



REGULATIONS RELATING TO OBTAINING THE ACADEMIC DEGREE OF DOCTOR AT HASSELT UNIVERSITY (UHASSELT)/TRANSNATIONAL UNIVERSITY LIMBURG (tUL)

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I. Provisions of Ministerial Decrees

The following summary contains relevant provisions of the Flemish Higher Education Code (Codex Hoger Onderwijs/CHO).

AIM OF PREPARATION OF A DOCTORAL THESIS

Article II.58 §7 CHO

Preparation of a doctoral thesis has the aim of training a researcher to make an independent contribution to the development and growth of scientific knowledge; the thesis must demonstrate the ability to create new scientific knowledge in a particular field or across fields, including the arts, on the basis of independent scientific research and the thesis must be able to lead to scientific publications.

AUTHORITY TO AWARD A DOCTORATE

Article II.73 §3 CHO

Universities may grant the degree of doctor in or including those areas of study or parts thereof in which they have the authority by virtue of articles II.78 to II.82 CHO to offer courses leading to the degree of master.

Universities that can offer only bachelor degree courses in particular areas of study or parts thereof may award the degree of doctor in or including those areas of study or parts thereof on the condition that the public defence of the thesis as provided for in article II.251 CHO takes place before an inter-university jury constituted in consultation with a university that is able by virtue of sections II.78 to II.82 CHO to offer master's courses in the field of study concerned or part thereof.

Article II.74

A university can grant the degree of doctor in or across the study areas "Audiovisual and visual arts", "Music and Stage arts", and "Nautical Sciences", or in or across parts of those study areas if the doctoral project is embedded in a joint research environment of the university and 1 or more university colleges. The university colleges concerned have by virtue of article II.83 to II.101 CHO the authority to offer courses in the areas of study concerned that lead to the degree of master.

CONDITIONS OF ELIGIBILITY

Article II.184 CHO

A general condition of eligibility for enrolment to prepare a doctoral thesis is possession of a master's degree.

The university management may ask for additional investigation to gauge the suitability of the student for carrying out scientific research in the discipline concerned and recording the results thereof in a thesis.

Article II.185 CHO

The university management may allow a student who does not possess a master's degree to enrol to prepare a doctoral thesis if it considers them capable of doing so.

The university management may make this exemption dependent on:

1. a research project that gauges suitability for writing a doctoral thesis, or
2. successfully taking an examination on parts of the academic education determined by the university management.

Article II.175 §2 CHO

For the application of the provisions of articles II.185 and II.190 CHO, diplomas from the second cycle of higher education (long type) and two cycle college of further education courses, diplomas from the second cycle of academic education and the diplomas rendered equivalent thereto by virtue of or by the Universities Decree, diplomas from postgraduate studies and the diplomas of chartered [polytechnic] engineer and the licentiate obtained at the Royal Military Academy in Brussels are regarded as equivalent to a master's degree.

Article II.192 CHO

The management of the institution may exempt persons who possess a diploma of higher education issued outside the Flemish Community from the above requirements for previous education for the preparation of a doctoral thesis where, in the opinion of the management of the institution, that diploma is equivalent to a master's degree. If this is not the case, the management of the institution may make permission to enrol dependent on successful completion of a preparatory programme specifically developed for the purpose.

ENROLMENT AND TUITION FEE

On an annual basis, The Board of Directors determines the tuition fees and the payment modality as outlined in the Flemish Higher Education Code (Codex Hoger Onderwijs/CHO). Further details can be found on the website.

OBTAINING THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR

Article II.251 CHO

The degree of "doctor" is awarded after the public defence of a thesis.

JOINT DIPLOMA OF DOCTOR**Article II.171 §1**

Within the limits of their educational authority, two or more universities may give out a joint diploma and grant the relevant degree of bachelor, master or doctor to a student who has successfully completed a course organised jointly by the universities concerned or after successful public defence of a thesis prepared under their joint supervision.

Article II.172 § 4 CHO

A university may, together with another university at home or abroad, give out a double diploma or joint diploma of the degree of doctor after the public defence of a thesis before a jury including as a minimum professors of the institutions concerned on the condition that the candidate has done research relating to their thesis at the partner university for at least six months.

a. Regulations

Section 1 - Introductory provision

Preamble

In this document the term "doctoral candidate" refers to both a male and a female doctoral candidate, and a supervisor, co-supervisor, lecturer, dean, rector and chairman may be either male or female.

Article 0 Definitions

1. *Faculty*: faculties are academic bodies that are set up by the Board of Directors in conformity with article 12 of the Government Decree and art. 89 of the regulations of the academic structure of UHasselt. For these regulations, the School for Transportation Sciences and the interfaculty School for Educational Studies is equivalent to a faculty.
2. *Dean*: the faculties are led by a dean. For these regulations, the chairman of the the School for Transportation Sciences and the interfaculty School for Educational Studies is equivalent to a dean.
3. *Authorized faculty*: the discipline in which the doctorate is awarded, as specified in article 1, determines which faculty is authorised, henceforth designated in these regulations as "faculty".
4. *Doctoral thesis*: at UHasselt, there are options to write a doctoral thesis in two different ways: either as a monograph or as a bundle of academic articles. The faculties have the right to make the final decision on this. If appropriate the faculty will work out the necessary modalities for this and/or produce regulations for this.
5. *My Doctoral file*: the 'My Doctoral file' application is an electronic tool for monitoring the doctoral process. This tool is always used where possible.
6. *UHasselt Campus*: all sites managed by UHasselt.

Article 1 Scope

These regulations specify the requirements and procedure relating to the preparation of a doctoral thesis leading to the obtaining of the degree of doctor at Hasselt University or the transnational University Limburg. The PhD regulations are applicable to all doctoral candidates except for those under the transitional regulations set out in article 27 (cf. article 26).

The doctorate is obtained in a discipline within or involving the areas of study or parts thereof within the educational authority of UHasselt/tUL (conform article II.73 §3 and the Treaty between the Flemish Community and the Kingdom of the Netherlands regarding the transnational University Limburg, approved by the decree of 13 July 2001) and leads to a degree in the disciplines shown on the website (www.uhasselt.be/doctoraldisciplines).

Article 2 Obtaining the degree of doctor

The degree of "doctor" is obtained after the public defence of a thesis (art. II.251 CHO), followed by deliberation and proclamation.

Article 3 Aim of preparation of a doctoral thesis

Preparation of a doctoral thesis has the aim of training a researcher to make an independent contribution to the development and growth of scientific knowledge. The doctoral thesis must demonstrate the ability to create new scientific knowledge in a particular field or across fields on the basis of independent scientific research, including the arts, and must be able to lead to scientific publications (art. II.58. §7 CHO).

Section 2 - Conditions of eligibility

Article 4 General conditions of eligibility

Enrolment to prepare a doctoral thesis is open to holders of the degree of master or of a degree regarded as equivalent.

Diplomas from the second cycle of higher education (long type) and two cycle college education, diplomas from the second cycle of academic education and the diplomas rendered equivalent thereto by virtue of or by the Universities Decree, diplomas from continued academic education and the diplomas of chartered [polytechnic] engineer and the licentiate obtained at the Royal Military Academy in Brussels are regarded as equivalent to a master's degree (art. II.175 §2 CHO).

By way of an exceptional measure, the rector may - on advice of the supervisor and with approval from the faculty council - permit a doctoral candidate who does not possess a master's degree to enrol to prepare a doctoral thesis if he considers them capable of doing so.

Article 5 Specific eligibility investigation

The file of every doctoral candidate shall be assessed individually.

The UHasselt website (www.uhasselt.be/admission_requirements) offers a list of master degrees that automatically result in admission for the various doctoral disciplines, without any additional research.

This list of master's degrees that will be permitted to enrol for a doctorate without eligibility investigation may be expanded, but not restricted, on the recommendation of a faculty.

If the doctoral candidate does not possess a contiguous master's degree as specified in the table above, the advice committee, or in the absence thereof the future supervisor, with approval of the faculty council must explicitly motivate and advise whether a doctoral candidate is capable of carrying out scientific research in the relevant discipline and lay down the results in a doctoral thesis (art. 184 CHO). This advice will comprise one of the three results listed in article 6.

The committee informs the faculty council about the results of its research. The faculty decides on the matter.

Article 6 Results of the eligibility investigation

The assessment of each doctoral candidate's file will lead to one of the following possibilities:

1. The candidate is admitted immediately without conditions.

The candidate is admitted with conditions. These conditions mean that the person concerned must acquire a particular skill or substantive knowledge of the subject that is considered necessary for the doctoral preparation and for which it may reasonably be expected that the candidate can acquire the knowledge/skills without delaying the research work. A period is laid down in which the additional skill/knowledge must be acquired and on expiry of this period, the result obtained shall be reported to the faculty council. The faculty shall determine whether the courses followed to acquire this skill/knowledge can be included in the doctoral school programme.

2. The candidate is not admitted to the doctoral programme.

Section 3 – Student and personnel administration

Article 7 Enrolment at student administration

Everyone preparing a doctoral thesis at UHasselt/tUL is required to enrol as a doctoral student, at the Student Administration Office, at the start of the doctorate, and as a member of a doctoral school. These enrolments must be renewed annually at the start of every academic year. The terms are specified annually by the University Board.

The tuition fee must be paid in the year when the student first enrols as a doctoral candidate and also in the year when the defence takes place. In case of a joint PhD, the modalities for enrolment are set down in an agreement (Cf. Section 11).

Article 8 Registration at the HR Department

The faculty ensures that every doctoral candidate is registered at the HR department at the beginning of their doctorate. This registration must always be renewed by the doctoral candidate, if applicable, *via My Doctoral File* (extension request), six months before the period expires. In accordance with this registration at the HR department, the doctoral candidate is expected to comply with all security regulations of UHasselt.

Section 4 - Start of the doctoral preparation

Article 9 The doctoral file

1. In consultation with the supervisor, the doctoral candidate draws up a doctoral file in the application *my doctoral file*. This file is submitted to the faculty within 3 months after the first enrolment. Doctoral candidates with an assistant's mandate of 3 x 2 years are allowed 6 months to submit this file. The faculty council attaches its (dis)approval to the doctoral file. If not approved, the doctoral student must rework the doctoral file with the supervisor and resubmit it. If it is approved, no further steps need to be undertaken.

2. The doctoral file states:
 - the doctoral candidate's master's degree;
 - the research group/research institute in which the doctorate will be prepared;
 - the subject, consisting of an indicative title and a research proposal. The research proposal contains at least: an overview of the state-of-the-art of the research, objectives, the methodology, workplan as well as a concise reflection on the anticipated impact of the planned research (on the scientific community, the wider stakeholders, the community in general, etc.);
 - the discipline;
 - the type of doctorate (UHasselt, tUL or joint PhD)
 - personnel number
 - the faculty;
 - the doctoral school to which the doctoral candidate belongs, and the URL where the minimum requirements of the doctoral school can be found;
 - the supervisor (in case of a joint PhD there are two supervisors, one from each partner institution);
 - at the suggestion of the supervisor: the constitution of the doctoral committee and possible co-supervisor(s) (maximum 2);
 - the results of the eligibility investigation (see article 6) are added by the faculty for further follow-up. .

3. When submitting the doctoral file in *My Doctoral File*, the doctoral candidate electronically signs the following internal regulations and guidelines - which are all available online:

- the PhD regulations
- the supervisor-doctoral candidate charter, including UHasselt's RDM policy.
- the no show policy.

Article 10 The supervisor

1. The doctorate is supervised by a supervisor. The supervisor must be either:
 - a. a senior academic staff (ZAP) of UHasselt with a doctorate by thesis (including ZAP members of the integrated courses). In exceptional cases, when the scientific file of a ZAP member of the UHasselt is of such a nature that it can be regarded as equivalent to that of a ZAP member with a doctorate, the rector can, on reasoned advice from the dean, make an exception to the need for a doctorate on the part of the supervisor;
 - b. a visiting professor with a doctorate by thesis employed at UHasselt. In exceptional cases, when the scientific file of a ZAP member of the UHasselt is of such a nature that it can be regarded as equivalent to that of a ZAP member with a doctorate, the rector can, on reasoned advice from the dean, make an exception to the need for a doctorate on the part of the supervisor. The faculty ensures that the appointment of the visiting professor extends for the entire duration of the doctorate;
 - c. an emeritus senior academic staff member (ZAP) of UHasselt. A emeritus ZAP member can only further guide doctorates that were started under their supervisorship prior to the reception of the status of emeritus, and with the express approval of the dean concerned.
2. The UHasselt supervisor (article 9 paragraph 3) subscribes to and implements the promoter-doctoral candidate charter (available online). This is done electronically using *My Doctoral File*.

Article 11 The doctoral committee

1. The doctoral committee consists of at least three people, including the supervisor and (max. 2) co-supervisors, if applicable. The doctoral committee must further comprise at least one member who is not the supervisor or co-supervisor of the doctoral candidate.
2. The supervisor together with any co-supervisor(s) is responsible for supervising the doctoral candidate and ensures that it is possible for the latter to carry out the doctoral research under favourable circumstances within the research group. The doctoral committee oversees the progress of the doctoral work and reports to the faculty council as specified in article 12.

3. The co-supervisor(s) of a doctorate must be:
 - a. in possession of a PhD by thesis and/or;
 - b. a member of the senior academic staff (ZAP) with a PhD by thesis or the foreign equivalent of such a senior academic staff member, or a visiting professor with a PhD by thesis. In exceptional cases, when the scientific file of a researcher is of such a nature that it can be regarded as equivalent to that of a senior member of the academic staff or visiting professor with a doctorate, the rector can, on reasoned advice from the dean, make an exception to the need for a doctorate on the part of the co-supervisor;
 - c. the emeritus senior academic staff (ZAP) of UHasselt.

If the co-supervisor does not have a PhD by thesis, the dean may submit a motivated advice for approval by the rector.

4. The doctoral committee may have a maximum of one member without a PhD, if written motivation by the supervisor is provided.

5.1 If the supervisor has the correct background in terms of subject content, he can supervise doctorates in disciplines outside the faculty to which he himself is affiliated. In this case additional requirements are imposed concerning the composition of the doctoral committee to safeguard the quality of the doctoral thesis:

- the doctoral committee must have at least one committee member from the faculty to which the doctoral discipline belongs (www.uhasselt.be/doctoraatsdisciplines);
- a co-supervisor from the faculty to which the doctoral discipline belongs, can be included in the doctoral committee, but this cannot be required by that faculty.

5.2 In case of any disagreement concerning the suitability of a member of the senior academic staff (ZAP) to act as a supervisor in this context (cf. article 5.1), the faculty that is to approve the doctoral file may submit this question to the Vice Rector Research for assessment.

The Rector of UHasselt may permit, after a on reasoned advice of the relevant dean, a deviation to the composition rules set out.

Section 5 - Monitoring the progress of the doctoral preparation

Article 12 Monitoring, progress and reporting

1. The doctoral committee meets at least once a year at the initiative of the doctoral candidate to monitor the progress of the research and to make adjustments if appropriate.
 - a. In the years when extension of the enrolment or appointment with the HR department is not required (years 1 and 3 and possibly year 5 for doctoral candidates

with an assistant mandate), the doctoral committee produces a written report¹ which is signed

by all members of the doctoral committee and by the doctoral candidate. This report is added to the *My Doctoral File* by the doctoral candidate under the heading 'reports'. If the doctoral committee considers that progress with the doctoral research is inadequate, it expressly states this in the report.

- b. In years when an extension of the enrolment or appointment with the HR department is required (year 2 and year 4 if applicable for doctoral candidates with an assistant mandate), the doctoral candidate is invited via *My Doctoral file* to produce a progress report for the doctoral committee. This report contains: i. a report of the work done during the previous period of doctoral study, taking into account the results of the eligibility investigation referred to in article 6, paragraph 2, ii. a forecast of the planned activities during the next two years and iii. a brief reflection on the anticipated impact of the planned research (on the scientific community, wider stakeholders, the community in general etc.). The doctoral candidate adds this report to the extension request in *My Doctoral file* and submits the request using the application. The doctoral committee evaluates this request and produces a written report² for the doctoral student and the relevant discipline group. This report focuses specifically on evaluation of the progress of the doctoral research and the feasibility of completing the doctoral thesis within the anticipated time. This report, together with the opinion of the committee, is added to the extension request in *My Doctoral file* by the supervisor.
 - i. In case of a positive opinion, the relevant discipline group also makes a recommendation and a request for extension in the financial application. After approval by the faculty council, this application is submitted to the HR department. The HR department submits this extension request to the competent decision-making body (Operational Remuneration Committee or Executive Board, depending on the type of appointment/enrolment of the doctoral candidate).
 - ii. If a negative opinion is given, preparation for the doctoral thesis cannot continue according to the modalities of the doctoral candidate's approved doctoral file. The modalities for termination are defined in article 13.
 - iii. If no recommendation is made, the doctoral candidate cannot obtain an extension.

¹ Template available online – only section A

² Same template but with completion of section B

2. If the doctoral committee, outside the reporting period(s) as described above, considers that progress with the doctoral research is manifestly insufficient, it informs the doctoral candidate of this in good time, in writing, and if necessary repeatedly. If the doctoral candidate considers that there is a problem in relation to progress with the doctorate, or with the doctoral supervision, he shall give notice of this in good time, in writing, if necessary repeatedly, to the supervisor and/or members of the doctoral committee. If problems arise with the doctoral supervision or other problems that the doctoral candidate is unable to submit to the supervisor or doctoral committee, the doctoral candidate may contact the ombuds service (cf. Article 23).
3. If the members of the doctoral committee are manifestly not in agreement during the doctorate, they may take this problem to the Rector. The Rector shall make a decision in such cases.

Article 13 Termination of a doctorate

1. (Cf. art. 11.1.b.ii) If the advice on the progress of the doctoral work from the faculty concerned is negative, the preparation of the doctoral thesis can no longer be continued according to the modalities of the approved doctoral file of the doctoral candidate. In this case the doctorate is not extended, or the arrangements for termination are agreed by mutual consultation between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor.
2. The doctoral candidate may cease the doctoral research. He shall inform the supervisor. The modalities for such a discontinuation shall be agreed in consultation.
3. In case of discontinuation of the doctoral research the supervisor shall always provide the relevant faculty with the reasons, on behalf of the committee, and a termination date. The faculty shall then inform the HR department, the Research Coordination Office and the Student Administration about the cessation.
4. The supervisor and doctoral candidate shall pay particular attention to the guidelines concerning sustainable collection, processing, keeping, archiving and removal of data and results which are obtained in the context of (research) work at UHasselt (cf. UHasselt RDM policy).

Section 6 - Final phase of preparation of the doctorate³³

Article 14 Submission and assessment provisional draft doctoral thesis

1. The doctoral candidate submits a draft doctoral thesis to the members of the doctoral committee with the announcement that he/she wishes to defend the thesis. This provisional draft includes the full content of the proposed doctoral thesis. The supervisor can submit the draft doctoral thesis to an external referee.
2. Within one month of submission, the doctoral committee, backed up if applicable by the assessment of the external referee(s), assesses the draft of doctoral thesis. This assessment

³³ When the final phase is available within My Doctoral file this procedure will be integrated in the application.

occurs preferably on the basis of discussion and written reports. The doctoral candidate receives from the supervisor a consistent written report of the comments.

3. If the doctoral committee gives permission for the doctoral thesis to be submitted, the doctoral candidate receives a notice from the supervisor, including notice of the deadline within which the revised doctoral thesis must be submitted.
4. If the doctoral committee decides that the provisional draft requires fundamental reworking, the procedure is suspended and will be dealt with in accordance with paragraph 2 of this section as from submission of the reworked draft.

If the members of the doctoral committee manifestly do not agree, they may take this problem to the rector. In such cases the Rector shall make a proposal to the dean, who shall make a decision.

Article 15 Submission of doctoral thesis

1. The candidate amends the doctoral thesis based on the assessment of the draft doctoral thesis by the doctoral committee. The doctoral candidate sends the thesis to the supervisor within the anticipated time span, as specified in article 14, paragraph 3.

Article 16 Procedure for constitution of doctoral jury⁴

1. Once the doctoral committee has given permission for the doctoral thesis to be submitted (see article 14, paragraph 3), the supervisor shall place the composition of the doctoral jury on the agenda for the next meeting of the faculty council, including the information below:
 - (if applicable) date of the pre-defence;
 - provisional date or period of the defence;
 - title of the doctoral thesis;
 - the discipline in which the doctoral student will be obtaining the doctorate;
 - proposal of the constitution of the doctoral jury;
 - the university most eligible for the required inter-university discussions, if the doctoral thesis is involved in an area of study or part of an area of study in which UHasselt/tUL can only award bachelor's diplomas. In this case the discipline, the institution and the date of the Master's degree that has been obtained will also be stated.

Before the proposal mentioned in paragraph 1 is placed on the agenda of the faculty council, the faculty shall⁵, if applicable, find out from the doctoral school whether or not the doctoral

⁴ An amendment to 'Article 16 – paragraph 2' was approved on the College of Deans of 15/12/2023. This amendment is included in the attached addendum n°1.

⁵ The faculty means an employee of the deanery (e.g. administrative director, officials on the staff, the dean, etc.).

candidate has already met the requirements for the doctoral school. Only with a positive advice of the doctoral committee and the doctoral school board the faculty can issue a positive advice on its next faculty council meeting on the proposal mentioned in paragraph 1 to the rector. This opinion will be valid for one year.

2. The faculty ensures that the doctoral jury is composed by members of different universities and preferably has an international constitution. The doctoral jury⁴ consists of a minimum of 6 members, including the chairman. The members of the doctoral committee are part of the doctoral jury. In addition to the doctoral committee, only members of the senior academic staff (ZAP), or their foreign equivalents outside Flanders, emeritus staff and postdoctoral researchers may be members of the doctoral jury. Proposed jury members associated with research institutions, research institutes and/or working in businesses, the magistracy, or government agencies may - subject to written argumentation by the supervisor - be members of the doctoral jury. The doctoral jury may include a maximum of one person without a doctorate, with written argumentation of the supervisor. This written approval is not necessary if the member without a doctorate is already member of the doctoral committee (cf. article 11.4). For doctorates defended within the faculty of Architecture and Arts, a maximum of two people without a doctorate can be included in the doctoral jury with written argumentation from the supervisor.

The faculty takes account of the decreed gender balance requirements when constituting examination boards and committees.

The rector of UHasselt can, following advice of the dean of the faculty, make an exception to the previous constitution rules.

3. The chairmanship of the doctoral jury is awarded to the dean of the faculty concerned, who can delegate this task to a member of the senior academic staff (ZAP) or emeritus member of the senior academic staff of the faculty. The members of the doctoral committee cannot act as chairman.
4. The rector decides on the constitution of the doctoral jury. As a rule the doctoral jury will be definitively constituted within a period of 10 calendar days of the rector receiving the letter from the dean of the faculty. For a doctoral thesis in which UHasselt does not have the teaching authority to offer an MA course, a recommendation from another institution that will act as patron institution, i.e. another university in Flanders that does have that teaching authority, needs to be obtained. The faculty shall make a proposal concerning the patron institution when composing the doctoral jury, and the institution will be contacted by the rector's office. In that case the doctoral jury shall only be constituted when agreement has been reached between the UHasselt rector and the rector of the university concerned. A maximum period of three weeks is aimed at in this regard.

The rector of UHasselt informs the dean of the faculty of the final constitution of the doctoral jury. Subsequently the dean of the faculty informs the members of the jury and the doctoral candidate.

5. If there is a change in the composition of the doctoral jury (cf. Article 14 paragraph 1) the whole procedure set out above (Article 16) must be followed again. In case of a change in the date of (pre-)defence and the title of the doctoral thesis, the procedure does *not* have to be restarted. In the latter case the doctoral candidate, with the supervisor's approval, must inform the Administrative Director of the faculty of the change, and the Administrative Director will in turn inform the departments involved, so that the doctoral candidate's *My Doctoral File* can be amended.

Article 17 Assessment of the content of the doctoral thesis by the jury and “pre-defence”

1. As soon as the constitution of the doctoral jury has been communicated by the rector, the supervisor provides the members of the doctoral jury with the content of the definitive doctoral thesis in accordance with article 15. The supervisor informs the members of the doctoral jury that they have a maximum of 4 weeks after receipt of the thesis to assess the doctoral thesis, to formulate comments⁶ and to express any objections to the public defence.
2. In accordance with the faculty regulations on the matter, there is the possibility of organising a pre-defence, before giving permission for the public defence. In that case the faculty arranges matters regarding the timing and the presence of the doctoral jury at the pre-defence.
3. If a doctoral jury member objects to the public defence, the doctoral jury must in any event discuss this matter. A 2/3 majority is required for permission for the public defence, including at least one of the external doctoral jury members.

As a result of these discussions, the doctoral jury may also make the permission to defend subject to conditions, and link it to a remediation plan.

If the doctoral jury does not give permission for the public defence (or imposes conditions), the supervisor informs the doctoral candidate of the objection and the remarks on the matter.

If the doctoral jury agrees with the public defence, the doctoral jury will report this in accordance with the relevant internal regulations, and the supervisor will report this to the doctoral student and the dean.

⁶ In accordance with the faculty regulations (if available).

Section 7 - Public defence and deliberations

Article 18 Public defence⁷

1. The defence of the doctoral thesis is public. The rector watches over the application of the public nature of the defence. Confidential information (for example confidential research results or commercially sensitive data) can be omitted from the public defence to guarantee its confidentiality. In that case the supervisor and the doctoral candidate shall discuss the specific approach to the doctoral defence with the Research Coordination Office. Notice of this defence will be given by the Communication and Marketing Department and the faculty will announce it on the notice boards. No public defence may take place during the period of 15 July to 20 August inclusive.
2. ⁷The doctoral candidate ensures that the members of the jury have a printed copy of the definitive doctoral thesis, or at the very least an electronic version, in their possession at least 7 calendar days before the planned defence. Three copies of the doctoral thesis are made available for the UHasselt library of UHasselt and for the Royal Library⁸ and the thesis is made accessible via Open Access. To safeguard later opportunities for publication, doctoral theses are placed under embargo as standard for a period of five years, and they are consequently (temporarily) not made available to the public. The doctoral candidate and supervisor may, however, jointly decide to alter this period or not to apply an embargo.
3. The public defence of the thesis may not last for longer than 2 hours including the exposition of the thesis, which may take a maximum of 50 minutes. The defence must take place at one of the UHasselt campuses, as indicated in the definitions (art. 0), with the exception of joint PhDs, where the place of defence is defined in the agreement. In case of any deviation from this, approval must be requested from the rector by the faculty, in a motivated advice.

⁷ At the College of Deans of July 4th, 2025 an amendment to 'Article 18 – paragraph 2' was approved. This amendment is included in Addendum n°2

⁸ Theses are usually printed via UHasselt. – cf. procedure for obtaining a doctorate on the UHasselt website. In that case three copies are automatically reserved for the libraries. In the exceptional cases of doctorates in the Architecture and Arts, where some doctorates are printed externally, the doctoral student shall, on his own initiative, submit three copies of his thesis to the UHasselt library.

Article 19 Deliberations and proclamations

1. The doctoral jury shall deliberate immediately after the end of the defence and proceed to the proclamation. The doctoral jury decides by a two-thirds majority.
2. In the deliberations no degrees are awarded: it is merely decided whether the doctoral candidate has succeeded.
3. The doctoral doctoral jury cannot validly deliberate unless at least four members excluding its chairman are present. At least one of these members (excluding the chairman) cannot be a member of the doctoral committee. If a member of the doctoral jury is not able to physically attend, in exceptional cases, the doctoral defence and deliberations can be attended remotely. If a doctoral jury member is physically unable to attend, he can exceptionally also attend the doctoral defence and deliberation from a distance.

Section 8 – Language, communication & publications

Article 20 Language

1. The doctoral thesis may be written and defended in Dutch or English. The UHasselt rector can allow for an exception to this rule, after obtaining a recommendation from the relevant faculty council.

Article 21 Communication

The doctoral candidate shall provide the necessary information to the Communication and Marketing department for the defence, for use in a possible press release.

Article 22 Publications

1. In publications concerning research carried out within a research group at UHasselt, its affiliation to UHasselt is always mentioned.
2. The doctoral thesis must be written in accordance with the house style rules as determined by the University Board. For PhDs in the faculty of Architecture and Arts, a separate agreed framework has been worked out, which can be consulted within that faculty.
3. The doctoral candidate is expected to comply with all relevant laws and regulations concerning copyright.

Subsection 9 – Arbitration Service and Disputes

Article 23 Arbitration Service and Disputes

1. Doctoral candidates who have a dispute during their doctorate with their supervisor and/or doctoral committee, or who experience other problems which they cannot take up with their supervisor or doctoral committee, can approach the ombuds person. The ombuds person is an independent third party that will listen, give advice, and - only at the request of and in consultation with the doctoral candidate - take on a conciliation function. The arbitration service can be reached at PhD-Ombuds@UHasselt.be.
2. If in cases where the doctoral regulations are not followed or in disputes between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor and/or doctoral committee, the conciliation by the ombuds person does not lead to a solution, the file is submitted to the rector, who takes appropriate steps or proposes the faculty concerned to take them.

Section 10 – Doctoral bonus

Article 24 Doctoral bonus

1. Every doctoral candidate who is enrolled with UHasselt for a regular (UHasselt/tUL - joint PhD), is entitled to a doctoral bonus after successful defence of the doctorate.
2. A bonus for (partial) reimbursement of the expenses associated with the defence of the doctorate is provided for in the BOF budget, and is partly granted directly to the doctoral candidate and partly granted directly to the research group. The modalities for this are approved annually by the university board. The bonus can be requested until a maximum of three months after the date of defence, as long as the requirements have been met.
3. The requirements for the doctoral bonus vary depending on the nature of the doctorate. These include, among others, making the doctoral thesis available, communication of the defence of the doctorate, preparation of a press release etc. The requirements are communicated in a way that is specific to the individual situation by the Research Coordination Office as soon as it is notified of the defence.

Subsection 11 – Joint PhD

Article 25 Joint and double PhD

1. Students can carry out a PhD under the joint supervision of UHasselt/tUL and one or more other universities which are authorised to award doctorates. The arrangements for the joint PhD are defined in a cooperation agreement concluded between the student and the institutions concerned.
2. In case of a joint PhD the partner institutions shall award the same doctoral title (with qualifications), in a double doctorate the doctoral titles awarded (with qualifications) are different for each partner institution.
3. A basic condition of the joint PhD is that the student performs research at each of the partner institutions for at least 6 months. The student must enrol as a doctoral student at UHasselt/tUL .
4. Each partner institution appoints a supervisor.
5. All the rules in these regulations are applicable, including approval of the doctoral jury.
6. Every joint PhD is reported no less than 12 months before the defence via the e-mail address jointphd@uhasselt.be.
7. Before agreements/rules are defined in relation to a joint PhD agreement, which differ from those in the PhD regulations, the opinion from the faculty, including justification, shall be submitted to the Rector for approval.

Section 12 - Final provision

Article 26 - Scope

The PhD regulations are applicable to all doctoral candidates except those under the transitional regulations set out in article 27.

Article 27 - Transitional arrangement

These PhD regulations replace the previous regulations. There are two exceptions to this:

- doctoral candidates who started before 01.11.2015 shall remain subject to the rules set out in the PhD regulations dated 11.12.2012.
- doctoral candidates who started between 01.11.2015 and 01.01.2019 shall be subject to the rules set out in these regulations, with the exception of the following items, for which the articles of the PhD regulations dated 01.11.2015 remain in force:

1. Doctoral committee (article 10 of the Regulations dated 01.11.2015).
 - 1) The doctoral committee consists of at least three persons, including the supervisor and any (max. 2) co-supervisor(s). The doctoral committee must also have at least one member who is not a supervisor or co-supervisor of the doctoral candidate.

- 2) The supervisor, together with any co-supervisor(s) is responsible for guiding the doctoral candidate and shall ensure that the latter is able to carry out the doctoral research within the research group under appropriate conditions. The doctoral committee shall supervise the progress of work on the doctorate and shall report on this to the faculty as provided in article 11 paragraph 5.
- 3) The co-supervisor(s) of a doctorate:
 - a. have a doctorate based on a thesis, and/or;
 - b. are members of the senior member of academic staff (ZAP), with doctorates based on a thesis or the foreign equivalent of ZAP, or guest professors with a doctorate based on a thesis. In exceptional cases, when the scientific credentials of a researcher are equivalent by nature to that of a ZAP member or a guest professor with a doctorate, the rector may, following a recommendation, stating reasons, from the faculty, permit an exception to the need for a doctorate for a co-supervisor;
 - c. are emeritus members of the senior academic staff of UHasselt.
- 4) The doctoral committee can have a maximum of one member without a doctorate. The rector of UHasselt may, after a recommendation, stating reasons, has been obtained from the relevant faculty, permit a deviation from the composition rules set out above.

2. Evaluation of the content of the doctoral thesis by the doctoral jury and "pre-defence" (article 15 of the regulations dated 01.11.2015).

- 1) As soon as the Rector has given notice of the composition of the doctoral jury, the supervisor shall provide the contents of the final doctoral thesis in accordance with article 13 to the doctoral jury members. The supervisor shall inform the doctoral jury members that they have a maximum of 4 weeks after receipt to evaluate the doctoral thesis and to make known any objections to its public defence.
- 2) In accordance with the relevant faculty regulations, it is possible to organise a pre-defence before giving permission for public defence. The faculty shall, in that case, make arrangements for the timing and for the presence of the doctoral jury at the pre- defence.
- 3) If a member of the doctoral jury has an objection to the public defence, the doctoral jury must consult on this in every case. A 2/3 majority is required to give permission for the public defence.

The doctoral jury may also, as a result of this consultation, place conditions on the granting of permission for the defence, which will in that case be linked to a remediation plan.

If the doctoral jury does not give permission for a public defence (or if it is made subject to conditions), the supervisor will inform the doctoral candidate about the objection and the relevant comments.

- 4) If the doctoral jury agrees to the public defence, the supervisor shall inform the

doctoral student and the dean of this.

Article 28 - Hierarchy of applicable internal regulations

In case of any conflicting provisions in faculty regulations concerning the awarding of PhDs, doctoral candidates and doctoral theses, the present doctoral regulations shall take precedence over all faculty regulations.

Addendum n°1: Clarification of the role of chairperson of the doctoral jury**Adjustment 'Regulations relating to obtaining the academic degree of doctor at Hasselt University (UHasselt)/transnational University Limburg (tUL), approved by the College of Deans on 15 December 2023 (CvD 234-N-CvD-022)**

The article below will be amended as follows:

Section 6 – Final phase of preparation of the doctorate**Article 16 Procedure for constitution of doctoral jury**

2. The faculty ensures that the doctoral jury is composed of members of different universities and preferably internationally. The doctoral jury consists of a minimum of six members. The members of the doctoral committee are part of the doctoral jury. A chairperson will be appointed who will take on a moderating role without voting rights. In addition to the doctoral committee, only members the senior academic staff (ZAP), or their foreign equivalents outside Flanders, emeritus staff and postdoctoral researchers may be members of the doctoral jury. Proposed jury members associated with research institutions, research institutes and/or working in businesses, the magistracy, or government agencies may – subject to written argumentation by the supervisor – be members of the doctoral jury. The doctoral jury may include a maximum of one member without a doctorate, with written argumentation of the supervisor. This written motivation is not necessary if the member without a doctorate is already a member of the doctoral committee (cf. Art. 11.4). For doctorates within the Faculty of Architecture and Art, a maximum of two people without a doctorate can be included in the doctoral jury with written argumentation from the supervisor.

The faculty takes account of the decreed gender balance requirements when constituting examination boards and committees.

The rector of UHasselt can, after advice of the dean of the faculty, make an exception to the previous constitution rules.

The addendum n°1 comes into effect on December 15th, 2023 and applies to all PhD students whose doctoral file has been definitively approved by the faculty board on or after November 1st, 2015.

Addendum n°2: Print procedure doctoral thesis

Adjustment 'Regulations relating to obtaining the academic degree of doctor at Hasselt University (UHasselt) / transnational University Limburg (tUL)', approved by the College of Deans on 4 July 2025 (CvD 245-N-CvD-079)

The article below will be amended as follows:

Section 7 – Public defence and deliberations

Article 18 Public defence

2. The doctoral candidate ensures that the jury members have a copy of the final doctoral thesis (digital or physical)⁹ in their possession at least 7 calendar days before the planned defence. Theses are formatted according to the guidelines described on the UHasselt website regarding doctoral research¹⁰. The doctoral thesis is made available electronically via the UHasselt depository before the defence. To safeguard further publication purposes, doctoral theses are generally placed under embargo for a period of 5 years, and are therefore (temporarily) not made publicly available. The doctoral candidate and supervisor can, however, jointly decide to adjust this period or not to apply an embargo.

The addendum n°2 comes into effect on February 15th, 2026 and applies to all doctoral candidates whose public doctoral defence will take place after this date.

⁹ The faculty addendum or the faculty procedures will state whether a printed version is necessary for the jury members.

¹⁰ <https://www.uhasselt.be/en/research/phd/current-phd-students/step-by-step-plan-per-year>
PhD regulations UHasselt/tUL
Version 01.01.2019