

FACULTY EDUCATION AND EXAMINATION CODE FOR DOCTORAL MATTERS ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025

FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

(Version A – First enrolment BEFORE AY 2024-2025)

PREAMBLE

The Council of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences approved the official Dutch version of the Faculty's Doctoral Regulations on 3 July 2024. These regulations contain faculty-specific requirements concerning the doctorate and the doctoral study programme at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. The regulations should be considered a supplement to the general regulations that are included in the current ['Education and Examination Code for Doctoral Matters'](#).

This version of the Faculty's Doctoral Regulations applies for all doctoral students with a first enrolment in the trajectory 'Doctor of Health Sciences' BEFORE academic year 2024-2025. Up to academic year 2025-2026, doctoral students will have the option of submitting the doctorate following the publication criteria described in the current version of the regulations – Version A or of submitting the doctorate following a PhD research portfolio with new criteria. The new criteria to submit the doctorate for defence are described in the Faculty's Doctoral Regulations – Version B. Starting from academic year 2026-2027, it will only be possible to submit the doctorate for defence using a PhD research portfolio with revised criteria.

FACULTY-SPECIFIC DOCTORAL REGULATIONS

SECTION I – APPLICATION FOR ENROLMENT

Article 1. In order to be admitted to the first enrolment for the doctorate at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, the following administrative steps must be completed:

- The application for enrolment is started by the administrative supervisor responsible via [Oasis](#).
- The curriculum vitae of the doctoral student is included.
- The research proposal is added using the appropriate [template](#).
- A (preliminary) advice of the human and/or animal ethics committee is provided.

The doctoral research should be registered as early as possible. Doctoral students with a personal research grant or assignment to a project are requested to do this within the first three months. Doctoral students with an assistant fellowship are requested to do this within the first year. Late registrations must be justified. If the justification is inadequate, the administrative supervisor responsible will be heard.

The Faculty Council decides on the application for enrolment for the doctorate after advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee. The doctoral student is obliged to [re-enroll](#) annually until the doctorate is successfully defended.

SECTION II – DOCTORAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Article 2. Each doctoral student has at least one supervisor who is an active professorial staff member or visiting professor with a research assignment at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and who is designated as the 'administrative supervisor responsible'. The administrative supervisor responsible bears the final responsibility for the academic training and supervision of the doctoral student as well as for the quality of the doctorate. In addition, a second supervisor may be appointed from within or outside Ghent University who must hold a doctorate with dissertation.

A request can be submitted to the Faculty Doctoral Committee to appoint a third supervisor. This request must be supported by a written justification clearly indicating that:

- A third supervisor is absolutely necessary for the success of the project.
- Each of the three supervisors is responsible for supervising a substantial and specific part of the research.
- Each of the three supervisors based on their expertise makes a unique contribution that is complementary to that of the other supervisors and contributes to the success of the doctorate.

The three supervisors are therefore affiliated with at least two different research groups. This element must be clearly stated in the motivation. The administrative supervisor responsible may be heard on this matter by the Faculty Doctoral Committee. In addition, the third supervisor must also hold a doctorate with dissertation.

When applying for an interdisciplinary doctorate or a joint doctorate with our faculty/university as main faculty/main institution, a maximum of 4 supervisors can be allowed (maximum 2 from each faculty/university).

The supervisors are confirmed by the Faculty Council upon submission of the dissertation based on advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

Article 3a. Each doctoral student (with a first enrolment since academic year 2022-2023) must be supervised by a doctoral advisory committee (DAC) appointed by the Faculty Council based on advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee. The DAC consists on the one hand of the supervisor(s) and on the other hand additional persons with a special expertise (in the subject and/or supervising of doctorates) who add value to the doctoral project (see table I). All members of the DAC must hold a doctorate with dissertation.

The DAC consists of at least three and at most five members, including the supervisor(s). Consequently, for an enrolment application with 1 supervisor, at least an additional 2 members of the DAC is required. When applying for an [interdisciplinary PhD](#) or a [Joint PhD](#) with our faculty/university as the main faculty/main institution, in addition to the possible 4 supervisors, 1 additional member of the DAC must also be appointed. Not all members of the DAC belong to the same research group.

Table I. Overview composition doctoral advisory committee (DAC).

Supervisor(s)	Other members DAC	
1 supervisor	minimum* 2	maximum 4
2 supervisors	minimum* 1	maximum 3
3 supervisors	minimum* 1	maximum 2
Joint / Interdisc. doctorate	minimum* 1	
Max 2 x 2 supervisors		

(*) One DAC member must take on the role of project counselor.

Article 3b. The doctoral advisory committee meets at least once a year in an evaluation meeting. One of the members of the DAC (not the supervisor(s)) is given the task of following up on the annual mandatory evaluation meetings of the doctoral advisory committee. The 'project counselor' follows the planning and ensures a thorough discussion during the meeting. In addition, the process counselor draws up a report of the evaluation meeting (according to the following [template](#)) and keeps it up to date annually. The doctoral student incorporates the conclusion of the evaluation meeting into his/her annual self-reflection report.

The DAC member who is appointed as 'project counselor' can act as a co-author for publications or as a jury member of the Examination Board (with a maximum of 1 co-authorship). If the project counselor will not act as a member of the Examination Board, he/she must submit a summary report to the chair of the Examination Board about the doctoral student's process.

A blood relative or relative by marriage up to and including the fourth degree is not allowed to act as a supervisor, a member of the doctoral advisory committee or a project counselor.

Article 4. It is possible that during the doctorate, there will be changes in the previously approved DAC. Changes to the DAC must be requested via the [form for 'adjustment of promotership – doctoral advisory committee'](#) and submitted to the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

The Faculty Council decides on the application for 'adjustment of promotership – doctoral advisory committee' after obtaining advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

Article 5. Following a doctoral training programme is highly recommended but is not mandatory. However, every doctoral student must complete the [PhD Onboarding Track](#) offered by the [Doctoral School](#).

SECTION III – SUBMISSION OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Article 6. Submission of the doctoral dissertation to the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences for defence is done via [Plato](#).

The following criteria are the minimum requirements imposed by the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences for the submission of the doctoral dissertation. As stated in Article 8, the Examination Board autonomously assesses the value of the submitted dissertation. Compliance with these minimum requirements is therefore essential but not necessarily sufficient to succeed for the defence procedure.

'[Publication](#)' means an A1-ranking publication as defined on the ISI Web of Science indexes. Table II gives an overview of the type A1 publication that may or may not be accepted to meet the minimum criteria.

Table II. Overview type of publications (not) accepted to meet the minimum criteria

Accepted	Not accepted
Publication with original research data	Case study
Systematic review and/or meta-analysis	Narrative review
Protocol or technical paper*	Proceeding paper
Letter to the editor (with original data)	Letter to the editor (without original data)

() In case of a protocol or technical paper, a manuscript with original research data is also required. The manuscript with original research data must be accepted/published or submitted for publication.*

The minimum criteria are met in the following situations (see Table III):

- Sole 1st authorship
 - There are two publications with a sole 1st authorship (regardless of the ranking of the journal).
 - There is one publication with a sole 1st authorship in a journal with an impact factor belonging to the highest 25% of the research domain to which it is assigned (journal in the first quartile or Q1) and one manuscript with a sole 1st authorship submitted for publication (regardless of the ranking of the journal).
 - There is one publication with a sole 1st authorship in a journal with an impact factor belonging to the highest 10% of the research domain to which it is assigned (journal in the first decile or D1) and one manuscript with a co- or sole 1st authorship submitted for publication (regardless of the ranking of the journal).

- Co-1st authorship
 - There are two publications with a co-1st authorship in journals with an impact factor belonging to the highest 25% of the research domain to which it is assigned (journals in the first quartile or Q1).
 - There is one publication with a co-1st authorship in a journal with an impact factor belonging to the highest 25% of the research domain to which it is assigned (journal in the first quartile or Q1) and one publication with a sole 1st authorship (regardless of the ranking of the journal).
 - There is one publication with a co-1st authorship in a journal with an impact factor belonging to the highest 10% of the research domain to which it is assigned (journal in the first decile or D1) and one manuscript with a co- or sole 1st authorship submitted for publication (regardless of the ranking of the journal).

Table III. Options for meeting the minimum criteria.

Manuscript 1	Manuscript 2
1. first author, sole authorship regardless of ranking published or accepted	first author, sole authorship regardless of ranking published or accepted
2. first author, sole authorship Q1 ranking published or accepted	first author, sole authorship regardless of ranking submitted for publication
3. first author, sole authorship D1 ranking published or accepted	first author, co- or sole authorship regardless of ranking submitted for publication
4. co-first authorship Q1 ranking published or accepted	co-first authorship Q1 ranking published or accepted
5. co-first authorship Q1 ranking published or accepted	first author, sole authorship regardless of ranking published or accepted
6. co-first authorship D1 ranking published or accepted	first author, co- or sole authorship regardless of ranking submitted for publication

Proof that a manuscript has been submitted to a Q1 or D1 ranked journal must be provided. For this purpose, the version of the year of publication must be used (if available) of the 'Journal Citation Reports' (Web of Science – use *rank by Journal Impact Factor*) and one of the existing 'subject categories' must be selected. When a journal is included in different subject categories, the most favourable classification can be used.

If the manuscript has not yet been published or accepted, proof of submission to an A1 journal must be provided. The Examination Board will decide whether this manuscript is worthy of the level of an A1 publication. Implicitly, the faculty assumes the commitment of the supervisors that this manuscript will actually be published in an A1 journal.

All authors who share the 1st authorship could use this publication to meet the minimum criteria. These authors must explain the complementarity of their contribution to the publication and indicate why co-first authorship is necessary.

If research results could be valuable for technology transfer and legal protection is required such that they cannot be published in a timely manner, then the admissibility of the manuscript will be examined confidentially by a subcommittee of the Faculty Doctoral Committee in collaboration with the Technology Transfer Office. The manuscript will then be admissible if it appears that the dissertation is based on the one hand on one A1 publication with sole first authorship and, on the other, on the transferable research results that at least meet the level of an A1 publication within the research field. Proof of research transfer must be added.

In exceptional cases, the Faculty Doctoral Committee may decide, after a thorough assessment, that the minimum requirements to submit the doctorate for defence can be deviated from. Failure to comply with the publication criteria must be sufficiently justified. If the application is at all admissible, a subcommittee of 5 members will first be composed within the Faculty Doctoral Committee (2 regular members, 3 members more familiar with the research field of the doctoral dissertation). The application is made via the [following procedure](#).

Article 7. All members of the Examination Board must hold a doctoral dissertation. There is one possible exception, whereby the member can present a major research expertise on the specific subject of the doctoral dissertation (content-wise or methodological). The research expertise is evaluated by the Faculty Doctoral Committee, which will judge independently whether the researcher is rightly included as a member of the Examination Board. Therefore, just meeting the criteria does not guarantee acceptance of the application.

An examination board consists of 6 or 7 members (including the chair and – if applicable – the member of the DAC who was appointed as 'project counselor'). If a research expert is admitted without a doctorate, the Examination Board must consist of 7 members. The majority of the members of an examination board consist of professorial staff members or postdoctoral researchers at Ghent University and/or Ghent University Hospital. No more than two members of the Examination Board may belong to the same research group. At least two members are not affiliated with the faculty and/or the Ghent University Hospital, and at least one of these two members is not affiliated with Ghent University.

The members of the DAC may not be part of the Examination Board, but can be heard by the Examination Board. As stated in Article 3a, an exception is that the member of the DAC who was appointed as 'project counselor' can act as a jury member of the Examination Board (with a maximum of 1 co-authorship). In addition, a maximum of one co-author of one of the manuscripts included in the dissertation may act as a member of the Examination Board. First and last authors of the manuscripts included in the dissertation are not allowed to be members of the Examination Board.

The Faculty Council decides on the submission of the doctoral dissertation for defence after advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

Article 8. The Examination Board autonomously assesses the value of the research and the manuscript and suggests any changes to be made. The doctoral student's knowledge and the revised manuscript, if necessary, are assessed in a closed defence during which the doctoral student is questioned about the work. The questioning and deliberation take place in the absence of the supervisors. Based on the result of the closed defence, the Examination Board decides whether the manuscript can be printed and whether the doctoral student can be admitted to the public defence. If the doctoral student is not admitted to the public defence, a subsequent closed defence must be organised. At least four members of the Examination Board must be present in order for the meeting of the Examination Board to be valid.

In the case of the public defence, the Examination Board also deliberates in the absence of the supervisors. It also applies that at least four members of the Examination Board must be present in order for the meeting to be valid.

Article 9. The doctoral dissertation must be submitted in a digital format and the final version must be uploaded in [UGent Biblio](#).