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Internal regulations of the UOC Doctoral School

Approved by the Research,
Innovation and Transfer Committee

UOC

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Universitat Oberta
de Catalunya



Changes from previous version

Previous edition	Review date	Description of changes
2014	April 2025	Update of regulations Approved by CRiT on 24 April 2025
2014	December 2025	Allowing research experts collaborating with the UOC to act as thesis supervisors for doctoral students (12/16/2025)

UOC Doctoral School Internal Regulations

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Preamble

Spain's Organic Law 2/2023 of 22 March 2023 on the university system structures university education into three levels: bachelor's, master's and doctoral. However, it stipulates that doctoral studies will be organized pursuant to the statutes or internal organizational and operational regulations of each university, based on the criteria for obtaining a doctoral degree approved by the Spanish government by Royal Decree, following a report from the Universities Council. Accordingly, the law provides that universities may include a doctoral school within their structure. These schools must promote collaboration, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity, and ensure integrated administrative management and have the necessary resources to properly and effectively carry out their functions.

Spanish Royal Decree 99/2011 regulates official doctoral programmes leading to the award of doctoral degrees, which have official status and are valid throughout Spain. It also states that universities may create doctoral schools, in accordance with the applicable university legislation, with the aim of organizing doctoral programmes and related activities within their area of administration.

In accordance with Article 9 of Catalan Agreement GOV/47/2015 of 31 March 2015 approving the Organizational and Operational Regulations of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), the Doctoral School is defined as a structural unit responsible for planning, organizing and coordinating doctoral programmes and related activities within its area of administration. The Doctoral School is governed by the aforementioned UOC Organizational and Operational Regulations, its own internal regulations and all applicable legislation in force.

For these reasons, and at the request of the UOC Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Committee (CRiT), the UOC Doctoral School Internal Regulations are hereby submitted for approval.

Article 1. Definition

The purpose of the Doctoral School is to train doctoral graduates who are competent in their respective fields of knowledge and who are able to carry out competitive research projects inspired by and for society, thus contributing to the advancement of national knowledge in accordance with the established scientific and competitiveness objectives.

To this end, the UOC Doctoral School organizes the doctoral programmes and proposes partnership agreements to the rector for interuniversity programmes.

Article 2. Functions of the Doctoral School

The Doctoral School has the following functions:

- Propose doctoral programmes to the competent bodies of the UOC.
- Manage the overall organization of programmes and activities, as well as the academic, administrative and management processes leading to the award of doctoral degrees.
- Coordinate the activities of the academic staff involved in the doctoral programmes and other academic activities of the Doctoral School.
- Supervise the mechanisms for monitoring and assessing doctoral students in accordance with the legislation in force.
- Promote activities that support the visibility of the doctoral programmes.
- Participate in the assessment, accreditation and certification processes of the Doctoral School and its staff.
- Carry out any other functions assigned to it by law, regulation or decision of the governing bodies of the UOC.

Article 3. Structure of the Doctoral School

The Doctoral School is structured around three main bodies: the director, the Management Committee and the Advisory Board. It offers several doctoral programmes, each of which has a coordinator and an academic committee.

Article 4. Aims of the Doctoral School

The Doctoral School has the following aims:

- Provide doctoral students with an appropriate environment for quality research training, by proposing and implementing activities in line with the UOC's research development strategy.
- Strengthen, support and ensure the quality of the UOC's doctoral programmes.
- Attract international talent, participate in international structures and secure external funding.
- Promote inter-institutional and international partnerships, as well as collaboration with the productive sector.
- Foster synergies among the members of the Doctoral School and encourage interdisciplinarity in order to meet the diverse needs and methods of research training, thereby serving as a driving force for innovation and continuous improvement.
- Achieve recognition for the excellence of the Doctoral School and its programmes.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the development of doctoral theses by online students.
- Ensure that doctoral training at the UOC aligns the interests of academia and the productive sector, enabling new doctoral graduates to find appropriate professional paths that reflect their academic qualifications.
- Integrate knowledge transfer and research value creation as key components of the UOC's doctoral programmes.

Article 5. Director of the Doctoral School

The director will be appointed by the rector for a period of five years, renewable once for a further period of the same duration. The appointment will be made from among the UOC's academic staff of recognized standing who meet the requirements set out in current legislation or, in the absence thereof, those established by the CRiT. Such standing must be evidenced by at least three recognized periods of research activity, or by equivalent merit as defined by current legislation. The director of the Doctoral School has the following duties:

- Provide overall leadership, day-to-day management and representation of the Doctoral School.
- Define the Doctoral School's strategic objectives, ensuring alignment with those of the UOC.
- Convene and chair the Doctoral School's Management Committee, and implement and ensure compliance with its decisions.
- Plan the Doctoral School's activities.
- Manage the staff assigned to the Doctoral School.
- Carry out any other duties assigned by general legislation, by the UOC's regulations or by these Internal Regulations.

Article 6. Management Committee

The Management Committee is the Doctoral School's governing body. It is responsible for the organization and management of the Doctoral School and ensures that the School duly fulfils the functions assigned to it by general legislation, the UOC's regulations and these Internal Regulations.

The members of the Management Committee include the director of the Doctoral School (who serves as chair), the coordinators of the UOC's doctoral programmes and representatives of the doctoral students.

The Management Committee may meet at least twice a year in plenary session with all its members, or it may hold monthly meetings of its Standing Committee, composed of the director of the Doctoral School and the coordinators of the UOC's doctoral programmes.

The Management Committee has the following functions:

- Organize and manage the Doctoral School.
- Apply the criteria and policies for doctoral studies consistently across the UOC.
- Appoint the assessment panel for the extraordinary awards for doctoral studies.
- Carry out any other functions assigned by general legislation, by the UOC's regulations or by these Internal Regulations.

Article 7. Doctoral programme academic committees

1. The academic committee for each programme is appointed by the UOC's governing bodies and is composed of doctoral degree holders with expertise in the relevant fields of knowledge. Each committee is responsible for organizing, designing and coordinating the relevant programme, as well as supervising the associated teaching and research activities. It is also responsible for selecting doctoral students, overseeing their research progress and ensuring quality throughout the process of developing, monitoring and assessing doctoral theses.

2. Academic committee members are appointed for a renewable term of five years.

3. Academic committee members actively participate in the coordination and supervision of their programmes by:

- Specifying and implementing the academic regulations for doctoral studies.
- Establishing procedures to ensure the quality of doctoral theses and, more generally, initiating and carrying out actions that help to improve the doctoral programmes.
- Selecting and admitting candidates to the programme.
- Assigning tutors and thesis supervisors to each doctoral student.
- Forming doctoral thesis committees, where applicable, and appointing non-committee faculty members (or researchers) to take part in the assessment of research plans.
- Approving doctoral students' training pathways.
- Assessing each doctoral student's activity report and research plan.
- Establishing the mandatory reports on thesis projects, research plans or other doctoral thesis assessment and monitoring procedures.
- Appointing external experts to carry out thesis assessments.
- Deciding on the continuation of doctoral students on their programmes.
- Accepting doctoral theses for defence.
- Appointing thesis panel members.
- Choosing the location for thesis defences.
- Assessing doctoral theses that qualify for official recognition.
- Announcing the *cum laude* distinction for defended doctoral theses.

4. All academic committee members must maintain strict confidentiality regarding the content of research plans and doctoral theses, as well as the deliberations of the committee.

Article 8. Doctoral programme coordinators

The rector of the UOC (or, in the case of an interuniversity programme, by agreement between the rectors) will appoint a coordinator for each doctoral programme. The appointee must be a distinguished member of the UOC academic staff, have supervised at least two doctoral theses and have acquired at least two recognized periods of research activity, or equivalent merits as defined by the legislation in force or, where the legislation does not apply, as determined by the CRiT.

Doctoral programme coordinators have the following duties:

- Chair the doctoral programme's Academic Committee.
- Ensure the doctoral programme's academic coordination.
- Propose changes to the doctoral programme.
- Propose the number of available places.
- Suggest specific admission criteria.
- Prepare the validation report for the doctoral programme and assume responsibility for its monitoring and accreditation procedures.
- Propose collaboration agreements with other bodies, institutions and organizations.
- Collaborate with UOC services in promoting the programme, recruiting students and securing external funding.
- Carry out any other duties assigned by general legislation, by the UOC's regulations or by these Internal Regulations.

Article 9. Advisory Board

The CRiT will act as the Doctoral School's Advisory Board. Its role is to advise the relevant bodies of the UOC and the Doctoral School in their decision-making processes.

Article 10. Doctoral tutors

All doctoral students admitted to a programme will be assigned a tutor.

The tutor must be a member of the academic staff employed by the UOC, hold a doctoral degree, belong to the same field of knowledge or subject area as the student and have a sound understanding of the programme.

Tutors must meet the requirements for accredited research experience, as defined by current legislation and quality assurance agencies.

Doctoral tutors have the following duties:

- Propose a personalized training pathway to the programme's Academic Committee.
- Liaise between the doctoral student and the programme's Academic Committee.
- Work with the programme's Academic Committee to select the student's thesis supervisor.
- Communicate the training pathway to the student once it has been approved by the programme's Academic Committee.
- Guide and support the student in adapting to the learning environment.
- Provide the student with the necessary guidance to carry out their activities.
- Review the student's activity report regularly to ensure that progress is in line with the objectives set out in the training pathway.
- Endorse the student's research plan during the first year.
- Submit an annual report on the student's progress regarding the research plan to the programme's Academic Committee.

The tasks of tutoring doctoral students and participating in thesis monitoring and assessment are recognized as part of the teaching and research responsibilities of UOC faculty.

Article 11. Doctoral thesis supervisors

1. The thesis must be supervised by a member of academic staff who has an employment relationship with the UOC or by a doctoral degree holder from an institution with which the UOC has signed a specific collaboration agreement for this purpose.
2. Theses may be co-supervised by a maximum of three people, provided that at least one of them belongs to the UOC or an institution with which the UOC has signed a specific collaboration agreement for this purpose, in accordance with the provisions of the academic regulations for UOC doctoral studies.
3. Individuals who serve as thesis supervisors must meet the following requirements:
 - a) Hold a doctoral degree.
 - b) Have research experience that has been duly accredited, in accordance with current regulations and the criteria established by the university system's quality agencies, or experience that is demonstrably equivalent.
 - c) Have a connection with the doctoral programme's research lines.

When the thesis is supervised by a doctoral degree holder from an institution with which the UOC has signed a specific collaboration agreement for this purpose, compliance with the requirements set out in the preceding section must be demonstrated before the thesis supervision begins.

4. Each programme may establish doctoral thesis committees or other mechanisms to ensure the monitoring and assessment of the activities outlined in the student's research plan.
5. Thesis supervisors have the following duties:
 - Assume ultimate responsibility for the consistency and suitability of training activities, the impact and originality of the thesis topic, its planning and, where applicable, its alignment with other projects or activities in which the student is involved.
 - Sign the doctoral candidate agreement that sets out the supervisor's duties.
 - Review the student's activity report.
 - Approve and endorse the student's research plan.
 - Endorse the student's research stays at other institutions.
 - Carry out any other duties assigned by general legislation, by the UOC's regulations or by these Internal Regulations.

The tasks of supervising theses and participating in thesis monitoring and assessment are recognized as part of the teaching and research responsibilities of UOC faculty.

Article 12. Rights and responsibilities of doctoral students, tutors and thesis supervisors

Doctoral students, tutors and thesis supervisors have all the rights recognized by general legislation, the specific regulations of Catalonia, as well as the internal regulations and the doctoral candidate agreement. In addition:

1. Doctoral students have the right to:
 - Quality training that fosters excellence in research.
 - A tutor and supervisor with accredited research experience.
 - Recognition and protection of the intellectual property rights of their work.

- Participation in programmes and funding calls that support research training.
- Participation in the monitoring of doctoral programmes and in institutional assessment processes in accordance with current regulations.

2. Doctoral students have the responsibility to:

- Conduct their doctoral studies in accordance with the regulations in force.
- Inform their supervisor regularly of the progress of their research.
- Submit their research to their supervisor for review.
- Complete the specific and interdisciplinary activities outlined in their training pathway.
- Pay the annual administrative and academic enrolment fees, as well as those for the defence of their thesis and issuing of the certificate.
- Comply with the legal and ethical standards set by the UOC.

3. Thesis supervisors have the following rights and responsibilities:

- Ensure the student's research project is original and relevant to the UOC's research lines.
- Advise the student on their research in general and on the preparation of their thesis in particular.
- Agree on a supervision plan for the doctoral student's research project.
- Together with the tutor, guide the student in choosing the most appropriate training activities for their research.
- Aid the student's participation in specific training activities.
- Review the doctoral thesis research plan.
- Prepare the mandatory reports for the monitoring committee.
- Ensure that the student is aware of the academic and administrative requirements for the assessment and defence of their thesis and the relevant deadlines.

4. Tutors have the following rights and responsibilities:

- Ensure that the doctoral student's training and research activities are in accordance with the principles of the programme and the Doctoral School.
- Review and endorse the student's research plan for approval.
- Prepare the mandatory reports for the Academic Committee.

Article 13. Doctoral students

Doctoral students are individuals enrolled on a doctoral programme.

Students admitted to a doctoral programme at the Doctoral School must sign a doctoral candidate agreement together with the UOC, the tutor and the thesis supervisor. They must also enrol annually for academic tutoring.

For interuniversity programmes or co-supervised students, the agreement must specify the university where the student will be enrolled and define the relationship with the participating institutions.

Article 14. Code of good practice

All members of the Doctoral School are required to comply with the UOC Code for Research Integrity. The thesis supervisor, tutor and doctoral student must also sign the doctoral candidate agreement.

Article 15. Conflict resolution

Conflicts between students, tutors and supervisors will be settled by the programme coordinator, who will act as mediator. If mediation is unsuccessful, the conflict will be resolved first by the vice rector responsible for doctoral programmes, and finally by the rector of the UOC.

Final provision

These regulations will enter into force on the day after their publication on the UOC's E-Services Portal, once they have been approved by the UOC's Executive Board.