



# **REGULATIONS RELATING TO OBTAINING THE ACADEMIC DEGREE OF DOCTOR AT HASSELT UNIVERSITY (UHASSELT)/TRANSNATIONAL UNIVERSITY LIMBURG (tUL)<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> For the application and implementation of these doctoral regulations, Hasselt University and the transnational University Limburg are regarded as one university, represented by the UHasselT rector (art. II.79 §1 and §2 CHO).

## **I. Provisions of Ministerial Decrees**

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

### **AIM OF PREPARING 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 lead to scientific publications.

### **AUTHORITY TO AWARD A DOCTORATE**

#### **Article II.73 §3 CHO**

Universities may grant the degree of doctor in or across those areas of study or parts thereof in which they have the authority by virtue of Articles II.78 to II.82 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 across those areas of study or parts thereof on the condition that the public defence of the thesis as provided for in Article II.251 takes place before an interuniversity jury constituted in consultation with a university that is able by virtue of sections II.78 to II.82 to offer master's courses in the concerned field of study or part thereof.

#### **Article II.74 CHO**

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 one or more university of applied sciences. The universities of applied sciences concerned have by virtue of Article II.83 to II.101 the authority to offer courses in the concerned areas of study that lead to the degree of master.

### **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Article II.184 CHO**

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

The competent decision-making body may ask for additional investigation to gauge the suitability of the student for carrying out scientific research in the concerning discipline and recording the results thereof in a thesis.

**Article II.185 CHO**

The competent decision-making body may allow a student who does not possess a master's degree to enroll to prepare a doctoral thesis if they consider them capable of doing so.

The competent decision-making body may make this exemption dependent on:

- 1° a research project that gauges suitability for writing a doctoral thesis, or
- 2° successfully passing an examination on parts of the academic education determined by the competent decision-making body.

**Article II.175 §2 CHO**

For the application of the provisions of Articles II.185 and II.190 diplomas from the second cycle of higher education (long type), higher education in 2 cycles, 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, the diplomas of civil 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 competent decision-making body may exempt persons who possess a diploma of higher education issued outside the Flemish Community from the prescribed preparatory education requirements in so far as the institution deems the obtained diploma and the student's specific study profile of sufficient level and on the condition that the authenticity check of the diplomas or certificates in question has been fulfilled, insofar as measures have been issued by the Flemish Government. The competent decision-making body may make admission to enrollment contingent on the successful completion of a preparatory program specifically designed for this purpose.

**ENROLLMENT AND TUITION FEE**

On an annual basis, The Board of Directors determines the tuition fees and the terms of payment 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 CHO**

Within the limits of their educational authority, two or more universities may issue 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 concerning universities 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, in Belgium or abroad, or the Royal Military Academy in Brussels, issue 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 involved institutions, on the condition that the candidate has undertaken research relating to their thesis at the partner university for at least 6 months.

## a. Regulations

### Section 1 - Introductory provision Preamble

In this document, the term "PhD student" refers to an M, F, or X PhD student, and a promoter, co-promoter, lecturer, administrative director, dean, rector and chairperson may be M, F or X.

#### Article 0 Definitions<sup>2</sup>

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 interfaculty School for Transportation Sciences, the interfaculty School for Educational Studies, and the faculty School of Social Sciences are equivalent to a faculty. The faculty is responsible for monitoring the doctoral trajectory of every PhD student belonging to that faculty. This includes but is not limited to the preparations for the appointment of the PhD student at the personnel department, evaluation of the doctoral file at the start of the doctorate, evaluation for the purpose of extensions and administrative follow-up of the final phase. Certain decisions stipulated to be under the competency of the faculty board in these regulations may be delegated to another faculty body of the involved faculty.

The competences that are delegated, as well as the faculty body they are delegated to, are stipulated in a faculty addendum, approved by the faculty board. The decisions taken by the faculty body are always communicated at the next faculty board meeting.

2° *Dean*: the faculties are led by a dean. For the purposes of these regulations, the chairperson of the interfaculty school board of the School for Transportation Sciences, the chairperson of the interfaculty school board of the School for Educational Studies, and the chairperson of the faculty school board of the School of Social Sciences are deemed equivalent to a dean.

3° *Administrative director*: the dean and faculty receive administrative and policy support from the administrative director. For the purpose of these regulations, the secretary of the interfaculty School of Transportation Sciences, the interfaculty School of Educational Studies and the faculty School of Social Sciences are deemed equivalent to an administrative director.

4° *Authorized faculty*: the discipline in which the doctorate is being pursued, as specified in Article 1, determines which faculty is authorised, hereinafter called "the faculty".

5° *Chairperson*: the chairmanship of the doctoral jury is assigned to the dean of the concerning faculty, who can delegate this task to a ZAP member or emeritus ZAP member of the faculty. The members of the doctoral committee cannot act as chairperson. The chairperson presides over the public doctoral defence and takes on the role of moderator. The chairperson is a member of the doctoral jury but has no voting rights.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A modified definition of '5° Chairperson' was approved by the College of Deans on 15/12/2023. This modified definition is included in the attached addendum n°1.

6° *Doctoral thesis*: at UHasselt, there are two ways of writing a doctoral thesis: either as a monograph or as a compilation of academic articles. The faculty will work out the necessary terms and include them in the faculty regulations. In the absence of faculty regulations, the doctoral committee has the final decision-making power.

7° *Doctoral Schools*<sup>3</sup>: Doctoral schools are cross-faculty bodies that support PhD students during their doctoral trajectory and that prepare PhD students and postdoctoral researchers for their further careers. On one hand they do this by offering a clear framework, and on the other hand by focusing on activities that contribute to the development and well-being of young researchers. The doctoral schools offer education/training in discipline-specific and cross-discipline skills, with a focus on the so-called 'transferable skills' that are useful for further personal and professional development regardless of further career choices. In addition, they develop career development initiatives for young researchers to support them in preparing for their further career. Finally, the doctoral schools stimulate the international mobility of young researchers. There are three doctoral schools at UHasselt, each of which headed by a director.

8° *My Doctoral file*: the 'My Doctoral file' application is an electronic tool for monitoring the doctoral process. Maximum use is being made of this application at all times.

9° *UHasselt Campus*: UHasselt has two campuses: Hasselt campus (head office) and Diepenbeek campus. PhD defences take place in one of the buildings on these campuses.

## **Article 1      Scope**

These regulations specify the requirements and procedure relating to the preparation of a doctoral thesis leading to obtaining the degree of doctor at Hasselt University or the transnational University Limburg.

The PhD regulations are applicable to all PhD students whose doctoral file received final approval by the faculty board on or after 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022.

The doctorate is obtained in a discipline in or across 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 (<https://www.uhasselt.be/doctoral-disciplines>).

## **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.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.uhasselt.be/en/doctoral-schools#anch-doctoral-schools>

### **Article 3      Aim of preparing a doctoral thesis**

The aim of preparing a doctoral thesis is 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 lead to scientific publications (Art. II.58. §7 CHO).

## **Section 2 - Admission requirements**

### **Article 4      General admission requirements**

Admission to prepare a doctoral thesis is open to holders of the degree of master or of an equivalent degree.

Diplomas from the second cycle of higher education (long type) and higher education in 2 cycles, 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 civil 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).

If a prospective PhD student does not have a master's degree, they may exceptionally be admitted by the rector to enroll for the preparation of a doctoral thesis, provided that the procedure of the specific eligibility investigation (Cf. Article 5) is followed.

### **Article 5      Specific eligibility investigation**

Every prospective PhD student's file will be assessed individually.

The UHasselt website (<https://www.uhasselt.be/en/research/phd/future-phd-students>) offers a list of master's degrees that automatically result in admission for the various doctoral disciplines, without any additional research.

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

If the prospective PhD student does not have a subsequent master's degree as specified in the above-mentioned list, or does not have a master's degree (Cf. Article 4), the selection committee, or in the absence thereof, the future promoter, must explicitly motivate whether a prospective PhD student is capable of carrying out scientific research in the discipline concerned and record the results in a doctoral thesis (Art. 184 CHO). In addition to this motivation, the highest diploma obtained, the transcript of records and an advice regarding one of the three possible outcomes listed in Article 6 are added.

- In case of no subsequent master's degree: The promoter delivers this file to the faculty board, which will make a final decision on the matter.
- In case of an absence of a master's degree: The promoter delivers this file to the faculty board, which formulates an advice on the matter. This authority may not be delegated. In the event of a positive advice, it will be submitted to the rector, who makes the final decision.

## **Article 6 Results of the eligibility investigation**

The assessment of each prospective PhD student's file will lead to one of the following possibilities:

1. The prospective PhD student is admitted immediately without conditions.
2. The prospective PhD student is admitted with conditions. These conditions imply that the person concerned must acquire a particular skill or substantive knowledge on the subject that is considered necessary for the doctoral preparation and for which it may reasonably be expected that the prospective PhD student can acquire the knowledge/skills without delaying the research work. A period is determined in which the additional skill/knowledge must be acquired and on expiry of this period, the result obtained shall be reported to the faculty board. The faculty shall determine whether the courses followed to acquire this skill/knowledge can be included in the doctoral school programme.
3. The prospective PhD student is not admitted to the doctorate.

## **Section 3 – Personnel and student administration Article 7 Registration at personnel department**

The promoter arranges the personnel registration with the discipline group/faculty so that every PhD student is registered with the personnel department for a maximum of two years at the start of the doctorate. If applicable, this registration must always be renewed by the PhD student via *My Doctoral File* (extension request), before the term expires. In accordance with this registration with the personnel department, the PhD student is expected to comply with all UHasselt safety regulations.

## **Article 8 Registration student administration**

A prospective PhD student appointed as a doctoral scholarship holder or assistant must register with the student administration at the latest on the day on which the scholarship or mandate starts. A prospective PhD student who does not belong to this category registers with the student administration as soon as the relevant faculty has granted permission to commence the doctorate.

The prospective PhD student registers for the doctorate, as well as for a Doctoral school. The PhD student makes sure to re-register at the beginning of each academic year.

The PhD student pays the tuition fee in the academic year of the first registration, as well as in the academic year of the doctoral defence. In the intervening academic years, the PhD student is not required to pay a tuition fee. In the case of a joint PhD, the registration terms are stipulated in an agreement (cf. Section 11).



#### **Section 4 - Start of the doctoral preparation Article 9 The doctoral file**

1. In consultation with the promotor, the PhD student draws up a doctoral file which must be submitted, within 3 months after the first enrollment at the student administration, via the application *My Doctoral File* to the faculty board. PhD students with an assistant's mandate of 3 x 2 years are permitted 6 months to submit this file. The faculty board attaches its (dis)approval to the doctoral file. This authority may not be delegated. If the file is not approved, the PhD student must rework the doctoral file with the promotor and resubmit it. If the file is approved, no further steps need to be taken by the PhD student.
  
2. The doctoral file includes:
  - the PhD student's master's degree;
  - the research group/research institute within 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, methodology and 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)
  - the personnel number;
  - the faculty;
  - the doctoral school to which the PhD student belongs, and the URL where the minimum requirements of the doctoral school can be found;
  - the promotor (in case of a joint PhD: one promotor from each partner institution (Cf. Article. 25));
  - at the suggestion of the promotor: the constitution of the doctoral committee and possible co-promoter(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 PhD student electronically signs the following internal regulations and guidelines - which are all available online:
  - the Doctoral regulations
  - the promotor-PhD charter, including UHasselt's RDM policy.
  - the Cancellation and no-show policy.

## **Article 10     The promoter**

1. The doctorate is supervised by one promoter, except in the case of a joint PhD (Cf. Art. 25). The UHasselt promoter must be either:
  - a. a senior academic staff (ZAP) member of UHasselt with a doctorate by dissertation, or, if not in possession of a doctorate by dissertation, appointed at UHasselt as an appointed ZAP member or temporarily appointed ZAP member (Associate Professor);
  - b. a (remunerated or unremunerated) visiting professor with a doctorate by dissertation employed at UHasselt. In exceptional cases, when the scientific file of a visiting professor of UHasselt is of such a nature that it can be regarded as equivalent to that of a ZAP member or visiting professor with a doctorate, the rector can, on reasoned advice from the faculty board, make an exception to the need for a doctorate on the part of the promoter. The administrative director ensures that this request for deviation is submitted to the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), which will submit it to the rector;
  - c. an emeritus senior academic staff member (ZAP) of UHasselt. An emeritus ZAP member can only further guide doctorates that were started under his promotorship prior to the emeritus status, and with the express approval of the faculty board concerned.
2. The faculty board ensures that the appointment of the promoter can be confirmed for the entire duration of the PhD.
3. The UHasselt promoter (Article 9 Paragraph 3) signs and implements the promoter-PhD charter (available online). This is done electronically via *My Doctoral File*.

## **Article 11     The doctoral committee**

1. The doctoral committee consists of at least three people, including the promoter and (max. 2) co-promoters. The doctoral committee must further include at least one member, and maximum three members who are not the promoter or co-promoter of the PhD student. In the interest of the PhD student, when considering the size of the doctoral committee, it is important to take into account its workability.
2. The co-promoter(s) (max. 2) of a PhD:
  - a) hold a doctorate by dissertation, or;
  - b) are not in possession of a doctorate by dissertation, but are appointed at UHasselt as an appointed ZAP member or temporarily appointed ZAP member (Associate Professor).

If the co-promoter is not in possession of a doctorate by dissertation (with the exception of 2.b.), the faculty board will submit a reasoned advice for approval by the rector. The administrative director ensures that this request for deviation is submitted to the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), which will submit it to the rector.

3. A maximum of one member without a doctorate can be part of the doctoral committee,

provided that the promoter offers a written motivation. This motivation is not necessary if the member without a doctorate is an appointed ZAP member or temporarily appointed ZAP member (Associate Professor).

4. A Non-Disclosure Agreement can be drawn up for committee members who are not employees of UHasselt if the promoter deems this desirable and necessary due to the nature of the research. The promoter can contact the Tech Transfer Office to do so.
5. Together with possible co-promoter(s), the promoter is responsible for the daily supervision of the PhD student and the substantive follow-up of their doctoral trajectory. The promoter-PhD charter (<https://www.uhasselt.be/en/research/phd/current-phd-students/procedures-rules-and-regulations>), which every promoter endorses, describes the roles and responsibilities of (co)promoters and PhD students. The entire doctoral committee is responsible for the support, follow-up and assessment of the PhD student for the entire duration of the doctorate. The doctoral committee meets at least once a year to advise on the progress of the doctoral research. In addition, the doctoral committee, together with the PhD student, is also responsible for the substantive interpretation and follow-up of the minimum requirements of the doctoral schools. Finally, during the annual meeting of the doctoral committee, the members of the doctoral committee and the PhD student also focus on the competencies that the PhD student can further develop in the coming period.

The rector of UHasselt can, after motivated advice of the relevant faculty board, approve a deviation on the above-mentioned composition regulations. The administrative director ensures that this request for deviation is submitted to the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), which will submit it to the rector.

6. If the promoter has the correct background in terms of subject content, they may supervise doctorates in disciplines outside the faculty to which they themselves are affiliated. In this case additional requirements are imposed with regards to the composition of the doctoral committee to safeguard the quality of the doctoral thesis to be delivered:
  - the doctoral committee must include at least one committee member from the faculty to which the doctoral discipline belongs (<https://www.uhasselt.be/en/research/phd/future-phd-students/doctoral-disciplines>);
  - a co-promoter from the faculty to which the doctoral discipline belongs, can be included in the doctoral committee, but this cannot be required by that faculty.

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

## 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 PhD student to monitor the progress of the research and to make adjustments if necessary. The PhD student also discusses the progress made with regard to the minimum requirements of the doctoral schools with a view to the further development of competences.
  - a. In the years when extension of the registration or appointment with the HR department is not required (e.g. years 1 and 3 and possibly year 5 for PhD student with an assistant mandate), the doctoral committee produces a written report<sup>4</sup>, which is signed by all members of the doctoral committee and by the PhD student. This report is added to the *My Doctoral file* by the PhD student under the heading 'reports'. If the doctoral committee considers that progress with the doctoral research is inadequate, it is expressly stated in this report.
  - b. In years when an extension of the registration or appointment with the HR department is required (e.g. year 2 and year 4 if applicable for PhD students with an assistant mandate), the PhD student 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 (including the targeted competencies that will be further leveraged) 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 PhD student adds this report to the extension request in *My Doctoral file* and submits the request via the application. The doctoral committee evaluates this request and produces a written report<sup>5</sup> for the PhD 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 timeframe. This report, together with the advice of the committee, is added to the extension request in *My Doctoral file* by the promoter.
    - i. In case of a positive advice, the relevant discipline group also makes an advice and, if applicable, a request for extension in the financial application. After approval by the faculty board, this application is submitted to the HR department. The decision by the faculty board cannot be delegated. The HR department submits this extension request to the competent decision-making body.
    - ii. If a negative advice is given by the doctoral committee, preparation for the doctoral thesis cannot continue according to the modalities of the PhD student's approved doctoral file. The modalities for termination are defined in Article 13.
    - iii. In the absence of an advice by the doctoral committee, the extension of the

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<sup>4</sup> Template available online - only section A

<sup>5</sup> Same template available online - completion of section B

registration or appointment of the PhD student by the HR department, cannot be extended.

2. If the doctoral committee, outside the reporting period(s) as described above, considers the progress of the doctoral research manifestly insufficient, it informs the PhD student of this in good time, in writing, and if necessary repeatedly. If the PhD student is of the opinion that there is a problem in relation to the progress of the doctorate, or with the doctoral supervision, they shall give notice of this in good time, in writing, if necessary repeatedly, to the promoter and/or members of the doctoral committee. If problems arise with the doctoral supervision or other problems that the PhD student is unable to submit to the promoter or doctoral committee, the PhD student 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 dean. If the dean is a member of the doctoral committee or if the problem is not resolved, the members of the doctoral committee can contact the rector, who will decide on the matter.

### **Article 13 Termination of a doctorate**

1. (Cf. Art. 12.1.b.ii) If the advice regarding the progress of the doctoral work from the doctoral committee 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 PhD student. In this case, the faculty communicates to the PhD student that the doctoral trajectory and the appointment will not be extended, including the modalities of termination<sup>6</sup>. These modalities must be carried out before the end date of the doctorate.
2. The PhD student may discontinue the doctoral research. They shall inform the promoter. The modalities for such a discontinuation shall be agreed upon in consultation.
3. In the event of premature discontinuation of the doctorate in accordance with 13.1 or 13.2, the promoter always provides the administrative director of the faculty concerned with a motivation and an end date. After this, the faculty will inform the personnel department, the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), and the Student Administration about the termination. The Directorate of Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI) will then terminate the doctoral file *My Doctoral File* and upload the motivation for termination in the doctoral file.
4. In the event of premature termination of the doctorate, the promoter and PhD student pay particular attention to the guidelines with regard to the sustainable collection, processing, storage, archiving and deletion of the data and results that were used in the context of (research) activities obtained from UHasselt (cf. Research Data Management policy of UHasselt).

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<sup>6</sup> Modalities regarding the suspension, extension or termination of remuneration in the context of a doctorate depend on the specific staff statute. The personnel department and faculty administration are responsible for the correct follow-up thereof.

## **Section 6 - Final phase of preparation of the doctorate<sup>7</sup>**

### **Article 14 Submission and assessment provisional draft doctoral thesis**

1. The PhD student submits a draft doctoral thesis to the members of the doctoral committee with the announcement that they wish to defend the thesis. This provisional draft includes the full content of the proposed doctoral thesis.
2. Within one month of submission, the doctoral committee assesses the draft of doctoral thesis. This assessment preferably takes place in consultation and based on written reports. The PhD student receives from the promoter a consistent written report of the comments.
3. If the doctoral committee gives permission for the doctoral thesis to be submitted, the PhD student receives a notice from the promoter, including notice of the deadline within which the revised doctoral thesis must be submitted to the promoter.
4. If the doctoral committee decides that the provisional draft requires fundamental reworking, the procedure is suspended and the submission of the reworked draft will be dealt with in accordance with Paragraph 2 of this article.

If the members of the doctoral committee manifestly do not agree, they may take this problem to the dean. If the dean is a member of the doctoral committee, or if the problem is not resolved, the members of the doctoral committee may contact the rector, who will decide on the matter.

### **Article 15 Submission of doctoral thesis**

1. The PhD student amends the doctoral thesis based on the assessment of the draft doctoral thesis by the doctoral committee. The PhD student sends the thesis to the promoter within the anticipated time span, as specified in Article 14, Paragraph 3.

### **Article 16 Procedure for constitution of doctoral jury<sup>8</sup>**

1. Once the doctoral committee has given permission for the doctoral thesis to be submitted (see Article 14, Paragraph 3), the promoter shall schedule the constitution of the doctoral jury on the agenda for the next meeting of the faculty board, including the information below:
  - (if applicable) the date of the pre-defence;
  - the provisional date or period of the defence;
  - the title of the doctoral thesis;
  - the discipline in which the PhD student will be obtaining the doctorate;
  - the proposal of the constitution of the doctoral jury;

Before the proposal mentioned in Paragraph 1 is scheduled on the agenda of the faculty board, the faculty<sup>9</sup> shall check, if applicable, with the doctoral school whether or not the PhD student

<sup>7</sup> When the final phase is available within *My Doctoral file* this procedure will be integrated in the application

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> This refers to a member of the faculty's administrative staff (e.g. administrative director, staff members, dean, etc.)

has met the requirements of the doctoral school. The faculty can only issue a positive advice at its next faculty board meeting on the proposal mentioned in Paragraph 1 to the rector with a positive advice of the doctoral committee and the doctoral school board. The issuing of an advice by the faculty board cannot be delegated. If the doctoral thesis is situated in a field of study or part of a field of study in which UHasselt/tUL can only offer a bachelor's degree, the faculty will propose a patronizing university in the advice that is most suitable for the required inter-university consultation.

2. The faculty ensures that the doctoral jury is composed of members of different universities and preferably internationally. The doctoral jury<sup>8</sup> consists of a minimum of six members. The members of the doctoral committee are part of the doctoral jury. In addition, a chairperson and at least two external members are appointed as members of the doctoral jury. The additional members of the doctoral jury can only be members of the senior academic staff (ZAP) or their equivalent outside Flanders, visiting professors with a doctorate by dissertation, emeriti and postdoctoral researchers. Proposed jury members affiliated with research institutions or institutes, from the business community, the judiciary, the legal profession, government institutions, etc. may be part of the doctoral jury, provided written motivation was given by the promoter. A maximum of one member without a doctorate can be part of the doctoral jury, subject to written motivation by the promoter. This approval with written motivation is not necessary if the member without a doctorate is already a member of the doctoral committee (cf. Art. 11.4) or is an appointed ZAP or temporarily appointed ZAP (Associate Professor). For doctorates defended within the Faculty of Architecture and Art, a maximum of two members without a doctorate can be part of the doctoral jury, provided that the promoter provides written motivation.

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

The rector of UHasselt may, after advice of the relevant faculty board, allow a deviation from the above composition rules. The administrative director ensures that this request for deviation is submitted to the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), which will submit it to the rector.

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 chairperson.
4. A Non-Disclosure Agreement can be drawn up for jury members who are not employees of UHasselt if the promoter deems this desirable and necessary due to the nature of the research. The promoter can contact the Tech Transfer Office to do so.
5. 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/tUL does not have the

educational authority to offer a master's course, an advice from another university that will act as patronizing university, i.e., another university in Flanders that does have that educational authority, needs to be obtained. The faculty shall make a proposal concerning the patronizing university when composing the doctoral jury, and this university will be contacted by the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI). In this case, the doctoral jury will only be determined once an agreement has been reached between the rector of UHasselt and the rector of the patronizing university concerned. A maximum period of three weeks is aimed for.

The rector of UHasselt informs the dean of the final composition of the doctoral jury. The approval of this composition remains valid for 1 year. The dean then informs the jury members and the PhD student.

6. If there is a change in the constitution 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, the title of the doctoral thesis, or a change of the chairperson, the procedure does not have to be restarted. In these cases, the PhD student, with the promoter'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 necessary changes are made.

#### **Article 17 Assessment of the content of the doctoral thesis by the doctoral jury and "pre-defence"**

1. As soon as the constitution of the doctoral jury has been communicated by the rector, the promoter provides the members of the doctoral jury with the content of the definitive doctoral thesis in accordance with Article 15. The promoter 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 comments<sup>10</sup> and to express agreement with or 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 two-thirds majority is required for permission for the public defence, including at least 50% of the extra doctoral jury members (non-committee members).  
As a result of these discussions, the doctoral jury may also make the permission to defend subject to conditions, and connect it to a remediation plan.  
If the doctoral jury does not give permission for the public defence (or imposes conditions), the promoter informs the PhD student of the objection and the remarks on the matter.
4. If the doctoral jury agrees to the public defence, the doctoral jury will report this in accordance with the internal regulations, and the promoter will inform the PhD student and the faculty.

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<sup>10</sup> In accordance with the faculty regulations (if available).



## **Section 7 - Public defence and deliberation**

### **Article 18 Public defence**

1. The defence of the doctoral thesis is public. The rector ensures the public nature of the defence. Confidential information (for example confidential research results or company-sensitive data) can be omitted from the public defence to guarantee its confidentiality. In that case, the promoter and the PhD student shall discuss the specific approach to the doctoral defence with the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI). No public defence may take place during the period of 15 July to 20 August inclusive.
2. The PhD student ensures that the members of the jury have a copy of the definitive doctoral thesis in their possession at least 7 calendar days before the planned defence. Three printed copies of the doctoral thesis are made available to the UHasselt library and to the Royal Library<sup>11</sup> and the thesis is made accessible electronically 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 PhD student and promoter 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 public 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 board in a motivated advice. The administrative director ensures that this request for deviation is submitted to the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), which will submit it to the rector.

### **Article 19 Deliberation and proclamation**

1. The doctoral jury will deliberate immediately following the defence and decides by a two-thirds majority and a minimum of 50% of the non-committee members whether the title of 'doctor' will be bestowed on the PhD student. The doctoral jury subsequently proceeds to the proclamation.
2. In principle, the full doctoral jury is present (physically/digitally) but can only validly deliberate if a two-thirds majority and at least 50% of the non-committee members are present (physically/digitally).

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<sup>11</sup> 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 PhD student shall, on their own initiative, submit three copies of their thesis to the UHasselt library.

## **Section 8 – Language, communication & publications and intellectual property**

### **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 an advice from the relevant faculty board. The administrative director ensures that this request for deviation is submitted to the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), which will submit it to the rector.

### **Article 21 Communication and publications**

1. The PhD student shall provide the necessary information to the Communication and Marketing department before the defence, with a view to possible communication, such as a press release.
2. The UHasselt affiliation is always included in (scientific) publications about the doctoral research.
3. The doctoral thesis must be written in accordance with the house style rules as determined by the university board. For doctorates in the faculty of Architecture and Art, a separate agreed framework has been developed, which can be consulted within that faculty.
4. The PhD student ensures that no communication or publication contains confidential data (e.g., confidential research results or company-sensitive data).

### **Article 22 Intellectual Property**

1. The PhD student acknowledges that, in accordance with the Higher Education Codex, all property rights to findings belong to UHasselt. If the PhD student makes findings in the context of their doctoral research (such as, for example, but not limited to, software or patentable inventions), the PhD student reports this to the Tech Transfer Office of UHasselt.
2. The PhD student is also expected to comply with all applicable laws and (internal) regulations on copyright.

## **Section 9 – Ombuds service and Disputes Article 23 Ombuds service and Disputes**

1. PhD students who have a dispute during their doctorate with their promoter and/or doctoral committee, or who experience other problems which they cannot take up with their promoter or doctoral committee, can approach the ombudsperson. All members of the doctoral commission who are affiliated with UHasselt can also appeal to this ombudsperson. The ombudsperson is part of the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), who will listen, give advice, and - only at the request of and in consultation - take on an intermediary function. The ombudsperson can be reached at [PhD-Ombuds@UHasselt.be](mailto:PhD-Ombuds@UHasselt.be).
2. If, in cases where the doctoral regulations are not followed or in disputes between the PhD student and the promoter and/or doctoral committee, the mediation by the ombudsperson 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 regular PhD student who is enrolled at UHasselt (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 public defence of the doctorate is provided for in the BOF budget, and in part granted directly to the PhD student and in part granted directly to the research group. The modalities for this are approved annually by the university board. The bonus can be requested up to a maximum of three months after the date of public defence, provided 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 by the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI) as soon as it is notified of the date of the public defence.

## **Section 11 – Joint PhDs**

### **Article 25 Joint PhDs**

1. PhD students can prepare and defend a doctoral thesis under the joint supervision of UHasselt/tUL and one or more other universities authorized to award doctorates (cf. Art II.172 §1 and 4 CHO).
  - a. Joint diploma: Collaboration with a Flemish university (KU Leuven, UGent, UAntwerp or VUB) results in one doctoral diploma, signed by both rectors, on which the doctoral disciplines of each university are included.
  - b. Double diploma: Collaboration with a non-Flemish university results in a doctoral diploma from each university separately with a reference to the collaboration.

The terms of the joint PhD are stipulated in a cooperation agreement between the PhD student and the universities involved. PhD students follow these regulations unless otherwise agreed in the aforementioned cooperation agreement.

2. The basic requirements for a joint PhD are:
  - a. Each partner university appoints a maximum of one promoter. The rector of UHasselt can grant an exception to this, after advice from the faculty board concerned. The administrative director ensures that this request for deviation is submitted to the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), which will submit it to the rector;
  - b. The PhD student conducts research for at least 6 months at each of the partner universities;
  - c. The PhD student must be registered at UHasselt/tUL every academic year via the student administration;
  - d. One doctoral thesis is prepared;

- e. There is one public doctoral defence.
3. All the above basic conditions and other modalities are stipulated in a mandatory joint cooperation agreement. The negotiations for this agreement are coordinated by the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI).
4. The UHasselt promoter or the administrative director provides [jointphd@uhasselt.be](mailto:jointphd@uhasselt.be) with the necessary information as soon as possible, and no later than 12 months before the date of the doctoral defence, after which the negotiation can be started.
5. Before any agreements/rules within the framework of a joint collaboration agreement that deviate from the doctoral regulations, are confirmed, they are always submitted to the rector for approval on the motivated advice of the faculty board. The administrative director ensures that this request for deviation is submitted to the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), which will submit it to the rector.

## **Section 12 – Internal Guidelines, Regulations and Charters**

### **Article 26 Internal Guidelines, Regulations and Charters**

The PhD students who fall under the scope of these doctoral regulations in accordance with Article 27 are subject to the internal guidelines, regulations and charters as stated on <https://www.uhasselt.be/en/research/phd/current-phd-students/procedures-rules-and-regulations>.

## **Section 13 – Final provisions**

### **Article 27 Scope**

The doctoral regulations will come into effect on September 1, 2022 and apply to all PhD students whose doctoral file has been definitively approved by the faculty board on or after September 1, 2022.

### **Article 28 Hierarchy of applicable internal regulations**

In the event of conflicting provisions in faculty regulations with regard to doctoral studies, PhD students and doctoral theses, the present doctoral regulations 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 articles below will be amended as follows:

**Section 1 – Introductory provision Preamble**

**Article 0 Definitions**

5° Chairperson: the chairmanship of the doctoral jury is assigned to the dean of the concerning faculty, who can delegate this task to a ZAP member or emeritus ZAP member of the faculty. The members of the doctoral committee cannot act as chairperson. The chairperson presides over the public doctoral defence and takes on the role of moderator. The chairperson has no voting rights.

**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. In addition, at least two external members are appointed as members of the doctoral jury. A chairperson will be appointed who will take on a moderating role without voting rights. The additional members of the doctoral jury can only be members of the senior academic staff (ZAP) or their equivalent outside Flanders, visiting professors with a doctorate by dissertation, emeriti and postdoctoral researchers. Proposed jury members affiliated with research institutions or institutes, from the business community, the judiciary, the legal profession, government institutions, etc. may be part of the doctoral jury, provided written motivation was given by the promoter. A maximum of one member without a doctorate can be part of the doctoral jury, subject to written motivation by the promoter. This approval with written motivation is not necessary if the member without a doctorate is already a member of the doctoral committee (cf. Art. 11.4) or is an appointed ZAP or temporarily appointed ZAP (Associate Professor). For doctorates within the Faculty of Architecture and Art, a maximum of two members without a doctorate can be part of the doctoral jury, provided that the promoter provides written motivation.

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

The rector of UHasselt may, after advice of the relevant faculty board, allow a deviation from the above composition rules. The administrative director ensures that this request for deviation is submitted to the Directorate Research, Library and Internationalisation (OBI), which will submit it to the rector.

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 September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.