

Curriculum PhD Programme

Amendment: 27 June 2024

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1. General provisions

1.1. Legal basis

The Universities Act (Universitätsgesetz, 2002) as amended and the relevant legal provisions in the statutes of the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna, form the legal basis for this curriculum.

1.2. Objectives and qualification profile

The PhD programme at the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna (Vetmeduni) is a comprehensive scientific programme at an international level. The academic degree awarded, PhD (Doctor of Philosophy), corresponds fully to ISCED level 8.

The PhD programme teaches scientific working methods and ways of thinking, encourages independent scientific development and prepares graduates for a successful scientific career at universities, research institutes, public authorities and in the private sector.

At the heart of the PhD programme is a research project lasting at least three years under the supervision of experts with demonstrable scientific expertise in the respective discipline and paired with a structured, academic programme of training. International review procedures during the project and final phases guarantee a high level of scientific quality. PhD students acquire the skills of performing scientific work in a specific field of veterinary medicine. They are trained to address scientific issues in research projects and to pursue independent research to help further develop specialist knowledge at an international level. They also acquire the skills to critically analyse, evaluate and unite complex ideas within their field of work. Graduates are qualified as scientists for research in the biomedical sector, both at universities and other institutions. This enables them to actively contribute to the development of the knowledge society in academic and professional circles.

PhD students make an important contribution to strengthening and developing the research profile of the Vetmeduni.

1.3. Duration, scope and language of instruction

The PhD programme has a standard duration of three years, equivalent to 180 ECTS credits.

The language of instruction of the PhD programme is English.

2. Admission to the PhD programme

2.1. General criteria for admission

Section 64(4) of the Universities Act 2002 stipulates that admission to the PhD programme requires a completed diploma or master's degree comprising at least 300 ECTS at a recognised domestic or foreign post-secondary educational institution.

It is possible to admit applicants with an academic degree with fewer than 300 ECTS on a case-by-case basis under section 64(5) Universities Act 2002 if a bachelor's degree programme has been completed within the regular time required for such a programme

and a high level of academic success achieved. Exceptions are decided based on regulations of the Rectorate in accordance with the Universities Act 2002.

2.2. Qualitative criteria for admission and registration

In addition to the general university entrance qualification indicated under item 2.1, applicants must provide evidence of their academic aptitude for the doctoral programme in accordance with section 63a(7) of the Universities Act 2002.

Academic aptitude is deemed to have been proven once the project application for the PhD project has been approved and the PhD agreement signed.

Access to PhD programme at the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna is only possible if a research project is available that covers the project and personnel costs of the applicant for at least three years.

2.3. Project application and approval of the PhD project

A project description of the PhD project must be written for projects that are not externally reviewed. The description of the PhD project must be reviewed by two experts, at least one of whom should not, as far as possible, be employed at the Vetmeduni. The experts are proposed by the supervisors and appointed by the respective member of the Rectorate in accordance with the Rectorate's rules of procedure, who also approves the project on the basis of the evaluations.

The required documents must be submitted for externally reviewed projects receiving financial support (peer reviewed). The respective member of the Rectorate decides on the approval of the PhD project in accordance with the Rectorate's rules of procedure.

Table 1: Required documents

| Required documents | Reviewed projects receiving financial support | Projects not externally reviewed |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| PhD project application form | X | X |
| Detailed project description: Title, abstract and description of the planned PhD project | | X |
| Proposals for independent experts who can review the PhD project | | X |
| Confirmation of available funds for the applicant to be employed | | X |

PhD students are selected by the supervision group (see item 5.1.).

2.4. Application for admission to the PhD programme

The candidate must enclose the following documents with the application for admission to the doctoral programme:

- Official photo ID
- Curriculum vitae
- Proof of successful completion of a diploma or master's degree programme
- Proof of approval of the project description
- Supervision agreement

3. Programme structure and examination regulations

3.1. Programme structure

The PhD programme is divided into four parts, of which 15 ECTS credits are allocated to the structured academic training programme and 165 ECTS credits to academic work, the preparation of the PhD thesis and the thesis defence.

These ECTS credits are distributed across the following subjects and coursework:

Table 2: Programme structure

| Coursework | ECTS |
|--|-------------|
| Scientific work and project presentation (1st year) | ECTS 52 |
| Scientific work and interim evaluation (2nd year) | ECTS 53 |
| Scientific work, preparation of publications and PhD thesis (3rd year) | ECTS 55 |
| Thesis defence | ECTS 5 |
| Structured academic training programme | ECTS 15 |

3.2. PhD project and examination regulations

The supervision group evaluates the scientific progress of the PhD candidate at least once a year.

3.2.1. Project presentation in the first year of the programme

The PhD candidates present their project to the supervision group in a presentation within the first 12 months of being admitted to the PhD programme. The results of the project presentation determine the recommendations made by the supervision group concerning the continuation of the research project and, where appropriate, any proposed changes to the objectives and work schedule. This must be documented and submitted to the competent university body. If the supervision group does not recommend the continuation of the PhD project, the competent university body must be contacted for consultations.

3.2.2. Interim evaluation at the end of the second year of the programme

The interim evaluation is organised by the supervision group at the end of the second year and comprises:

- A report by the PhD student on the scientific progress of the project.
- An oral presentation by the PhD student on the scientific progress of the project.
- A discussion and evaluation of scientific progress by the supervision group.
- Proof of successful completion of courses or lectures in the structured academic training programme.

The result of the interim evaluation determines the recommendations made by the supervision group concerning the continuation of the research project and, where appropriate, any proposed changes to the objectives and work schedule. The interim evaluation must be documented in writing and submitted together with the progress report to the competent university body.

3.2.3. Structured academic training programme

At least 15 ECTS must be earned as part of the structured academic training programme in order to be admitted to the thesis defence.

The structured academic training programme consists of journal clubs, seminar series, practical training, laboratory rotations, guest lectures, active participation in congresses and didactic training, etc. Proof of attendance at relevant events must be provided.

The courses can be selected from the course programme offered at the Vetmeduni, as well as from the course programmes offered by recognised domestic or foreign post-secondary educational institutions and equivalent research institutions.

The successful completion of courses must be documented.

4. Submission of the PhD thesis

4.1. Requirements

At least one scientific paper, describing original scientific research, with the PhD student as the lead author must have been published in an internationally recognised peer-reviewed journal or accepted for printing at the time the PhD thesis is submitted. If this is not the case, this must be specifically justified to the competent university body.

Joint lead authorship is accepted. The qualitative and quantitative contribution of the PhD student to the scientific result must be outlined in detail. All joint lead authors, with the exception of the PhD student, must confirm that the same publication will not be used as a prerequisite for the completion of another PhD programme.

The formal requirements for the PhD thesis must meet the criteria listed in Annex 1.

4.2. Assessment of the PhD thesis

Once approved by the supervision group, the PhD thesis is submitted to the competent university body for assessment. The PhD thesis is assessed by the examination board (see 5.2).

The members of the examination board will provide a reasoned assessment within six weeks. Grading is based on the legal provisions contained in the statutes of the Vetmeduni. In the event of the dissertation being negatively assessed by the members of the examination board, a third examiner will be appointed by the competent university body.

The competent university body will use these assessments as a basis for deciding on the admission of the PhD student to the thesis defence. These assessments are made available to the supervision group and the PhD student.

5. Organisation

5.1. Supervision group

The supervision group supervises the PhD students and the associated research projects.

5.1.1. Structure

- The supervision group consists of at least two experts who act as supervisors.
- The first supervisor recruits the second supervisor. All members of the supervision group must have at least a completed doctorate or PhD degree.
- At least one supervisor must have a habilitation or the qualification required in accordance with section 16 of the 5th part of the statutes.
- At least one supervisor must work at the Vetmeduni.

5.1.2. Responsibilities

- Selection of PhD students.
- Conclusion of the supervision agreement.
- Guidance and support for PhD students in all aspects of research and training. The first supervisor is in continuous contact with the PhD student and monitors the ongoing progress of the PhD project.
- Organisation of the public presentation and the annual interim evaluation. Evaluation of the progress of research performance and advice on the selection of courses for the structured academic training programme.

5.2. Examination board

The members of the examination board are appointed by the competent university body and consist of at least two independent experts, one of whom does not, as far as possible, work at the Vetmeduni.

The members of the examination board are responsible for assessing the PhD thesis and conducting the thesis defence.

Members of the examination board must be academically qualified in accordance with section 11(4) of the 5th part of the statutes.

6. Thesis defence

The purpose of the thesis defence is for the PhD student to communicate their research activities to the public and demonstrate their competence in the presentation, discussion and defence of scientific results.

6.1. Requirements for admission to the thesis defence

The PhD student must have successfully completed the structured academic training programme in accordance with item 3.2.3 and achieved a positive assessment of the PhD thesis in order to be able to register for the thesis defence.

6.2. Regulations

- The date and place of the thesis defence are announced publicly at least one week in advance.
- The thesis defence consists of a public presentation of the research project followed by a scientific discussion and should not exceed a reasonable length of time.
- The presentation is to be conducted in English.
- The chairperson of the examination board is responsible for ensuring that the thesis defence is conducted in an orderly fashion, and for keeping an examination record.
- The examination board decides on a single final grade for the thesis defence.
- The thesis defence is assessed with a grade from one (= Very Good) to five (= Insufficient) in accordance with the Universities Act 2002.
- The number of examination retakes is determined by the regulations laid down in the Vetmeduni statutes.

7. Completion of the programme and overall grade of the programme

The following parts of the PhD programme must be successfully completed in order to graduate from the PhD programme:

- Scientific work and project presentation
- Scientific work and interim evaluation
- Structured academic training programme
- PhD thesis and thesis defence

Academic title

Graduates of the PhD programme are awarded the academic title Doctor of Philosophy, abbreviated to PhD.

8. Rights and obligations of PhD students

In addition to the Universities Act 2002, the following rights and obligations apply to PhD students:

- PhD students have a right to appropriate supervision. This is the responsibility of the supervision group.
- PhD students are committed to adhere to the rules of good scientific practice and quality-assured data management.
- PhD students report on their progress to the supervision group at least once a year.
- PhD students are provided with the infrastructure required to conduct their work and have access to all areas of the university that are required for students to undertake their work.

9. Transitional provisions

This curriculum applies to all students starting the programme from the winter semester 2021/22. Students who were subject to a curriculum valid prior to the time that this curriculum came into force are entitled to continue following the former curriculum and successfully complete the programme by 30 September 2027 at the latest. If the programme is not completed within this time, the student will be subject to the new curriculum for the rest of the course.

Students who commenced their PhD studies before the date of this curriculum may voluntarily accept the provisions of this curriculum at any time by means of a simple declaration.

10. Effective date

This curriculum will enter into force in the 2024/25 winter semester after publication in the Vetmeduni Gazette.

11. Annex 1

- **Cover sheet**
 - Title of the PhD thesis, name of the PhD student, organisational unit
- **Acknowledgements**
- **Own contribution**
 - List of publications that are part of the cumulative PhD thesis.
 - The qualitative and quantitative contribution of the PhD student to the scientific result must be outlined in detail. Categories are: experimental design, experiments, data analysis, writing the manuscript.
- **Declaration**
 - The PhD student confirms that the rules of good scientific practice have been observed in all aspects.
- **Summary**
 - The summary must not exceed 300 words in length.
- **Introduction**
 - The introduction contains an overview of the current state of research in this field, including the hypotheses and objectives.
- **Submitted manuscripts**
 - Published manuscripts should be provided in the journal layout as an original PDF. Accepted manuscripts should be provided in the form in which they were accepted by the journal.
- **Other results**
 - Unpublished results should be provided in a form in which they can be submitted for publication in scientific journals.
- **Discussion and conclusion**
 - The PhD thesis should conclude with a general discussion explaining the results of the studies in relation to the original hypotheses, the appropriateness of the methods used and the implications for the field.
- **Bibliography**
 - Uniformly formatted list of references.