

University of Debrecen

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF ANIMAL SCIENCE

Quality Assurance Plan

The Doctoral School's website must regularly publish:

- the training plan, courses, and instructors,
- the dates and subject lists of comprehensive exams,
- the announced dates and venues of defenses, as well as the availability of thesis booklets and dissertations.

This transparent operation ensures professional and societal control over doctoral education.

General Introduction of the Doctoral School

The coordination of quality assurance tasks in doctoral education is carried out by the Head of the Doctoral School, Prof. Dr. István Komlósi, with quality assurance responsibilities held by Prof. Dr. Levente Czeglédi.

Quality assurance is achieved partly through the work of academic staff, researchers, and supervisors involved in education, and partly through administrative personnel managing organizational and student affairs.

Doctoral education's teaching and research framework is provided by doctoral schools. Within the Doctoral School of Animal Husbandry Sciences, five doctoral programs operate: Animal Product Production; Nutrition and Fish Biology; Reproductive Biology; Genomics; Animal Breeding–Gene Conservation; and Animal Ecology.

The professional activities of the doctoral school are governed by its head and a council of 13 members. The council chair is the doctoral school head; members include doctoral program leaders, other academics, and the doctoral school secretary. One doctoral student member with advisory rights also participates.

The Head of the Doctoral School is Dr. István Komlósi, university professor responsible for the school's scientific and educational standards, holder of the MTA (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) Doctorate. The head is elected by the doctoral council from among the school's permanent university professor members, upon majority proposal, and appointed by the Rector for a five-year term.

A permanent member of the doctoral school is a PhD holder actively conducting high-level research in the doctoral school's discipline and employed as an academic or scientific researcher at the University of Debrecen.

Permanent membership may also be granted to emeritus professors of the University of Debrecen by council approval.

Further, permanent members may include researchers holding PhD or DSc titles employed full-time in research institutes under contract with the university, who maintain high-level scientific

activity for at least five years and commit to supervising doctoral candidates. A permanent member must have supervised at least one doctoral candidate (or two if co-supervised).

Doctoral school instructors are those PhD-holding academics and researchers approved by the disciplinary doctoral council upon the doctoral school head's recommendation for teaching, research, and supervisory duties. They may offer topics and courses within the organized doctoral program.

Description of the Quality Assurance Plan

The Doctoral School Council annually reviews and evaluates the state and tasks of quality assurance.

The doctoral training aims to prepare candidates for high-level scientific work and the analytical, systematic processing of scientific literature, as well as for planning and performing primary and secondary research. Another goal is to impart scientific methodological knowledge enabling high-quality research execution. Candidates demonstrate attainment of these goals by preparing and successfully defending a doctoral dissertation.

The quality assurance plan fully respects principles published by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB). The Doctoral School seeks to uphold the following principles:

- Principle of Transparency: ensuring the main phases of quality assurance are widely accessible to the professional and scientific community.
- Principle of Professional Control and Feedback: continuous evaluation and feedback on doctoral candidates', instructors', researchers', and supervisors' activities, with reports and official events open to the scientific community.
- Principle of Quality-Centricity and Scientific Ethics: continuous improvement of activities and full adherence to scientific ethical expectations, applying international scientific and scientometric trends and following MTA Scientific Ethics Board recommendations.
- Principle of Intellectual Property Protection: developing the quality assurance system so that doctoral education complies with EU and Hungarian intellectual property protection regulations.
- Principle of Individual Responsibility and Efficiency: successful operation requires clear task and responsibility definitions, internal division of labor to respect individual scientific personalities and commitment, and resource concentration ensuring candidates study under the most capable supervisors and best-equipped research facilities. Cost-efficiency is monitored continuously.
- Principle of Documentation: all decisions related to doctoral education are documented and monitored, keeping administrative burden of instructors minimal.
- Principle of Practical Applicability: thesis topics and research results should assist in societal and economic responses related to nutrition.
- Principle of Adherence to Scientific Ethics: applying opinions of the MTA Scientific Ethics Board in quality system establishment and operation.

The University Quality Assurance Rector's Commissioner (currently Prof. Dr. Edit Szűcs) is responsible for developing and ensuring doctoral schools' quality assurance systems comply with MAB guidelines.

Announcement of Training

Doctoral research topics are announced nationally on the National Doctoral Council website (www.doktori.hu).

The proposer of a doctoral topic is the academic with a scientific doctorate whose topic announcement was approved by the Doctoral School Council.

The Council only approves topics whose intellectual and infrastructural background is undisputed, promising high-quality dissertations, and whose nature allows completion within the scholarship period. Supervision at external research institutions is allowed only if cooperation agreements exist and the student's employment relationship and rights/obligations are clearly defined.

Topics are preferably connected to funded research projects ensuring financial support.

Admission to the doctoral program requires application to announced topics and successful oral examination before the admission committee.

Selection of Supervisors

Supervisors are appointed for topics approved by the Doctoral School Council, and who have accepted enrolled students. A supervisor is a leading academic or researcher with a scientific doctorate approved by the Council, responsibly directing doctoral candidates' studies, research, and preparation for their degree. Their publication record substantially exceeds the minimum doctoral publication requirements. Each supervisor may supervise up to two new doctoral candidates per admission period, and no more than six concurrently. Past supervisory success is evaluated to ensure effective mentoring.

Co-supervisors may be appointed in professionally justified cases with EDHT approval.

Supervisors must facilitate the development, direct research activities, promote academic connections, and monitor progress. They are responsible for organizing and scheduling the doctoral research and providing infrastructural support. If costs exceed state funding, the Doctoral School, via the supervisor, seeks additional resources.

Admission to Doctoral Training

Admission follows doctoral program regulations. The committee evaluates candidates' motivation, knowledge, presentation, and discussion skills during interview, in addition to written materials. It assesses scientific plan, expertise, previous scholarly achievements, and language proficiency.

The scoring system totals 100 points across three categories:

- First category assesses candidate's expertise and research plan foundation (max 40 points).
- Second category assesses academic achievements from prior studies (max 30 points).
- Third category evaluates scientific background through documented outputs, e.g., publications, theses (max 30 points).

Scientific performance is scored in bands with points for high-quality first-authored papers, awarded presentations, and professional competitions.

Admission requires at least a “C” type intermediate language exam (preferably English). Higher-level language exams gain additional points (3-5 depending on level).

Admission committee ranks candidates by score recommending admission if minimum 60 points.

Training Requirements and Assessment

Course contents and programs are reviewed at least every three years upon course leader's initiative with council approval to ensure alignment with scientific trends and labor market needs.

Course topics and themes are defined by program leaders and participating instructors, regularly updated based on latest animal husbandry research. Course approval and updates are decided by the Doctoral School Council. Descriptions include contact hours and assessment methods.

Instructors appear in the National Doctoral Council database with declared doctoral school affiliations.

At enrollment, first-year candidates receive orientation, course offerings, and credit values, plus guidance on educational and research plan preparation. Deadlines: October 1 (fall) and March 1 (spring).

Candidates prepare training plans selecting compulsory and elective courses with supervisor guidance.

Two appointed opponents review training and research plans and examination schedules. Candidates publicly defend research plans before finalization.

Training requires annual research work and credit accumulation: 30 credits per semester (combined study, research, teaching), total 240 credits.

Candidates take at least 16 study credits in the first four semesters from compulsory and elective courses. Assessments can be oral or written; formats and timings are arranged by course leaders. Credits are verified via the Neptun system.

Credits are only granted for graded courses. Language study credits are not accepted.

Candidates submit biannual written progress reports verified by supervisors.

At the end of the fourth semester, candidates must pass a comprehensive exam assessing academic and research progress, prerequisite for initiating research and dissertation phase.

Candidates receive an absolutorium after completing eight semesters, certifying fulfillment of academic obligations, issued by the disciplinary doctoral council upon doctoral school head's approval. Without required credits, no certificate is issued.

Monitoring Doctoral Candidates' Progress

The doctoral school continuously monitors candidates' scientific progress. Candidates submit biannual reports on academic, research progress and language exams reviewed by supervisors and council.

Annual research results are summarized in public presentations. Based on reports and presentations, the council may decide topic or supervisor changes.

All second- and third-year candidates must give presentations at the annual doctoral conference in November. After peer review, top presentations are published in the *Acta Agraria Debreceniensis* journal in English.

Candidates are expected to participate in peers' preliminary workplace and public defenses.

The school encourages national and international research training, requiring reporting research in domestic and foreign conferences.

International training is part of the program, requiring approved work plans ensuring academic credit acknowledgment. The council approves training plans.

Comprehensive Exam

The candidate receives exam subjects and compulsory reading lists at least one month before the exam; the date and venue are posted online, with detailed records archived.

The exam occurs at the end of the fourth semester, marking the transition to research and dissertation phase, assessing academic and research achievements.

Eligibility requires completion of at least 90 credits in the first four semesters and fulfillment of all compulsory credits, except for individual PhD preparation.

Candidates must apply in writing; passing the exam enters them into the degree awarding process.

Supervisors must have significant recent publication output exceeding degree criteria. Supervisor effectiveness considers past candidate success. The council rates supervision in three categories: successful, ongoing, unsuccessful.

The oral exam before the disciplinary doctoral council's appointed committee requires at least three members, one-third external to the institution. The committee chair must hold a professor or equivalent title. Supervisors cannot be committee members.

Supervisors provide written assessment prior to the exam recommending degree awarding.

The exam has two parts: theoretical (testing knowledge in at least two subjects) and dissertation defense (presentation of scientific progress, research plan, dissertation timeline). Supervisors may evaluate during the exam.

The committee separately evaluates both parts and issues a detailed report. Results are announced on exam day. Candidates may retake failed theoretical parts once per examination period; a failed dissertation defense cannot be retaken in the same period.

Degree Awarding Procedure

Following the comprehensive exam, the degree phase involves research and dissertation writing.

The doctoral school organizes a preliminary workplace defense with supervisors' consent regarding dissertation readiness. Scheduling and invitations are managed by the school. The University and National Library checks text similarity before review; reviewers confirm ethical standards compliance.

The defense may proceed despite ethical concerns if issues are rectified without consequences. Notifications are sent to the disciplinary council if ethics concerns arise. Revised dissertations undergo renewed text checks.

The school organizes defense logistics and distributes documents to the Agricultural Doctoral Council secretary.

Candidates submit printed dissertations and 5 copies of theses in Hungarian and English.

Pre-defense is ideally held with the final public defense review committee, keeping reviewer membership consistent and allowing at least six weeks for review feedback.

The pre-defense follows the public defense procedure. The chair decides on acceptance or request for revision based on reviewer and participant opinions.

Publication Requirements

Ensuring candidates have sufficient quality publications by defense is crucial for quality control.

The university adopts MAB accreditation criteria as standards.

Acceptable scientific publications include printed/electronic journal articles, university textbooks, monographs, book chapters, and translations of ancient classics with scholarly notes, meeting criteria of original research, detailed references, ISSN/ISBN, peer-reviewed publication, indexed in common databases, and impact factor depending on discipline.

Unacceptable as scientific publications are non-peer-reviewed popular articles, self-published works without peer review, lecture notes, abstracts, short conference papers, translations (except ancient classics' scholarly editions), reviews, commissioned reports, theses, popular science articles, non-research interviews, and unpublished manuscripts.

The doctoral council defines the minimum number and composition of publications required for defense eligibility: at least four peer-reviewed journal articles in the dissertation field (published or accepted in impact factor or MTA-approved journals), one full conference paper,

and two other scholarly publications (conference presentations or abstracts). Copies of all must accompany the dissertation.

Quality and appropriateness of publications are individually assessed by the council.

Since 2008/2009, candidates must have at least one impact factor journal article or accepted manuscript among the four publications before defense.

Publications may have co-authors, including supervisors. For articles with two doctoral candidates, supervision must clarify contribution percentages.

Original or copied publications must be submitted and uploaded to the University and National Library database (Tudóstér/DEA). The library certifies the publication list uploaded with the dissertation submitted to the disciplinary council.

Language Requirement

The doctoral school mandates a state-recognized “C” type intermediate English language exam. A second language exam may be accepted if equivalent to a profession-enhanced “C” type intermediate exam issued by the University’s Economic Language Communication Institute.

The Doctoral Dissertation

A dissertation is a comprehensive work presenting candidate objectives, literature knowledge, research methods, and new scientific results, demonstrating ability to perform independent scientific tasks required for the degree. It must be compiled in Hungarian or English.

The dissertation cover must clearly list the supervisor(s).

Doctoral Theses

Theses summarize scientific results for public disclosure based on the dissertation, demonstrating readiness for the degree. Theses are prepared in Hungarian and English (or another language suitable for the discipline).

Detailed formatting and content requirements for dissertations and theses are in ADT Regulations (§17 and §18).

Before final binding, candidates must obtain signatures on a Certification Sheet from supervisors, the doctoral school head, and the Agricultural Doctoral Council chair, certifying compliance with regulations and requirements.

At least four weeks before the planned defense, candidates submit electronic versions of the dissertation, theses, keywords, and abstracts in the university’s electronic archive (DEA) as prescribed.

Accepted dissertations and theses are uploaded by the doctoral school secretary to the doctoral database (www.doktori.hu) and the school website.

At least three weeks before the defense, candidates submit the appropriate number of hard copies, two signed opponent statements and responses, eight Hungarian and eight English thesis booklets, curriculum vitae, and copies of the five most important publications to the PhD Office.

Public Defense

The review committee consists of a chair, official opponents, and two other members, one serving as secretary. All hold scientific degrees. The chair is a university professor or professor emeritus with relevant expertise.

At least one committee member and one opponent must be external to the university. One opponent with a negative opinion may also be a member. The council proposes substitute members as needed.

Supervisors and co-authors of the candidate's publications supporting the dissertation may not serve on the committee.

Candidates may raise objections to committee composition within eight days for conflict of interest or bias to the disciplinary council.

Opponents produce written reviews with recommendations for public defense. Only with two supporting recommendations is defense allowed.

Reviews must detail the dissertation's content and form, including acceptance of new scientific results. Reviewers must indicate whether to approve the dissertation and recommend PhD awarding.

Candidates receive reviews in advance and respond at least 15 days before defense.

During defense, candidates present theses freely and answer questions from committee members, opponents, and audience.

After defense, the committee meets in closed session to decide on dissertation acceptance, candidate's independent scientific work, and defense performance. The committee rates the dissertation, individual scientific performance, and defense performance on a four-tier scale (summa cum laude, cum laude, rite, fail). Separate votes are recorded for each category according to the university's doctoral regulations.

The chair publicly announces and justifies the defense result.

Defense minutes are publicly recorded and may be requested in copy from the disciplinary council.

The doctoral degree is awarded by the University Doctoral and Habilitation Council (EDHT) upon successful completion of the doctoral program and defense.

A degree is granted when the committee considers the dissertation, individual research work, and defense performance satisfactory.

The Scientific Directorate issues the doctoral diploma within 30 days of the EDHT decision. The diploma date marks the candidate's entitlement to use the Dr. (PhD) title.

Student Feedback and Alumni Tracking

Students anonymously evaluate teaching each semester via questionnaires covering professional quality, course relevance, methods, facilities, and teacher-student relations. The council aggregates results and enacts development measures maintaining full anonymity.

Once yearly, doctoral candidates anonymously evaluate supervisors' work, cooperation quality, research support, publication assistance, and international opportunities. Council assesses and acts as needed.

Publication activities are monitored via reliable sources; the library certifies published records in the Tudóstér/DEA repository. Candidates must submit co-author declarations among degree documents.

Doctoral candidates complete anonymous questionnaires annually on instructors, supervisors, and alumni feedback is similarly gathered. Analysis is computerized via EvaSys, utilizing advanced data processing and internet technologies ensuring fast, effective course evaluations and surveys. The system is web-based, platform-independent, and user-friendly with secure anonymity.

The Doctoral School Quality Assurance Officer oversees survey administration with staff cooperation.

Alumni Monitoring

The doctoral school monitors graduates' activities and supports their careers, maintaining alumni data records.

An alumni registry tracks career development. Graduates are invited to school events and surveyed to collect feedback incorporated into self-assessment reports.

Quality Assurance System Elements in Doctoral Training

1. Program announcement
2. Selection of instructors and supervisors
3. Preparation of admission procedures
4. Conducting admissions and evaluations of individual candidates
5. Structuring training
6. Developing course curricula and assessments
7. Guiding course selection
8. Monitoring academic progress with record-keeping systems
9. Student evaluations of teaching
10. Doctoral candidate-supervisor relations
11. Candidate-host department (research site) relations
12. International study opportunities

Doctoral candidates must pursue international experiences, including at least one foreign conference presentation or publication. The Doctoral School encourages exchange training and presentation at home conferences or seminars at least annually.

13. Regular reporting of doctoral candidates
14. Supervisor progress reviews
15. Preparation and conduct of comprehensive exams
16. Submission and defense of dissertation proposals (internal defense)
17. Dissertation submission and final defense
18. Evaluation of candidates' publication records
19. Degree awarding
20. Infrastructure development
21. Collection of graduate opinions
22. Alumni records and post-graduation contact

Research and Dissertation Phase

Doctoral Training Preparation

- Selecting instructors and researchers
- Formulating course structure
- Announcing training

Admission Examination

Educational Process

Research Process

Course Selection

Comprehensive Examination

Doctoral Candidate and Supervisor Cooperation

International Study

Research Plan

Publication of Partial Results, Conference Participation

Dissertation Proposal and Defense

Dissertation and Defense

Degree Awarding

Measurement Points

Documents

Doctoral Training Process

Doctoral Regulations

Curriculum

Admission Results

Behavioral Test Reports

Research Plans

Student Evaluation Questionnaires

Doctoral Candidate and Supervisor Reports

Additional Reports

Document Analysis of Regulations, Curricula, Research Plans, and Reports
Evaluation of Questionnaires
Annual Reports and Public Defense Records
Evaluation Questionnaires of Newly Graduated Candidates