



DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Code of Good Practice

Passed by the Executive Committee of the Doctoral School on 21 January 2014.

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1. Introduction: aim and scope

The *Code of Good Practice* of the University of Alcalá's Doctoral School aims to explain the principles, criteria and instruments that bring to bear on achieving excellence in the doctoral programmes offered by the school.

This code applies to all members of the Doctoral School: students, lecturers and administrative and service staff.

As a matter of course, the Doctoral School abides by the procedures established by the University of Alcalá in matters of research quality assurance and ethics, namely Governing Body's resolution of 29 January 2009 establishing the model for the quality assurance system, the document "The UAH's Quality Policy", passed by Governing Body on 27 July 2010, and the guidelines of the University of Alcalá's Research Ethics Committee.

The Doctoral School further abides by the principles set out in the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* (European Commission, 2005).

2. The Doctoral School

The Doctoral School was constituted as the body responsible for taking a management role in organising the teaching and other activities proper to doctoral studies at the University of Alcalá. Its goals are:

- To devise a model of doctoral training aligned with the University of Alcalá's research and training strategy, thereby creating a suitable framework for doctoral students to carry out quality research.
- To achieve solid transversal training and the acquirement by doctoral students of competences that will enhance their future employability.
- To foment its students' national and international mobility, as well as that of the supervisors and tutors involved in their training.
- To involve the public administration, companies and other entities outside the university in the School's activities with a view to offering its students better orientation regarding the needs of society at large.
- To keep track of the career paths of its *ex alumni*.

The bodies responsible in the Doctoral School for ensuring the achievement of these goals are the Director, the Managing Committee and the various committees entrusted with supervising the research process and doctoral programmes.

The Doctoral School undertakes to act at all times in full compliance of the law, properly applying established regulations and procedures; also to ensure that all measures adopted are consistent with general principles of proportionality, impartiality, transparency, diligence and efficacy.

The Doctoral School undertakes to provide general information about the activities it runs, its organisation and functions, the location of its administrative services, and the procedures to be followed in matters relating to the doctoral programmes and other organised activities. Its competent bodies further undertake to make available to thesis supervisors and doctoral students all such information concerning scholarships, mobility grants, and so on, as may facilitate the completion of research work. Those bodies are the guarantors of the quality of the information received by the student and teaching bodies in the institutions they run.

Students and teaching staff may obtain information from any of the established channels: in writing, by telephone, from the Doctoral School website, or by any electronic means.

2.1. Complaints and suggestions box

The University of Alcalá maintains a Complaints and Suggestions Box, the aim of which is to keep a record of complaints, ideas or suggestions about the working of the university's administrative services.

After identifying themselves, interested parties may make a complaint or suggestion in two ways:

- In person: by printing and handing in at any of the Registry offices of the University of Alcalá the properly completed available from the UAH website.
- Electronically: by sending the completed form to quejas.sugerencias@uah.es. An email address must be given.

Once the complaint or suggestion has reached the appropriate destination, this will inform the student within 20 days of the actions taken and measures adopted.

Each complaint or suggestion will be kept on file. If the complaint implies any abnormal functioning of the services, relevant action may be taken on a case by case basis. Under no circumstances will the complaints made be treated as administrative appeals.

Interested parties may also appeal the actions or decisions of the Managing Committee or Director of the Doctoral School before the Rector.

3. The Doctoral Programme Academic Committee

Each doctoral programme has an Academic Committee composed of the Programme Coordinator and at least one representative from each of its lines of research.

As the body responsible for the doctoral programme's training and research activities, the functions of the Academic Committee are:

- To approve the doctoral programme's Research Plan and to remit the Learning Agreement to the Doctoral School for registration.

- To assign tutors to the students of the relevant doctoral programme and, should there be reasonable grounds for doing so, to manage any changes of Tutor at any stage of the doctoral programme.
- To assign thesis supervisors to the students of the relevant doctoral programme in a period no longer than six months after matriculation and, should there be reasonable grounds for doing so, to manage any changes of Supervisor at any stage of the doctoral programme.
- To authorize the co-supervision of theses when there are good academic reasons for doing so, such as the interdisciplinary nature of the subject or doctoral programmes run in collaboration with other national or international institutions.
- To subject to annual assessment and modify as necessary the Research Plan and the memorandum of the activities undertaken by the doctoral students of the relevant doctoral programme, as well as the reports of their tutors and thesis supervisors.
- To make a grounded decision regarding the continuation or otherwise of the doctoral programme of the doctoral students on that programme.
- To determine the exceptional circumstances which might affect the non-publication of certain contents of theses, as laid down in article 14, section 6 of Royal Decree 99/2011.
- To authorize stays and activities outside Spain as part of the doctoral student's training programme with a view to obtaining the International Doctor Mention.
- To issue reports on doctoral students' applications to join or leave doctoral programmes, for approval by the Managing Committee.
- To authorise the examination of the Thesis of each of the programme's doctoral students and to propose the examining panel for said Thesis.

3.1. Guidelines for action

The doctoral programme academic committees will offer students whatever individualised backing and guidance they may need in the processes of information, admission, Tutor and Supervisor assignment, foreign stay requests and assessment.

The admission process and the assignment of tutors and thesis supervisors will be in accordance with the following criteria:

- The admission of students will be subject to the availability of human and material resources related to the research line in which the student wishes to pursue his or her students.
- Every attempt will be made to cater to the student's own proposal provided that it has the approval of the researching lecturer.
- As explained in point 4.4 of this document, as far as possible the Tutor and the Thesis Supervisor will be the same person unless the Thesis Supervisor is a researcher who is not affiliated to the University of Alcalá. The Tutor must always be a member of the University of Alcalá.
- Coherence and balance will determine the distribution of Thesis supervision.¹

¹ See point 4.1.

The members of these committees will carry out their assigned duties with diligence and act in accordance with the ethical principles of objectivity, integrity, neutrality, impartiality, confidentiality, transparency, efficacy and honesty.

4. Doctoral Thesis Supervision

The doctoral Thesis consists of a work of original research conducted by the student in any discipline belonging to the research lines established in the University of Alcalá's doctoral programmes. This work will be carried out under a Supervisor, in accordance with the *Regulations concerning the Writing, Authorisation and Examination of Doctoral Theses*.

No later than three months after matriculation, the Academic Committee in charge of the programme will assign each doctoral student a doctoral Thesis Supervisor, who may be any Spanish or foreign doctor.

4.1. The Thesis Supervisor

The Thesis Supervisor will have full responsibility for the coherence and suitability of the training activities, for the impact and innovativeness of the Thesis' subject matter in its field, and for guiding the planning and tailoring, where necessary, of other projects and activities in which his or her student participates.

The duties of the Thesis Supervisor are to:

- Sign the written undertaking establishing their functions in relation to their students.
- Review their students' Record of Activities Document regularly.
- Report on and endorse their' Research Plan periodically.
- Ensure that the results of their students' research are fruitful, and are disseminated and put to use by means, for instance, of papers, transfers to other research contexts or, where appropriate, commercialization.
- Emit a favourable report on the doctoral Thesis.

The supervision of a Thesis is a major undertaking on the part of the Supervisor in terms of making available and contributing to the student his or her knowledge and experience. It is therefore advisable to limit the number of theses that can be supervised by each Supervisor at any one time. More than two new doctoral students per year would, in many areas of knowledge, represent an excessive workload for the Thesis Supervisor.

At the request of the student, and after consulting the Director, the Academic Committee may modify its appointment of Thesis Supervisor at any stage of the doctoral studies when there good reasons for doing so.

4.2. Quality of supervision

The quality of supervision of the work of research must be guaranteed in all respects, such as:

- The organisation and planning of the student's work.
- The facilities made available to students for finding sources of information.
- Support for students when taking their first steps in academic publishing.
- The necessary backing for the achievement of scholarships or contracts which may enable doctoral students to support themselves financially while working on their Thesis.
- Encouragement for students to participate in mobility schemes and training activities.

It is the Supervisor's duty to define clearly the goals of the research, its context, its relation to other research work (if any) in progress under the same programme, and the expected outcomes. To do so he or she must be familiar with the student's training record since one of the first issues to be addressed is whether any top-up training is needed, in which case guidance must be given about the most effective way of achieving the desired goals in the requisite time.

Bearing in mind the Research Plan,² the Supervisor(s) will fix a schedule for monitoring work done. This will include regular face-to-face meetings where specific goals are set in order to facilitate progress. Another feature of these meetings will be the direct supervision of manuscripts related to the doctoral Thesis or susceptible to publication.

The Supervisor must ensure complete respect for the intellectual property rights of other authors over data and research work, apprising the student of issues related to plagiarism. He or she must also apprise students of the ethical implications of their research and require of them the utmost respect for established ethical limits.

The Supervisor should facilitate means for finding information, making available to the student all the resources at the university's disposal: library, reference managers, search engines, and so on. In this respect it is important that students be shown the basic journals as well as the leading and most reliable sources of information. Students also need to be acquainted with the state of the art in the relevant field of knowledge and be introduced to basic sources.

It is also necessary to enhance the projection of the results obtained in the course of the student's research, helping the student build a scientific career which prioritises publication in high-impact journals, chiefly international ones in those areas where such are the norm. Arranging opportunities for doctoral students to meet and pool their experiences is a good way to study possible collaborations and to grow familiar with scientific debate. Where appropriate the Supervisor will also analyse the

² See below, point 8 ("Research Plan").

repercussions of the research by applying for a patent prior to the publication of any results, particularly in those fields where this mode of protection is common, recommended practice.

4.3. Joint supervision and joint tutelage

If authorized by the doctoral programme's Academic Committee, the Thesis may be jointly supervised by other doctors when there are good academic reasons for doing so, such as the interdisciplinarity of the subject matter or programmes run in collaboration with national or international partners. That authorisation may subsequently be revoked if in the judgement of the Academic Committee the joint supervision is failing to have any beneficial effect on the development of the Thesis. Should there be a desire for the participation of three or more joint supervisors, permission must be applied for from the Official Postgraduate Studies Committee.

On 26 May 2011, the Governing Body of the University of Alcalá approved the possibility of pursuing doctoral studies under joint supervision with a foreign university with a view to obtaining a doctorate from both universities. Details about the procedure as well as the application form and joint supervision agreement are available from the Doctoral School website.

4.4. Distinction between the roles of Supervisor and Tutor

Once admitted onto the doctoral programme, the corresponding Academic Committee will assign each student a Tutor. The Tutor will have ties with the Doctoral School, be in possession of a doctorate and have demonstrable research experience.

Although Royal Decree 99/2011, which regulates official doctoral studies, distinguishes between the Thesis Supervisor and the student Tutor, as far as possible it is advisable that Supervisor and Tutor be the same person. This not only facilitates advisory and support roles, but also makes the satisfaction of various academic formalities more agile.

Tutors will take charge of offering their students initial guidance and ensuring the suitability of their training and research activity to the principles of the doctoral programme and of the Doctoral School.

Among other tasks, tutors will:

- Oversee student's dealings with the Academic Programme Committee.
- Sign the Learning Agreement setting out their supervisory functions with respect to their students.
- Submit to regular review their students' Record of Activities Document.
- Report on periodically and endorse their students' Research Plan.
- Help their students in the course of their training, providing them with the information, guidance and resources needed for their studies.
- Undertake in writing to comply with the Doctoral School's *Code of good practice*.

At the request of the student, and after consulting the Tutor, the Academic Committee may modify its appointment of Tutor at any stage of the doctoral studies when there are good reasons for doing so.

5. The Student

Any student admitted onto and matriculated in a doctoral programme run by this School will be considered a doctoral student of the Doctoral School.

Much as thesis supervisors, doctoral students take on a considerable responsibility when agreeing to form part of a research programme which in many cases is supported by public or private scholarships or contracts. Their chief commitment is to completing their doctoral Thesis in the prescribed time, and they must accept the consequences of any failure to do so.

Their commitment is personal, but also social in so far as the general public places its confidence in people who have been trained to advance knowledge and apply its outcomes to the benefit of the society that supports them. Their commitment is also due to those who supervise the Thesis, making available their experience and time in order to train their students. Consequently, doctoral students are expected to respect the time-frames established by supervisors in the plan of work and to be punctual when attending scheduled meetings and reporting on work done to date. Doctoral students must also undertake to participate in mobility schemes and attend seminars and courses as recommended by their supervisors in order to further their training, as well as to await their Supervisor's approval before publishing any of the results of their Thesis.

Their absolute commitment to professional ethics must be maintained scrupulously in line with current regulation. There can be no excuse for plagiarism, unacknowledged borrowing or other malpractice, or for the illicit appropriation of the work of colleagues, failure to comply with their basic obligations with respect to working hours, or fraudulent use of any information provided by their supervisors or members of their research team. In this respect, students must inform their supervisors of the contents of their publications whenever they are related to the results of research conducted under the aegis of the research team to which they belong.

In general terms, doctoral students will abide by the deontological principles generally accepted and acknowledged by the scientific community, the chief of which are rigour, honesty and responsibility.

5.1. Doctoral students' rights

In addition to the rights set out in current regulations, particularly those of the University Student's Statute (Royal Decree 1791/2010, of 30 December), doctoral students will enjoy the following rights:

- Equal rights and obligations regardless of the doctoral programme they are matriculated in.
- Assessment of training activities in accordance with public, objective, transparent and pre-established criteria, and taking into account the overall creativity of the research, the impact of its results in terms of publications, patents and so forth, and the way in which the training has developed.
- Recognition of authorship of work carried out during their training and the protection of their intellectual property of that work, especially of the results of the doctoral Thesis and any preceding research work, in the terms set out in relevant current legislation.
- The support of a Tutor to guide their training period and a supervisor (where necessary joint Supervisors) with proven research experience to supervise the writing of the doctoral Thesis.

5.2. Obligations of doctoral students

Doctoral students must undertake to be active and co-responsible during their time at the University of Alcalá. They should be familiar with and abide by the university's statutes and other rules and regulations. In fulfilment of this commitment, their obligations are:

- To study and to take active part in the academic activities designed to complete their training, to be organised and regular in their relations with their tutors and thesis supervisors, and to keep their document of activities fully updated in accordance with current regulation.
- To observe accepted ethical practice and the fundamental ethical principles of their disciplines, as well as the ethical guidelines defined in the various national, sector or institutional codes. They must agree in writing to abide by the *Code of Good Practice* as adopted by the Doctoral School.
- To respect the principle of intellectual property or joint ownership of data when their research is conducted in collaboration with their Supervisor and/or other researchers.
- To be familiar and comply with internal health and safety rules, especially in regard of use of laboratories, field work and other research environments.

6. The Learning Agreement

In view of the report issued by the doctoral programme's Academic Committee, the Director of the Doctoral School will sign in the name of the University the so-called "Learning and Good Practice Agreement". This document must also be signed by the doctoral student, the Thesis Supervisor and the student's Tutor. The Learning Agreement establishes the following obligations:

- **The student:** will comply with relevant regulations regarding doctoral studies and intellectual and industrial property in relation to research work, as well as maintain the record of activities and the Research Plan as approved; be directed by his or her Tutor and Supervisor; respect the research ethics or good practice

code; and follow the established procedure in the event of conflict with Tutor, Supervisor or research working group.

- **The Tutor:** will comply with relevant regulations regarding doctoral studies; plan and monitor the student's activities, advising him or her on training issues; write an annual report on the record of activities; and appear before the Academic Committee if requested to do so in order to account for that report.
- **The Thesis Supervisor:** will comply with relevant regulations regarding doctoral studies and intellectual and industrial property in relation to research work, as well as oversee fulfilment of the Research Plan and the writing of the Thesis by means of planned, periodical meetings with the student. He or she also undertakes to write an annual report on the monitoring of the Research Plan and to appear before the Academic Committee if requested to do so in order to account for that report.
- **The university:** will put at the student's disposal the resources set out in the Research Plan in order for the work leading to the writing of the doctoral Thesis to be carried out.

7. Change, Interruption or Abandonment of Programme

Should students wish to change programme, they should apply to do so to the Academic Committee of the programme in which they are matriculated. It will also be necessary for the Academic Committee of the programme to which they wish to change to approve the change and for a new document of activities and Research Plan to be drawn up. A new Learning Agreement must also be signed.

At any juncture in their studies, students may apply to the Academic Committee to interrupt their relationship with the university after duly stating their reasons. If those reasons are deemed justified, the university will accede to the request and indicate the duration of the interruption. If the student fails to apply for readmission at the end of that period, he or she will be deemed to all effects to have abandoned the doctoral programme.

At any juncture in their studies, students may apply to the Academic Committee to abandon the doctoral programme. Record will be duly made in their file and the document of activities and the Research Plan will be held to have been renounced.

For further details regarding the modes of study and the permanence policy, see the information published in the Doctoral School website.

8. The Research Plan

The Research Plan is a document prepared by the student, with the guidance of its tutor and supervisor, in which they draft the planning of the research that will be carried out throughout the doctoral period. Its size and format may vary, but it must include at least the following contents:

- Title of proposed research

- Tutor and Supervisor(s)
- Introduction to subject of research
- Literature review
- Working hypothesis / Research questions
- Goals pursued
- Methodology to be followed
- Available material means and resources
- Timetable
- Bibliographical references

In preparing the Research Plan, the following deadlines must be taken into account:

- ☒ Within the first six months from the date of admission, the students, both part time or full time, will send the Research Plan in PDF format, with the corresponding signatures, to the doctoral programme coordinator. The academic committee will assess this Research Plan as indicated in the Assessment Report.
- ☒ Then, the academic committee will have a period of three months to issue the corresponding assessment report. In any case, the committee must take into account that this report must be issued within the first nine months from the date of admission of the student.
- ☒ If the report is negative, the student can submit a modified plan within the next 15 days. Once the new version of the plan has been received, the academic committee must issue the second report before twelve months from the date admission of the student.

This plan of work must be based on the experience and knowledge of the Thesis Supervisor, must pursue scientific quality but must also be realistic. It can be improved and filled out in the course of the student's research. When significant changes have been made (affecting the title or subject matter, for instance), the academic committee must send the new version of the plan, with its corresponding approval, to the Doctoral School before depositing the Thesis.

Once a year, the programme's Academic Committee will assess the Research Plan, and any modifications, as well as the reports of Tutor and Supervisor. A positive assessment is required in order to continue in the programme. In the event of a properly grounded negative assessment, the student must be reassessed in the space of six months. To this end, a new Research Plan will be drawn up. Should the negative assessment be repeated, the student will leave the programme definitively.

For details regarding the format, presentation and examination of the Thesis, see the *Guide to Writing and Defending a Doctoral Thesis*, published on the Doctoral School website.

9. The Record of Activities Document

Once matriculated in the doctoral programme, each student will be given a Record of Activities, or document for recording key training activities carried out.

In addition to the training activities organized by the Doctoral School, students may enter in the Record of Activities Document other activities run by external bodies which have been approved by their Thesis Supervisor or Tutor, if no supervisor has yet been assigned. Such activities might include attendance at talks, seminars, workshops or summer schools, as well as participation in conferences (whether as speaker or merely attending).

The Record of Activities will be reviewed regularly by the Tutor and Thesis Supervisor and assessed annually by the academic programme committee. A positive assessment is required in order to continue in the programme. In the event of a properly grounded negative assessment, the student must be reassessed in the space of six months. To this end, a new Research Plan will be drawn up. Should the negative assessment be repeated, the student will leave the programme definitively.

10. Resolution of conflicts

In the event of conflict, the first step should be to try to find a solution informally, with both sides reaching a compromise and settling differences through dialogue and without the need for any intervention from third parties.

Conflicts which cannot be resolved through the intervention of the Tutor or Thesis Supervisor will be referred to the doctoral programme coordinator for mediation. Should the conflict persist, the coordinator will inform the programme's Academic Committee, which will adopt the appropriate decision. The last resort for any administrative appeal will be to the rector.

In the event of conflict with the Tutor or the Supervisor, the Academic Committee may decide on his or her substitution. Should the nature of the research make any such substitution impossible, the committee will consider alternatives, among which might be the recommendation that the student change to another doctoral programme or university.