

Good Practice Guidelines in the Management of Doctoral Theses

Introduction

These Good Practice Guidelines in the Management of Doctoral Theses are designed to clarify the commitments, expectations and responsibilities of all parties directly involved in the research, namely the doctoral students themselves thesis directors, tutors, and the Academic Commission of the Doctoral programme in question.

This document should not be considered exhaustive and does not intend to make reference to other rulings, procedures or protocols that have already been published elsewhere by the University of Granada (for example via the website of the doctoral programme). Rather, these are academic and ethical good practice guidelines aimed at supporting all parties so as to avoid potential problems derived from a lack of information or communication and to enable all concerned to ensure that the research is carried out in the most suitable conditions and culminates in a high quality doctoral thesis. We have endeavoured to produce a document that is brief, clear, as generic as possible, and suitable for all areas of knowledge active at the University of Granada. While the guidelines focus on doctoral theses, the content of this document may also be of value to students who are now preparing to start a Master's programme and those currently working on Master's dissertations.

The document is based on other similar guides produced by other universities and reflects practitioners' experiences of tutoring, supervision and learning at the University of Granada, in the different areas of knowledge.

Responsibilities on the part of the student

Doctoral students must undertake an original piece of research under the supervision of a director. The product of their research, if successfully delivered, will be a doctoral thesis, which should make a substantial contribution to the state of the art in the area of knowledge in question (for example, by means of a notable publication in specialized journals). At the beginning of the process, the student must defend their doctoral project within the conditions set by their doctoral programme; and at the end of the process they must be able to defend their

work to a panel of experts in a *viva voce*. The student is responsible for their research work and is expected to make a reasonable effort, as befits their academic level.

To fulfil this expectation the student must:

1. Be familiar with the rules surrounding doctoral studies and other documentation related to university research (both national and European), including administrative requirements, measures to combat plagiarism, and so on.
2. Understand and acknowledge the expectations of their thesis director(s) and research group regarding their work, and communicate their own expectations.
3. Conduct a professional relationship with the director(s) and other members of the academic team.
4. Make a commitment to completing their studies in a continuous manner via the activities included in the doctoral programme and/or others agreed with their director(s).
5. Make a commitment to be proactive in identifying any problems (technical, personal, and so on) that may arise during the course of their research and proposing possible solutions for discussion with their director(s).
6. Foster well-functioning human relations that enable a suitable working rhythm.
7. Develop the dissertation plan and undertake annual evaluations (including reports on any fellowships or related projects).
8. Attend and actively participate in periodical meetings, for example those with their director, research team, etc. This includes:
 - a. Preparing brief reports following every meeting attended during the course of their research, so as to capture the key conclusions.
 - b. Addressing their dissertation plan, as agreed with their director, on an on-going basis. The director must be notified of any changes to the plan as soon as possible.
9. Endeavour to achieve the maximum diffusion for their research results and activities. We recommend:
 - a. The use of online tools (blogs by way of a portfolio, social networks, etc.) to create networks with other researchers, other research groups, and the general public.
 - b. Active participation in national and international seminars and conferences.
10. Endeavour to maximise networking opportunities and create new networks. We recommend:
 - a. Undertaking brief visits and stays at foreign research centres (thus fostering internationalization).
 - b. Taking part in social networks online, devoted to research and academic topics, so as to keep up to date with the latest networking opportunities.
11. Make a commitment to acquiring cross-cutting competencies:

- a. Spoken and written communication, both in the native and also a foreign language.
 - b. Competencies in the use of information and communications technologies.
 - c. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.
12. Participate in knowledge transfer programmes and other professional activities.
 13. Actively participate in university and academic life.

Responsibilities of the research team director

Supervision consists of offering intellectual, educational and administrative support to doctoral students, to help them complete their studies successfully.

General

1. Possess sound judgement when selecting doctoral candidates. Academic Commissions should agree, disseminate and apply the specific criteria of a given doctoral programme regarding selection; and the director may, if necessary, establish their own selection criteria.
2. Make the doctoral student aware of their expectations and those of the supervisory team, regarding all aspects of the research.
3. Define the desired competencies, skills and attitudes to be achieved by the candidate during their studies.
4. Should directorship be held by more than one person, it will be made clear from the outset who will lead on each aspect of the supervision, and the role of each director will be agreed with the student.
5. Maintain a professional, clear, realistic and constructive relationship with the student and others involved in the doctoral programme.
6. Be familiar with the regulations, the policy direction and the administrative structures of the University, as well as the other doctoral programmes and research projects or groups that may be relevant to the student in question.
7. Provide guidance, as the need arises, on complementary study activities that may be helpful to the student's learning and research (both those within their doctoral programme and also those beyond the programme).
8. In all cases the director has overall responsibility for supervising the student and their research studies.

On-going monitoring and assessment

One of the key aspects of the director's role is to undertake regular on-going monitoring of the student's progress. This should take a structured approach, based on a series of regular formal and informal meetings. The director should also work with the student to prepare the annual assessment carried out by the relevant Academic Commission. This aspect of their role includes:

9. Maintaining regular contact with the student, in line with the needs of the different stages of the research process, and responding to the student's questions and doubts within a reasonable timeframe.
10. Planning regular meetings for the purposes of monitoring progress on the research, as per the steps agreed previously with the student.
11. Encouraging the student to periodically produce in written format the results or advances achieved during the course of their research – for example in the form of laboratory notebooks, reports, or portfolios – and then review the material they have gathered so as to make appropriate observations.
12. Ensuring that the student is aware of the relevant deadlines and timeframes for any reports that may be required (either by the University or by public or private funding bodies supporting their research) and takes responsibility for producing the work on time.
13. In the case of a prolonged absence on the part of the director(s), anticipating the implications and implementing alternative solutions in sufficient time so as to ensure continuity of supervision for the research.

Quality

14. Advising and supporting the doctoral student in matters relating to: the research topic; annual reporting; the level of quality required in order to achieve a Doctorate; ethical considerations in terms of student behaviour; and funding opportunities (fellowships, research contracts, grants, etc.).
15. Ensuring high ethical and academic standards, making the student aware of the relevant regulations, codes of conduct and related guidelines, health and safety and hygiene standards in the workplace, and related procedures and duties.
16. Ensuring that the student's doctoral research is original and fulfils academic requirements. In the case of signs of possible plagiarism or violation of intellectual property rights, the director must communicate their concerns to the academic commission pertaining to the programme in question.
17. Encouraging the doctoral student to publish their work and participate in conferences or seminars relevant to the characteristics or practice of each scientific/academic discipline; and advising the student, should the need arise, on how to identify sources of funding to support such activities.

18. Providing support and guidance to the student in submitting and publically defending their doctoral thesis.
19. Advising the student on the different professional options once they have presented their thesis.

Responsibilities of the tutor

Each student will be assigned a tutor by the Academic Commission of the doctoral programme in question. The role of the tutor is to act as a guiding figure for the doctoral student in academic and administrative matters, with a view to ensuring they carry out their research successfully. The tutor, who may be responsible for one or more students, has the following responsibilities:

Prior to a director being assigned

1. Advise the student, as soon as they join the doctoral programme, on how the programme works. They will also provide information regarding the learning activities offered via the programme and by the Doctoral School in question or the International School for Postgraduate Studies.
2. Be fully aware of the expectations, preferences, aptitudes and capacities of the doctoral student, so as to provide suitable guidance.
3. Guide the student when they are selecting a director for the research they wish to conduct, and advise directors in selecting candidates.
4. Provide on-going information, advice and guidance on administrative matters related to the doctoral programme in question.
5. Provide suitable advice to the student to help them take full advantage of the research resources available.

Once a director has been assigned

6. It is the tutor's responsibility to act as an intermediary between the student and their thesis director, mediating whenever issues or problems arise during the course of the research.
7. The director, tutor and student will agree on their respective responsibilities and relationships for the entire research process.

Responsibilities of the Academic Commission of the Doctoral programme

The Academic Commission of the doctoral programme on which a student enrolls and carries out their research plays a key role in supervising their progress and is responsible for ensuring that the student has at their disposal all the necessary resources and supervision to complete their research successfully. All doctoral programmes have their own Academic Commission that delivers these functions.

The responsibilities of the Academic Commission of the doctoral programme are as follows:

1. To ensure that the student has access to the resources, facilities and equipment necessary for conducting their doctoral thesis. The programme Coordinator must commit to ensuring that these requirements are fulfilled when the student's request for access is accepted.
2. To assign a tutor and a thesis director to each student accepted on a doctoral programme. The director must fulfil the requirements set out by the Official Doctoral Studies Regulations of the University of Granada and the national regulations pertaining to the title of Doctor.
3. To provide the necessary support to students and supervise their progress during the evaluation of the annual reports they are required to present before the Commission.
4. To assign a research topic to each student, which will be notified to them officially within the required timeframe.
5. To act as a link between the students, the thesis directors and the International School for Postgraduate Studies, with a view to monitoring student progress (including the transfer of students from Master's programmes to the Doctorate, if necessary), supporting the thesis directors, and improving the student's learning and research experience. The Academic Commission will provide mechanisms to identify and resolve any problems that may arise during the development of the doctoral thesis.
6. To name the individuals responsible for evaluating the thesis dissertation and verify that the correct evaluations have been undertaken.
7. To keep all information pertaining to the doctoral programme up to date and available via the website of the programme in question.
8. To maintain a register of all the relevant activities and meetings, including the annual reports on the progress made by each student.

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and revised and subsequently approved by the Doctoral Advisory Board, at its meeting of 19 September 2012.