VADE MECUM FOR THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN « MEDICAL SCIENCES, PUBLIC HEALTH, DENTAL, BIOMEDICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL, AND MOTOR SKILLS »

Reminder :
UCLouvain doctoral regulation & special provisions for Phd students of the Health Sciences sector :
https://uclouvain.be/en/sectors/sss/reglements-cdss.html

Abbreviations : CA, steering committee ; CDD, Health Science doctoral commission ; CP, local doctoral commission; SIC, UCLouvain enrollment office

1. Provisional and definitive admission

The **application for admission** must be entered via **OSIS-Doctorate**.
https://www.uclouvain.be/en/enrolment

You will first need to create an account before you can start the online application. If you are already a UCLouvain student, use your "student.uclouvain.be" address (or your current login details) to log in, and the system will retrieve all your previous information.

Before completing your online application, **make sure you have obtained the approval of your supervisor and the members of your steering committee**. You will also need to have at least the following information to hand:

- The name(s) of your supervisor(s);
- Your thesis proposal, approved by your supervisor(s);
- The proposed supervisory committee (the supervisor and at least two other members, at least one of whom does not belong to the same research team as the supervisor(s));
- A proposed doctoral training program (a list of courses/trainings you intend to follow during your PhD);
- Your CV and a copy of your ID card or passport;
- Copies of your university degrees and transcripts

The supervisor and the members of the supervisory committee will be asked to digitally sign the application for admission.

You must then submit the application online so that the administrative coordinator can review your application. She will inform the relevant local doctoral commission.

The local doctoral commission (CP) will appoint one of its members (= future chair of the steering committee) to assess the application and meet with the candidate. This member will then issue an opinion and inform the PhD administrative coordinator.

Three situations may arise :

1) The CDD approves the application and all the admission requirements are met. The CDD validates the application for admission and the file is then forwarded to the enrollment office, which will verify the administrative and legal requirements for enrollment in the doctoral program. The decision will be communicated by email. To be officially enrolled, the PhD-candidate must pay the full enrollment fees (if applicable).

2) The CDD approves the application, but the requirements for admission to the PhD program are not all met. A pre-admission (=provisional admission) is granted. The decision is communicated by email. The file is then forwarded to the enrollment office, which will verify the administrative and legal conditions for registration. To be officially enrolled, the PhD-candidate must pay the administrative fees. The candidate is invited to complete his file and resubmit an application for admission when all conditions have been met.

3) The application is refused. The reasons are communicated to the candidate and his/her supervisor. An admission request file covering the same research topic with the same supervisor, can only be submitted to one CP. If the file is rejected by the CP, this will be the case for all other CP of the Health Sector. A CP can orient a candidate to another CP which is more appropriate for the supervision of the PhD research program. A file that was rejected can be re-submitted after revision.

In certain specific situations (e.g. need for a visa, FRIA scholarship applicant with no alternative funding if the scholarship is not awarded, residence permit for foreign applicants) and if justified, you may **apply for pre-admission.** As stated in the UCLouvain regulation, a provisional admission is valid during 12 months maximum. The President of the CP will make sure to shorten this period as much as possible.

The pre-admission application must be submitted via OSIS-Doctorat (see link above).

- This file must include at least:
- The name of your supervisor;
- Your thesis project approved by your supervisor;
- Your CV and a copy of your identity card or passport
- Copies of your university degrees and transcripts

Only the supervisor will be asked to digitally sign the pre-admission file.

Applications for admission or pre-admission are reviewed by the local committee within a minimum of four weeks after submission of a complete application.

Important note about the doctoral training programme : As the doctoral training programme can be spread over the entire duration of doctoral studies, it will not be defined a priori. On the other hand, the CDD can impose additional training (2nd cycle courses) to the candidate, of which the nature and the number depend on the previous academic background and/or the PhD project. These courses must be mentioned immediately so that the candidate can start this course(s) as quickly as possible

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.**

2. Mandatory training on scientific integrity

From the start of their thesis, PhD students must complete a training in scientific integrity. **The CDD requires completion of** all **six training modules "Mind the GAP"** (Good Academic Research Practices; https://mindthegap.vlir.be/).
This training is based on the European Code of Conduct on Research Integrity (https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/). The supervisors are responsible for informing their new doctoral students of this requirement. One credit will be awarded in the 'transferable skills'.
At the end of the training, the PhD student must take a screenshot of the final screen showing the unique bookmark that was generated and the modules completed. This screenshot must be uploaded in OSIS.

3. PhD student and supervisor

From a scientific point of view, the PhD student :

- regularly informs his thesis supervisor about the progress of his work and / or the difficulties encountered;
- meets the requirements of doctoral training;
- respects the rules relating to the scientific ethics of the laboratory, as well as the institutional rules in terms of intellectual property and exploitation of research results.

From an administrative point of view, the PhD student :

- keeps up-to-date the “doctoral training form” or any other document for the steering committee (CA) meetings ;
- informs the PhD administration[1] about any followed course/examen relating to his doctoral training
- takes care of the practical organization of the meetings of his CA and informs, at least one week in advance, the PhD administration[1] about the planned meeting.

On a scientific and administrative level, the supervisor :

- can be assisted by a co-supervisor, even if not a UCLouvain member. In the case of a joint PhD supervision, the supervisor will inform/contact the PhD administration so that a joint PhD agreement can be set up ;
- is responsible for the supervision of the PhD student until the end of the thesis. As such, he undertakes to devote a significant part of his time to guide the PhD student to ensure him an innovative approach in an updated scientific context, and to follow a doctoral training ;
- ensures the necessary funding to allow the completion of the PhD.

Mediation in case of conflict between the doctoral student and the supervisor :

Any persistent conflict between the PhD student and the supervisor, which could not be settled amicably, will first be brought to the attention of the president of the CA who will endeavor to resolve it in the most responsible and human possible manner. If the conflict persists, the PhD student or the supervisor refers it to the President of the CDD[1].

4. Meetings between the PhD student and his steering committee (CA)

The PhD student and his/her CA interact at least once a year, on the initiative of the PhD student or the supervisor.

When a meeting date is set, the student MUST inform the PhD administration[1] and SHALL PROVIDE his doctoral training form (excel sheet OR in OSIS).

A few days before the meeting, the PhD administrator provides the president of the steering committee with a summary of the PhD student' record as well as the necessary documents for the minutes of the meeting.

The PhD student presents the progress of its experimental work and informs about the writing status of his/her articles. The steering committee evaluates the progress of the thesis and the doctoral training; 45 credits must be obtained before the private defense. The president of the steering committee leads the meeting and write the minutes.

5. Mid-term evaluation / confirmation test

Within a maximum of 24 months after (definitive) admission to the doctoral program (36 months for a half time thesis), PhD students must undergo a mid-term evaluation (confirmation test). The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to determine whether students'research has progressed sufficiently well enough to enable them to complete their doctoral thesis.

For this test, an external member to the steering committee must be added and invited to participate. **This person is appointed by CP and chosen from among its members.**

Once the date and place are fixed, the student communicates this information to the administrative coordinator[1].

Ten days before the test, The PhD student is required to enter the date of his/her confirmation exam in the "Confirmation" tab of OSIS and to upload his/her thesis progress report (approximately 3–6 pages). The PhD student should also add all the new doctoral training activities in the "Training" tab and submit them all at once.

At least one week before the test, the administrative coordinator provides electronically the president of the steering committee with this 'confirmation test file' as well as the necessary documents for the minutes of the meeting. This document has to be completed, signed by all the members and returned to the administrative coordinator as soon as possible.

The other members of the steering committee only receive the 'confirmation test file'.

Once the evaluation is completed, the result (success or failure) is immediately communicated to the PhD student and shall be submitted subsequently to the administrative coordinator who will update OSIS accordingly.
5 credits will be granted if the confirmation test is passed.

In the event of failure, the steering committee can set a maximum period of 12 months within which the student may retake the mid-term evaluation.

6. Jury proposal and private defense

In a final meeting between the PhD student and his/her CA, the overall progress of the thesis is evaluated. If the CA considers that the PhD's research work and the 45 credits of doctoral training program (excluding defenses) have been completed, the "writing authorization" is given.

During this meeting, the members of the CA will also :
• decides about the thesis layout
• propose a jury composition

When the PhD student has received the writing authorization, he/she (or his/her supervisor) forwards the proposed composition of the jury to the administrative coordinator[1]. This proposal has to be signed by the president of the CA (with full details about the external members). A secretary has to be identified among the jury members.
The jury is composed of at least 5 members (including the president) who hold a doctorate or are acknowledged as having a high level of expertise in the relevant field of the science. It is chaired by the president of the CA. It must include the thesis supervisor(s) and at least 2 external examiners from outside the UCLouvain, selected for their specific expertise in the subject matter of the thesis being defended.

The appointment of the jury is subject to verification that the candidate is enrolled as a doctoral student and that the tuition fees have been paid.

Upon confirmation, the PhD administrative coordinator produces a document containing the proposed composition and submits it for review to the president of the doctoral commission (CDD), before sending to the Rector.
Upon receipt of the Rector'agreement on this jury proposal, the PhD administrative coordinator shall send a copy (pdf format) to the president of the jury, the PhD student and his/her supervisor(s).

After this the PhD student submits the provisional text of his/her thesis to the jury members, who have then one month to make comments.

A date of private defense can then also be fixed.

At least one month before the date of the private defense, the candidate sends the provisional manuscript of his/her thesis to the jury members. The PhD student shall notify the administrative coordinator[1] of the date, hour and place chosen for this defense. He will also provide his updated doctoral training form.

As a reminder, all the members of the jury should be present for the private defence (in person or through videoconferencing, for example). In the case of force majeure or exceptional circumstances, the absent member must send the president a written report before the meeting, giving his/her reasoned opinion on the value of the thesis and a list of the questions that he/she wishes to ask to the candidate.

During the private defense, the candidate may present a short summary of his/her work. The form and content of each chapter of the thesis will be discussed The jury examines the text submitted by the candidate and discusses the research results with him/her.

At the end of the private defense, the jury deliberates and comes to a conclusion about the admissibility of the thesis. The result of this deliberation is communicated immediately to the candidate and forwarded to the administrative coordinator[1].

If the thesis is judged admissible, the jury agrees with the candidate on a date and time for the public defense, which takes place at the earliest one month after the private defense. This information is communicated to the administrative coordinator[1] of the doctoral commission.

If the thesis is judged admissible pending amendments of the text, the supervisor(s) are instructed to check and approve these amendments before the date of the public defense. The implementation of these amendments can't exceed 3 months of full-time work.

If not possible in less than 3 months, a new private defence should be organized.

7. Public defense

The public defense cannot take place earlier than one month after the private defense.

One week at least before the public defence, the candidate provides the jury members with a printed version of his/her thesis (*), in accordance with the specifications recommended by the jury at the private defense.

In parallel, the administrative coordinator informs the candidate about the final steps to take for the electronic encoding of his thesis. For this purpose, the PhD student is asked to complete and sign (with his/her promotor) a copyright licence stating which access he/she wants to give to his/her paper thesis. This licence has to be given at the administrative coordinator of the doctoral commission (CDD) at least the day before the public defence.

The administrative coordinator prepares, for the day of the public defence, the minutes of the meeting (PV), the diploma/degree, the certificate of research training, the supplements and/or appendices.

During this defense, at least half of the jury members have to participate actively. Any member unable to attend the public defense must send the president a written report before the defense, giving his/her reasoned opinion on the value of the thesis and a list of the questions that he/she wishes to ask the candidate.

The PhD student is required to give an oral presentation of 30-40 minutes targeting a master's level audience. The presentation is followed by a limited number of questions from the jury and, possibly, the audience.

(*) The format and the cover of the thesis are standardized for the Health Sciences sector. Contact the administrative coordinator to obtain the template and the instructions.

Wearing of the gown is required for all jury members.

Immediately after the public defence, the jury members withdraw to decide on the outcome of the doctoral programme and to certify that the candidate has obtained the minimum 180 credits required for the granting of the academic title of PhD. All the documents will be signed by the jury members.

All the signed documents (minutes, diploma/certificate and appendices) must be returned personally to the administrative coordinator.

The administrative coordinator informs the libraries that the thesis has been succesfully defended.

Once the diploma is signed by the Rector, the administrative coordinator informs the new PhD that the document is available.

8. Useful contacts

Président of the doctoral commission : Professeur Cyril CORBET

Members from the doctoral commission : Professeurs Yannick Bleyenheuft, Jean-Christophe Jonas, Gaëtane Leloup, Christophe Pierreux, Marie de Saint Hubert, Valéry Legrain, Françoise Van Bambeke, and Clara Neumeister, Doua Benaissa, Pascaline Dembour (as members of the scientific staff).

PhD administrative coordinator :

Medical Sciences Public Health Sciences Dental Sciences Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences CDD-Health Sciences	Sandrine Wollanders sandrine.wollanders@uclouvain.be	+ 32 2 436 17 09
Motor skills sciences	Sandrine Wollanders Doctorat-fsm@uclouvain.be	

9. Timeline of the doctoral program

