

UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS

Quality Assurance Plan of the Doctoral School of Biology and Sport Biology

This Quality Assurance Plan outlines the specific quality assurance activities of the Doctoral School of Biology and Sport Biology (hereinafter referred to as BDS) at the Faculty of Science, University of Pécs, reflecting the particular requirements of doctoral education.

The principles and methods of quality assurance for doctoral training and degree conferment are primarily defined by the *Code of Doctoral Studies of the University of Pécs*, the relevant sections of the *Code of Studies and Examinations of the University of Pécs*, and the *Organisational and Operational Rules of the Doctoral School of Biology and Sport Biology*. The following document presents requirements that partly overlap with, and partly extend beyond, these regulations. It does not discuss the quality assurance elements included in related legislation—primarily Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education and Government Decree No. 387/2012 (XII.19.) on Doctoral Schools, Doctoral Procedures, and Habilitation.

The Doctoral School of Biology and Sport Biology (hereinafter: BDS) aims to ensure the effective implementation of the following key principles of quality assurance:

1. **Principle of Professional Control.** Throughout the entire process of doctoral education and degree attainment, the BDS enforces the oversight of both the international and domestic professional and scientific communities. In addition to Hungarian experts, the BDS occasionally involves Hungarian researchers residing abroad in the evaluation of dissertations. For dissertations submitted in English, the BDS strives to ensure that at least one of the reviewers is a foreign scholar or a Hungarian researcher living abroad.
2. **Principle of Adherence to Scientific Ethics.** In developing and operating its quality management system, the BDS adheres to the statements and recommendations of the Committee on Scientific Ethics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Research involving animal experiments, human subjects, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs) may only be conducted with the necessary prior ethical approvals, and dissertations must include appropriate references to these ethical permits.
3. **Principle of Transparency.** The main phases of the quality assurance system implemented by the BDS shall be broadly transparent to the professional and scientific community. Defended dissertations are made publicly accessible through both the national doctoral database (www.doktori.hu) and the University Library of Pécs website, except for classified or confidential works.
4. **Principle of Feedback.** Supervisors, instructors, and members of the BDS Council receive continuous feedback on the quality of their activities and have the opportunity to share their experiences and suggestions. Therefore, the BDS's annual opening sessions, reports, and official events are open to all members of the academic community, including the research progress presentations held as part of the complex examination after the second year. A student representative, elected by the doctoral candidates, participates in the meetings of the BDS Council.
5. **Principle of Quality Orientation.** Through the development and operation of its quality management system, the BDS aims to continuously enhance the aspirations and standards of both its students and faculty. It seeks to instil in them a deep respect for science, while fostering initiative and creativity as core elements of their intellectual framework. Members of the BDS community are expected to be familiar with and apply

international trends in science and scientometrics, including updates to the so-called Norwegian List.

6. ***Principle of Intellectual Property Protection.*** The quality management system supports the alignment of the university's doctoral training with the intellectual property protection standards of both the European Union and Hungary. According to the Code of Doctoral Studies of the University of Pécs, doctoral candidates who hold patents and have at least a 15% ownership share are exempted from the requirement of publishing a second scientific paper.
7. ***Principle of Individual Responsibility.*** The establishment and operation of a scientific school is a collective effort, but its success depends on clearly defined roles and responsibilities throughout the processes of training and research. Therefore, the BDS reviews the list of supervisors at least once per accreditation period and makes changes when necessary.
8. ***Principle of Process Documentation.*** Documentation is required for all decision points related to doctoral education. Reviewing these documents is a fundamental task of the quality management system. A key objective of the BDS is to ensure that the administrative workload of instructors does not increase as a result of the implementation of the quality management system. To support documentation, the electronic student information system is used to its full potential.
9. ***Principle of Equal Opportunity.*** As the BDS also admits international students, it is committed to cultural sensitivity and ensuring equal treatment for all participants.

The present Quality Assurance Plan aims to ensure the high and consistent quality of the BDS through the regulation of five major phases of doctoral education and degree attainment:

1. Announcement of Doctoral Topics

(1) Each year (January–February), the BDS invites topic proposals from research group leaders and collaborating institutions. Proposals must include the supervisors' details. Supervisors must have held a doctoral degree for at least five years and may supervise a maximum of four doctoral candidates at a time (co-supervision counts as 0.5). Both the topic and the supervisor must be approved by the Council of the Doctoral School of Biology and Sport Biology (CBDS).

(2) Active research engagement is an essential requirement. The scientific output of the past five years must exceed the publication standards required for degree attainment. This is verified through the PTE TÉR (performance evaluation system) database or, for external supervisors, the MTMT system.

(3) Approved topics, supervisors, admission criteria, and the list of admitted students are published and regularly updated on the BDS website and in the Hungarian Doctoral Council's registry.

2. Admission to the Doctoral Programme

(1) The BDS announces its annual call for applications (March–April), which includes topic descriptions and admission requirements. The admission interview (June) assesses applicants' preparedness and ranks candidates. The interview is conducted before the Admission Committee, appointed by the CBDS. Written confirmation of acceptance from both the supervisor and host department/institution is required.

(2) International applicants are interviewed online.

(3) Based on the Admission Committee's report, the CBDS recommends admissions and state scholarships to the Doctoral and Habilitation Committee of Sciences (DHCS), which makes the final decisions and informs candidates.

3. Monitoring Student Progress

(1) The CBDS evaluates student progress annually based on research reports. These include:

- a) an at least 10-page literature review at the end of the first year;
- b) a complex examination at the end of the second year;
- c) written presentation of key thesis points by the end of the third year.

(2) The CBDS also monitors elements of scientific output required for the degree procedure.

(3) The secretary of the DHCS notifies students in their fourth semester about eligibility for the complex exam and in their eighth semester about the submission deadline for the dissertation.

4. PhD Degree Requirements

(1) General degree requirements are specified in the *Code of Doctoral Studies of the University of Pécs* and the *Organisational and Operational Rules of the Doctoral School of Biology and Sport Biology*.

(2) Candidates must also meet detailed field-specific requirements (available on the BDS website).

(3) These requirements are approved by the University Doctoral Council (UDC). Publication criteria are aligned with the UDC's general minimum requirements published online.

(4) The list of complex exam subjects and topics is reviewed every five years. New subjects may only be introduced with CBDS approval.

5. Degree Awarding Procedure

(1) The degree procedure follows the *Code of Doctoral Studies of the University of Pécs*.

(2) Before submission, dissertations must undergo a preliminary workplace defence, verified by two core members of the BDS. Two reviewers (at least one external) evaluate the thesis, and their comments are recorded in minutes, attached with the review reports. At least five active supervisors, including two core members, must attend.

(3) After submission, all materials are distributed electronically to the Review Committee. Opponents are approved by the DHCS. The dissertation and thesis summary are made available on the BDS website at least 10 days prior to the public defence.

6. Quality Objectives for Academic Year 2025/26

Quality Objective 1: Increase the completion rate of student satisfaction surveys among doctoral candidates. *Indicator:* response rate (%); *Target:* 60%.

Quality Objective 2: Improve accessibility of regulatory and informational documents on the BDS website. *Indicator:* availability ratio (%); *Target:* 100%.

Quality Objective 3: Review the course attendance system. Optimize participation for students at different locations and in different language programmes by expanding block-scheduled and

hybrid course options and enhancing hands-on training opportunities. *Target:* inclusion of all compulsory courses (100%).

Quality Objective 4: Review the performance evaluation system. In the annual update of the PTE TÉR, special attention will be given to doctoral education tasks. Reliable verification of activities conducted at external sites remains unresolved. *Target:* inclusion of at least three previously unrecorded activities.

Regarding its performance indicators, the Doctoral School of Biology and Sport Biology (BDS) of the University of Pécs aims to improve its performance in the following parameters:

Indicator 1: Proportion of students passing the complex examination after four semesters — *Target:* $\geq 80\%$.

Indicator 2: Proportion of full-time doctoral students obtaining the PhD degree within three years after the complex examination — *Target:* $\geq 75\%$.

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