- between 15 and 25 credits for publication (two original publications as first author are required)
- possibly providing teaching support, worth a maximum of 6 credits

Special provisions specific to the CDSS:
Health Science doctoral committee
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3/ Key players and various stages involved in doctoral studies

At UCLouvain, a single committee has been created for the Health Science field of study ("Medical Sciences, Public Health, Dentistry, Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Motor Skills"). This committee delegates the tasks of local, daily management of doctoral students' records to "local committees" (*commissions de proximité*, CPs).

3.1 Key players

3.1.1 Local committees

Composition

- The creation or dissolution of a CP is subject to the approval of the CDD.
- The CPs are made up of members representing the different scientific disciplines in the field covered by the CP; the members are chosen by their peers.
- The CPs decide on the number of their members. The CDD recommends a number of members proportional to the number of doctoral students that come under a particular CP. For information, 6-8 students/member seems to be workable and compatible with the inclusion of at least one CP member in each supervisory panel (*Comité d'Accompagnement*, CA). The members of a CP choose their Chair, if necessary by means of a simple majority vote.
- The composition of the CPs is subject to the approval of the CDD. The CDD Chair seeks advice from the research institutes that cover the CP's scientific activities.
- Each CP changes 15% of its membership annually, i.e. one in 6 or 7 members. This rule applies to CPs that have been in existence for more than five years. The term of office served by the members is unlimited. The CP Chairs inform the CDD of any changes in the composition of the CP.
- A list of the CPs and their members is available at: https://uclouvain.be/en/sectors/sss/commissions-de-proximite.html

Tasks

The CPs are responsible for the local, daily management of doctoral students' records. They appoint the CA Chairs.

3.1.2 Supervisor

The procedure for appointing a supervisor, the eligibility criteria for supervising a PhD thesis, and the tasks of a supervisor are specified in Annex 4 of the UCLouvain doctoral regulations.

3.1.3 Supervisory panel

- The composition of the CA and its tasks are specified in the UCLouvain doctoral regulations.
- Any proposal to change the composition of the CA is submitted by the CA Chair to the CDD Chair.
- The CA is supplemented by an additional member, appointed by the CP and chosen from among its members, for the purpose of the mid-term evaluation.

Special provisions specific to the CDSS:
Health Science doctoral committee
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3.2 Stages involved in doctoral studies

The various stages involved in doctoral studies are detailed at
https://uclouvain.be/en/sectors/sss/different-steps-of-the-phd.html

3.2.1 Mid-term meeting (confirmation test)

Within a maximum of 24 months after admission to the doctoral program, PhD students must undergo a mid-term evaluation (confirmation test). This period can be extended to 36 months for assistants and part-time doctoral students.

3.2.2 Thesis defence procedure

The UCLouvain doctoral regulations stipulate two methods for organizing the private and the public defences. The Health Science CDD has opted for the first method, which stipulates that the private and the public defences are separated in time (cf. Section 2.5 of the UCLouvain doctoral regulations).

The public defence comprises a presentation lasting about 45 minutes and is in two parts: a summary of the objectives and results of the thesis in language that lay people can understand, including the doctoral student's family and friends (approx. 15 min), followed by a scientific presentation (30 minutes), about which the examination board and possibly the audience ask questions. The examination board members wear academic gowns for the public defence.

4/ Joint PhD

A joint PhD imposes many conditions and is only justified when there is real integration of the doctoral student in the joint supervision laboratory. Consequently, a joint PhD must be requested no later than during the first year of the thesis.

5/ Others

A doctorate is a long-term research project, ideally completed in four years working full-time. It may not extend beyond five years full-time and cannot be done in less than three years full-time. In the case of faculty assistants, a doctorate can take six years.

The following provisions apply for clinical doctors. Their purpose is to reduce the disparities in the duration of thesis work between non-clinical and clinical doctoral students, since the time taken for the latter to complete their thesis is twice as long on average as for their non-clinical counterparts, usually because of their clinical activities.

1. The doctorate will ideally be undertaken during the specialization period (interruption of the specialist medical trainee fellowship – *Médecin assistant clinicien candidat spécialiste*, MACCS) or during the specialist assistantship or clinical residency period.
2. For specialist medical trainees subject to the regulations of the specialization committees at Wallonia-Brussels Federation level, the doctorate can take two years full-time followed by two to three years part-time. This method will be considered by the CP on a case-by-case basis.

Special provisions specific to the CDSS:
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(cont'd and concluded)

3. During their doctoral studies, clinical doctors will be relieved of all routine clinical activities (consultations, surgery, etc.). A written undertaking by the Section Head, supported by the Head of Department, will be required. In the case of areas of clinical research requiring contact with patients, or examinations of or procedures on patients, clinical work will be permitted, but only to the extent that it relates to the subject of the thesis. The CA will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this rule and notifying the CP in the event of a dispute.

Any exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the CP and require the support of the CDD.