

# **Quality Assurance Plan of the Doctoral School of Geosciences (February 2024)**

## **1. Organisation and operation of the Doctoral School of Earth Sciences**

a) The Doctoral School Board is responsible for the training of the Doctoral School of Earth Sciences (DSG). The Board reviews the training plan and the quality assurance plan annually. The DSG Board shall document its activities, decisions and meetings and shall keep a record of them. The DSG Coordinator shall send the minutes to the Board members after the meetings. If no objections or suggestions for corrections are raised by the members within 5 working days of the dispatch of the memos, the memos shall be deemed to have been adopted.

b) The DSG may take its decisions in person or by online voting. The DSG Coordinator shall be responsible for the conduct of the voting.

c) The Board of the Doctoral School of Geosciences shall appoint a Quality Assurance Officer from among its members. The term of office of the Quality Assurance Officer shall be 4 years, renewable indefinitely. The Head of the Doctoral School and the Coordinator of the Doctoral School shall not be eligible for appointment as a Quality Assurance Officer. The name and contact details of the rapporteur shall be published on the DSG website.

d) The Quality Assurance Officer of the Doctoral School shall prepare an annual quality assurance report by the end of each academic year, which shall be discussed and voted on by the Board. The annual quality assurance report shall include the experience gained in the procedures for the awarding of degrees, the admission procedures, and the feedback from and responses to supervisors and students. If necessary, the Board shall amend the training and quality assurance plan on the basis of the annual report. The annual quality assurance report of the Doctoral School shall be examined by the University Doctoral Council. The Coordinator of the University Doctoral Council shall inform the Senate in writing of the results of the audit in accordance with the provisions of point 12.2 of the Regulations for Doctoral Training and Degree Awarding of the University of Szeged.

e) The Board is composed of the programme leaders and the student representative, who are responsible for informing the subject leaders and doctoral students of each programme and ensuring their involvement in regulatory, quality assurance and information management processes. The student representative shall be elected by the doctoral students, approved by the Board and shall not be subject to any form of review. The primary responsibility of the student representative:

- ensuring the flow of information between the Board and the students, and providing students with reminders of Board meetings;
- participate in the DSG Board meetings with the right to be present, and if unable to attend, arrange for a substitute to attend;
- forwarding student complaints and feedback to the Board;
- communicating the Board's decisions to students;

- informing students about the possibilities to make complaints or suggestions, and to appeal against decisions.

The mandate of the student representative is terminated:

- at the end of the semester in which the Member obtains the absolutory;
- if the representative leaves the doctoral programme before obtaining the absolutory;
- if the Member resigns from office;
- if the delegating students decide to recall him/her.

The heads of the training programmes are elected by the Board on the basis of proposals from the core members of the doctoral school. The head of a training programme may be an active senior lecturer with an academic degree from the University. The appointment of training programme leaders shall be for the duration of the accreditation of the doctoral programme and may be renewed indefinitely. Training programme directors have primary responsibility:

- for information on the subject leaders involved in the training programmes;
- monitoring the work of the subject leaders involved in the training programmes;
- for the content of their training programme;
- ensuring the quality of their respective training programmes, in particular with regard to their topics, the list of compulsory and optional courses, the organisation of the house examinations, the composition of the public examination committees and, in cooperation with the heads of department, the organisation of the annual public presentation of doctoral students;
- assisting doctoral students in open access publishing, in cooperation with the heads of the professional workshops (departments, research groups) and the subject leaders;
- monitoring, coordinating and evaluating the work of doctoral students involved in teaching.

f) The annual quality assurance reports shall be published on the website of the doctoral school after their adoption. The DS Coordinator is responsible for publishing and keeping the reports.

g) The training regulations are available on the DS website (<https://geosci.u-szeged.hu/foldtudomanyok-doktori>) in English and Hungarian. The higher level regulations are available on the websites of the USZ Doctoral Institute and the Faculty of Science and Informatics. The regulations of the doctoral school complement the university and faculty regulations. In case of conflict between the regulations, the higher level regulations shall prevail. In such a case, the DS Board must ensure that the rules are in conformity and amend the regulations of the doctoral school. It is the responsibility of the Head of the Doctoral School and the Coordinator to draft and propose the amendment.

h) Students may submit complaints about the professional content of doctoral studies to the DS Board. If the student does not agree with the decision of the Board, he/she may appeal to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The Deputy Academic Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities is responsible for questions concerning the student's status.

## 2. Instructors at the doctoral school

a) The DSG Board shall annually review the composition of the core members and the teaching staff and vote on the admission of new teachers and supervisors to the Doctoral School. A supervisor may be a person who is not employed by the USZ. The supervisor must meet the following requirements:

- have at least a PhD or a candidate's degree (CSc). At least 3 years must have passed after obtaining the degree before the lecturer/researcher can become an individual subject leader;
- persons employed on a fixed-term contract at the USZ can only be co-subject leaders alongside a subject leader who has an indefinite contract at the USZ;
- for degrees awarded less than three years ago, the teacher/researcher can only be a co-supervisor with a supervisor who meets all the criteria;
- research in the earth sciences or related disciplines;
- have previously successfully completed a MSc or PhD course as a subject supervisor (with a list of students you have supervised and the degree obtained), **or have an outstanding academic record** (with a list of publications and selected publications).

A supervisor may announce up to 3 topics in the Doctoral School and may supervise up to 6 students at a time. The co-leadership of a topic may be counted with a multiplier of 0.5.

b) Supervisors are responsible for supervising the professional work of students, supporting their research and publication activities, taking into account the relevant national and international regulations and scientific ethical guidelines. The responsibilities of the supervisor include:

- suggesting which optional courses the student should take;
- support the student's application work;
- ensure physical and electronic access to research material;
- to support students' publication activities and to encourage them to publish their work in the highest quality journals and other publications;
- monitoring the student's professional progress and reporting any problems to the DSG Board;
- assist and supervise the preparation and timely submission of the student's research plan and annual report, and assist with any necessary revisions;
- to promote open access publishing, in collaboration with the heads of professional workshops (departments, research groups) and training programmes;
- to raise awareness among doctoral students of ethical and other principles related to research and publication, including intellectual property protection;
- presenting the operation of the databases and repositories included in the regulations (e.g. MTMT, publication repository, doktori.hu, etc.), and assisting students in their use;
- support students in their participation in conferences (e.g. information on possible conference participation opportunities, help with funding, professional support for applications, professional review of abstracts, conference presentations and posters);
- involving students in projects and tenders;
- helping students to develop their scientific knowledge;

- informing the head of the programme and the Coordinator of the doctoral school about the student's professional progress and any problems encountered.

c) The DSG Board may decide on the termination of the mandate of the supervisor if one of the following conditions is met:

- the supervisor is not fulfilling their duties and the student has informed the Board personally or through the student's representative. The information and the request for the appointment of a new subject leader must be submitted in writing to the Coordinator of the Doctoral School;
- the supervisor becomes unworthy of their position for professional or ethical reasons - in this case, the head of the Doctoral School or the heads of the training programmes may initiate the withdrawal of the mandate;
- on the written initiative of the head of the training programme, if the head considers that the supervisor is not performing their work properly and that the successful award of the degree is not ensured;
- the supervisor requests in writing to the DSG Coordinator that the mandate be terminated;
- the supervisor is permanently unable to carry out his/her duties.

At the same time as the termination of the mandate, the Board appoints new supervisor(s) on the basis of a proposal from the head of the training programme. The programme leader must consult the student before making a proposal. No supervisor may be appointed who is not accepted by the student. The decision on the change of supervisor shall be communicated to the student concerned, the subject leader, the possible new supervisor, the programme leader and the doctoral students' representative.

d) If professional reasons justify it, a co-supervisor may be involved until the beginning of the 5th semester of the course. A doctoral candidate may have a maximum of 2 supervisors. The following person may initiate the involvement of a co-supervisor:

- the student concerned;
- the training programme manager;
- the original supervisor.

A co-supervisor who is not accepted by the student cannot be appointed. The co-supervisor leader must meet the requirements for supervisors.

### **3. Quality assurance requirements in the doctoral admission procedure**

a) Candidates for doctoral studies shall be interviewed orally by an Admissions Committee of at least 3 members, on the basis of personal questions, according to the procedure established by the Faculty Doctoral Council. The admissions committee shall be composed of the same number of candidates in Hungarian and foreign languages. The members of the committee are appointed by the DSG Board on the basis of the following criteria:

- the members of the Committee (with the exception of the student representative) are supervisors in the doctoral school;
- each training programme for which there are applicants is represented by at least one member;
- the Committee is chaired by the Head of the Doctoral School, who must appoint a substitute from among the members of the Committee if he/she is unable to attend;
- the elected representative of the doctoral students is also present at the entrance examination.

b) All prospective doctoral students may apply for an announced research topic that has been pre-approved by the DSG Board. This also applies to English language training. The Board will update and publish the list once a year on doktori.hu. The application must be accompanied by a short research plan, which should include the main objectives of the research, the methods to be used and an outline work plan for the research.

c) The technical details of the application are defined in the university regulations.

d) The topics covered by the interview:

- discussing the research proposal submitted in the application, in particular its justification, its technical background and its feasibility;
- shed light on the candidate's motivation and professional background;
- to understand the methodological skills needed for the planned research.

The interviews will be held primarily in person, but if necessary, the Board may decide to hold the interviews online. In the following cases, online interview is justified:

- the candidate's place of residence (e.g. abroad) does not allow them to appear in person;
- where the epidemiological situation or other exceptional occurrence or situation makes it necessary.

e) The calculation of admission points is based on the rules of the faculty, on the basis of academic results, academic achievements, language skills and the professional aptitude test (entrance interview). The doctoral school has made the following additions to the regulations concerning the assessment of academic activity:

<b>Scientific performance assessment</b>	<b>Point</b>
OTDK 1st prize	15
OTDK 2nd, 3rd prize or special prize, commendation	10
local TDK placement	5
OTDK participation without fee	3
international journal article (first author)	25
international journal article (not first author)	20
domestic journal article (first author)	23
national journal article (not first author)	15
conference article	10
popular scientific article	5

conference poster	5
conference abstract	3
participation in an international research project	5
participation in a national research project	3
demonstrator activity	5

The principles of scoring are published on the doctoral school's website. A student who does not achieve at least half of the maximum number of points will not be admitted. Achieving the minimum score does not guarantee admission.

f) On the basis of the admission scores, the Commission will rank the candidates and indicate whether or not it recommends admission of each candidate. The DSG Board votes on whether to support the recommendation. In the case of equal scores, the Admissions Committee shall decide on the ranking of the candidates, based primarily on their oral examination results.

#### **4. Quality assurance requirements in doctoral training**

a) Students will have access to the research infrastructure of the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, including laboratories and other research facilities. The learning and use of the latest methods and tools, and the provision of physical and electronic access to research materials, are the joint responsibility of the programme leaders and subject leaders. By assuming responsibility for the supervision of the student's work, the supervisor also undertakes to provide the professional conditions necessary for the conduct of the research and the preparation of the thesis. If the student has problems with these, he or she may contact the DSG Board in person or through the student's representative. The complaint should be submitted to the Coordinator of the Doctoral School, in writing, setting out all relevant circumstances and considerations. The Board is obliged to examine the problem and decide on its resolution. The student concerned, the supervisor, the head of the training programme and the student representative shall be informed of the decision.

b) Students must submit a research plan in the first semester of the training, which is an updated version of the plan attached to their application and approved by the supervisor. The research plan is the basis for the evaluation of subsequent progress reports. Research plans are reviewed, evaluated and voted on by the DSG Board. The student must revise and resubmit any unaccepted plan. If the student fails to submit the research plan or if the Board does not approve it by the end of the semester, the student will not be allowed to continue the training. The student is responsible for the submission of the research plan in due time and with the appropriate content.

c) The doctoral school shall monitor the professional progress of students on an annual basis. At the end of the second, fourth, sixth and eighth semesters, the doctoral student shall submit a one-page report on his/her activities and academic progress to the Board of the Doctoral School, which shall be approved by the supervisor and signed by the supervisor. The report shall be

submitted electronically to the Head of the DSG and to the Coordinator. The report shall be reviewed and voted on by the DSG Board. The student must revise and resubmit the report if it is not accepted. If the student fails to submit the report or if the Board does not accept it by the end of the semester, the student will not be allowed to continue the training. The student is responsible for submitting the report in due time and with the appropriate and relevant content. Students are required to give an annual oral research progress report to the relevant university professional community (primarily the department providing the framework for the professional work). The heads of the training programmes are responsible for organising and conducting the presentation, in collaboration with the heads of department. The reports are open to the public and are open to participation and comment.

d) The doctoral school shall support the academic career of students in cooperation with the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, the departments of the Institute and the institutes and enterprises cooperating with the doctoral school. Students are eligible to participate in various international mobility programmes. The credits obtained during these programmes may be credited to the course. The DSG supports students' application activities. The broadening of the network of professional contacts is primarily the responsibility of the supervisors.

e) Students should strive to make their research results available, with particular attention to open access publication. To this end, they may make use of the resources available from various funding schemes (e.g. OTKA, Horizon Europe, Thematic Programmes of Excellence, etc.) in collaboration with the training programme leaders and their supervisor. In addition, they may also benefit from the USZ Open Access grants, the conditions for which are laid down in the university regulations (<http://szerzoknek.ek.szte.hu/tamogatott-oa-publikalas/>).

f) Students are required to register with the Hungarian Scientific Works Repository (MTMT), upload and regularly update their publication and citation data.

g) Students should upload their publications to the USZ Publicatio Repository (<https://publicatio.bibl.u-szeged.hu/>).

h) The conduct of the complex examination shall be determined in accordance with the laws and regulations applicable to doctoral studies and the rules of the university, in particular with regard to the appointment of the members of the committee. The quality control of the committee members shall be the responsibility of the head of the training programme: the head of the training programme shall propose the committee members to the Board. The subjects for the complex examination shall be determined by the head of the training programme in consultation with the student and his/her subject leader. The list of optional examination subjects is available on the doctoral school's website and may be revised annually. Students may primarily take examinations from their own training programme, but may also be selected from other training programmes of the Doctoral School if there is a professional justification for this - this must be agreed by the student, who must not be able to select an examination from another training programme without his/her consent. The DSG Board shall approve the committees and the designated examination subjects by vote. Prior to the complex examination, the subject leader will assess the candidate in writing. The evaluation shall be sent electronically to the Coordinator of the Doctoral School, the Chair of the Complex Examination Committee,

the Head of the Training Programme and the student concerned at least one week before the examination.

i) Student feedback is primarily provided through the Student Opinion on Teaching (OMHV) surveys. In addition to the OMHV, students can submit their comments and suggestions (in particular on training, courses, lecturers, subject leaders, administrative management and learning support tools) to the DSG Board through the student representative. Any complaints raised should be investigated by the Board and, if necessary, resolved by changing the relevant rules and procedures. The results of the investigation and the decision on complaints and comments should be communicated to the student representative, who is responsible for forwarding the information to the parties concerned.

j) Data on student progress, in particular on drop-outs, shall be collected and managed by the Coordinator of the Doctoral School. This is based on data provided by the sub-programme leaders and supervisors. To this end, subject leaders are obliged to inform the Head of the Training Programme and the Coordinator of the Doctoral School without delay if their student drops out of the doctoral programme.

k) The DS shall annually review and revise the list of compulsory and optional courses and topics. The training programme directors are responsible for checking the topics of the courses. New courses should be initiated by the sub-programme leaders, specifying the course topics and educational objectives. The DSG Board decides on the launching of new courses and the cancellation of old courses on the basis of proposals from the training programme leaders.

l) Each semester, the DS organises a public forum where students have the opportunity to give feedback on the doctoral programme, in particular:

- the DI training plan, list of courses offered;
- course content, requirements and the work of the trainers;
- the work of the theme leaders;
- the content and operation of training programmes;
- issues related to obtaining a degree;
- any discrimination against students during their training.

The head and coordinator of the DI must be present at the forum. The forum is open to all students, teachers and supervisors. The forum should be organised in person, unless an epidemic or other exceptional event or situation requires the event to be conducted online. The place and date of the forum shall be published at least one week in advance on mailing lists and social media. Complaints made at the forum should be investigated immediately by the DSG Board and action taken to resolve the situation if necessary. The results of the investigation into the complaints and comments and the decision should be communicated to the student representative, who is responsible for forwarding the information to the parties concerned.

## **5. Quality assurance requirements for doctoral studies**



a) The DSG Coordinator is responsible for checking the publication and foreign language requirements as a prerequisite for the award procedure. In the case of a presumed deficiency, the DSG Board will decide. The DSG Coordinator shall notify the candidate and his/her supervisor of the decision.

Language requirements for the degree: at least an B2/intermediate (complex) state language certificate (or equivalent) of English. For those who started their training before 2023, other languages may be accepted as follows: the candidate must have at least an B2/intermediate (complex) state language examination (or equivalent) in one of the following languages: German, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian. Furthermore, in justified cases, if the doctoral candidate can demonstrate that he/she uses a foreign language other than the above in his/her scientific work, it may be accepted by the DSG Board. A second language examination is not required for obtaining the degree. For non-native Hungarian-speaking foreign nationals, the requirements are the same as for native Hungarian speakers, but for them Hungarian is also a foreign language, thus a language examination in Hungarian may be accepted.

b) Quality guarantees for training in a foreign language:

- foreign language students have the same rights as Hungarian language students;
- the professional content of the foreign and Hungarian language courses is the same (unless the deviation is professionally justified);
- the literature lists of Hungarian and English courses can be different;
- foreign language training is only open to teachers and supervisors who have the appropriate professional language skills based on their publication record. This decision is taken by the DSG Board on the basis of a proposal from the training programme leaders;
- the DSG Board may require language proofreading of a thesis written in a foreign language.

c) Compliance with research ethics rules (publication rules, avoidance of plagiarism, etc.) is primarily the responsibility of the doctoral candidate and the supervisor. The plagiarism detection software provided by the USZ Klebelsberg Library must be run on the thesis at the latest after submission of the thesis, before it is sent out for evaluation. The Coordinator of the doctoral school is responsible for the plagiarism check. In the case of plagiarism, the thesis may not be submitted for public discussion.

d) If the leaders of each training programme consider it necessary, they may require that the theses be submitted for internal discussion/defence. The internal defence is compulsory for individual trainees and for those in fee-paying training. The internal defence is open to DI supervisors, tutors and students. The panel for the workplace debate shall be appointed by the training programme leader. The panel shall consist of at least one chairperson and two referees, at least one of whom must be an external expert (not employed by the University).

e) The procedure and requirements for the public debate shall be determined by the university and faculty doctoral regulations. The DSG does not lay down any conditions or requirements beyond these. After the submission of the thesis, the Head of the Doctoral School (preferably from among the heads of the training programmes) will invite a referee to propose a proposal

to the evaluation committee. The composition and the chairperson of the doctoral thesis evaluation committee shall be governed by the Regulations for Doctoral Training and Doctoral Degree Awarding of the USZ. The DSG Board shall vote on the proposal for the list of the committee. The approved proposal shall be forwarded by the Coordinator of the DSG to the responsible Doctoral Officer. The final decision on the Committee shall be taken by the Doctoral Council for Science and Technology.