

Holy Spirit University of Kaslik

Doctoral College

Doctoral Studies Rules and Regulations

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDC	Council of Doctoral College
COMPS	Comprehensive Exams
CV	Curriculum Vitae
CRF	Confidentiality Request Form
DAC	Doctoral Advisory Committee
DYRF	Doctoral Year Review Form
GPA	General Points Average
IP	Intellectual Property
ODC	Office of Doctoral College
PCS	Plagiarism Compliance Statement
PSF	Proxy Signatures Form
PTP	PhD Thesis Proposals
PTPF	PhD Thesis Proposals Forms
REEPF	Readers and Examiners for Evaluation of PhD Thesis Form
TEDAF	Thesis Evaluation and Defense Authorization Form
WF	Withdrawal Form

Article 1: Introduction

The purpose of these regulations is to define the structure, the conditions pertaining to the organization, the preparation, and the completion of PhD degrees at USEK.

Article 2: Council of Doctoral College (CDC)

§1. A Council of Doctoral College (CDC) is established within USEK and is responsible for the coordination of doctoral studies, and the follow up on PhD students' learning and research experience within different Schools/faculty.

§2. The CDC is composed of the dean of the Doctoral College as chair, associate deans of the Doctoral College (Office of Doctoral College), and schools/faculty doctoral studies coordinators. The dean of College is appointed by the president from among the full-time faculty members holding the academic rank of professor.

The council meets a minimum of two times a year upon the request of the dean of the College. A quorum of 2/3 of the members is required to hold the council meeting.

§3. The CDC is in charge of:

- suggesting general doctoral studies regulations according to USEK academic and research strategic directions as well as the admission criteria.
- ensuring and endorsing the display of the PhD Thesis Proposals (PTP) of schools/faculty on the website of the University.
- approving the admission/re-admission of applicants according to USEK academic and research strategic directions.
- ensuring the implementation and respect of the doctoral studies regulations, outlining the procedures relating to the preparation and defense of a PhD thesis and propose amendments, if necessary.
- organizing and promoting doctoral studies as well as ensuring their quality.
- promoting intra- and inter-university cooperation.
- encouraging knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship.
- overseeing the progress work of PhD programs.
- assisting the PhD students to take hold of any calls for doctoral scholarship and research grants.

§4. The decisions of the CDC are taken by the absolute majority of the present members. In case of parity, the dean of the Doctoral College has the casting vote.

§5. The school/faculty doctoral studies coordinator is in charge of:

- collecting the PhD Thesis Proposals Forms (PTPF) issued by the school/faculty researchers and endorsing them according to the availability of full-time faculty, the school/faculty resources and research planning.
- preparing, in accordance with the general admission requirements, the assessment tools to evaluate the ability of the applicant to pursue doctoral studies.
- proposing, in collaboration with the PhD supervisor(s), the Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC) to assess the PhD applicant's admission in accordance with functions stipulated in article 3.
- preparing the comprehensive exams¹.
- encouraging and guiding PhD students to participate in peer-reviewed conferences and symposiums according to institutional policies and procedures.

§6. Doctoral Advisory Committee:

- For each PhD Thesis Proposal, a DAC (Doctoral Advisory Committee) is proposed by the PhD supervisor, endorsed by school/faculty doctoral studies coordinator, and approved by the dean of the school/faculty. The DAC is composed obligatorily of:
 - *PhD thesis supervisor(s) (joint supervision or co-supervision).*
 - *One or two experts with the appropriate skills for the assessment of the applicant in the required field.*
- For each PhD thesis proposal, it belongs to DAC to:
 - *study the PhD application and assess, depending on the profile sought, the applicant's ability to pursue doctoral studies in accordance with the admission requirements stipulated in article 3.*
 - *guide, along with the supervisor(s), the accepted PhD student throughout the doctoral program by broadening and deepening the range of expertise and experience available to the PhD Student*

¹ The comprehensive assessment, Comps, comprises the applicant's file review followed by an oral assessment to evaluate the candidate's scientific and communicative skills; **additional admission requirements may be specified by the program**. The candidate will sit for comps before the Doctoral Advisory Committee.

Article 3: Admission to Doctoral Studies

PhD programs are designed for individuals who demonstrate the potential to perform original research under guidance, with a view to various careers, including those in research, industrial sector or initiating start-ups, and teaching.

§1. Eligibility: Candidates should hold a master's degree (or an equivalent diploma approved by the Commission of Equivalences in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education) in any of the disciplines approved by the program to which the candidate is applying and shall fulfill all eligibility requirements as defined by the program (Cf. Appendix 1).

§2. Application: An eligible applicant is considered for admission to the PhD program if s/he meets the following requirements validated by the Office of Doctoral College (ODC):

1. Applicant shall choose a PhD Thesis Proposal (PTP) option displayed on the USEK website or present his/her individual pre-approved PhD thesis proposal.
2. Applicant shall submit a complete application including:
 - A motivation letter (400-500 words) indicating the purpose for pursuing doctoral study in the particular field at USEK and specifying the applicant's research interests and/or practical experience in the field.
 - Two letters of recommendations issued by faculty members who are not prospective supervisor.
 - Transcripts of academic record from all the institutions attended.
 - A portfolio that includes, but not limited to, a resume or curriculum vitae and evidence of research activities.

An incomplete application, or a late submission, will lead to rejection.

§3. Admission: the candidate's application is evaluated by the Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC) of the chosen PTP. To be admitted, the applicant shall pass the comprehensive assessment to evaluate her/his potential to pursue doctoral studies and to complete a PhD thesis. The comprehensive assessment comprises the applicant's file review followed by an oral assessment to evaluate the candidate's scientific and communicative skills; additional admission requirements may be specified by the program.

§4. Satisfaction of the minimum admission requirements does not guarantee admission.

§5. All application forms and admission results shall be endorsed by the school/faculty doctoral studies coordinator and approved by the dean of the school/faculty.

§6. The school/faculty's appraised admission results will be submitted to the dean of Doctoral College for endorsement by the ODS, who will issue the final admissions' reports.

Article 4: Registration

§1. Each applicant, admitted to a doctoral program, shall register within one semester following her/his admission, if the applicant does not register within the established deadlines, she/he shall reapply for admission.

§2. Following a positive Doctoral Year Review (DYRF)² of PhD Student, the registration shall be renewed every semester till graduation, in accordance with functions stipulated in article 10. The PhD supervisor(s) shall fill out the Doctoral Year Review Form (DYRF) every 12 months starting from the first registration of the PhD student. The DYRF shall be signed by the supervisor(s) and PhD student and submitted to the Office of Doctoral College.

Article 5: PhD Thesis Supervisor(s)

§1. The thesis supervisor is among the full-time faculty members, and shall hold, at least, the academic rank of associate professor. The thesis supervisor must take overall responsibility for the supervision of the PhD Student in accordance with functions stipulated in *PhD Thesis Charter* (Article 8). A faculty cannot supervise more than four theses in parallel, unless otherwise previously authorized by the dean of school/faculty.

In the case of joint supervision, both supervisors must take overall responsibility for the supervision of the PhD Student. The co-supervisor may be selected from outside USEK; she/he should hold, at least, the academic rank of assistant professor.

§2. In the event of a change/addition to the subject directions and/or DAC members including the supervisors and co-supervisors, the PhD student shall fill the requested form to change, with the consent of his/her PhD supervisor, which shall be endorsed by the concerned CDC members and approved by the dean of the Doctoral College.

Article 6: Interruption of Study

§1. A PhD student has the right to interrupt her/his studies once, and interruption may only be granted for one semester, subject to a valid justification supported by evidence and provided by the student. Interruption form must be endorsed by the supervisor (s), the school/faculty Doctoral Studies Coordinator, approved by the dean of school/faculty and the dean of the Doctoral College.

§2. Upon the end of the interrupted term, s/he shall fill out a readmission form. If s/he is absent for more than one semester, she/he will be excluded from the program. In order to be

² A DYRF must be filled and signed by the PhD supervisor (s) and his/her student every 12 months starting from the first registration of the PhD Student

readmitted, the registration of the PhD student will require an admission procedure (not a readmission procedure).

§3. If a PhD student is in receipt of a scholarship, it is her/his responsibility as well as that of his/her PhD supervisor (s) to notify the sponsor of her/his interruption to her/his studies.

§4. PhD students have the right to suspend their studies in case of maternity or certified illness.

Article 7: Exclusion and Withdrawal from Doctoral Studies

§1. The dean of Doctoral College shall advise to exclude a PhD student from the doctoral program whose progress in the work is deemed unsatisfactory, following a negative Doctoral Year Review (DYRF). The exclusion shall be endorsed by the dean of school/faculty, the dean of Doctoral College and approved by the provost.

§2. PhD student may withdraw from her/his doctoral program at any time, by filling out the Withdrawal Form (WF). In such a case, no readmissions are allowed, and all future admissions will be subjected to Article 3.

§3. A PhD student whose absence exceeds one semester, without an official and approved interruption (refer to article 6), will be automatically excluded from his/her doctoral program.

§4. In case of exclusion or withdrawal from a doctoral program, the University retains ownership of the results and rights to use the intellectual property.

Article 8: PhD Thesis Charter

The PhD supervisor (s) and the PhD student respectively have rights and duties with regard to high achievement levels. Their respective responsibilities are explained in detail in a thesis charter outlined by the Council of Doctoral College in line with the prevailing University regulations and research policy. When registering for the first year of a doctoral program, the PhD student signs the *PhD Thesis Charter* (Appendix 2) along with the PhD supervisor(s), in compliance with the University regulations and research policy including the USEK Code of Ethics and Research Code of Conduct.

Article 9: Appeal

Until the nomination of the jury, the PhD student can appeal against an assessment, thesis progression or exclusion decision in accordance with functions stipulated in *PhD Thesis Charter* (Article 8, Appendix 2).

Article 10: Doctoral Studies Program

§1. USEK doctoral studies curriculum framework must enable the PhD student to develop her/his knowledge and skills. It is composed of a minimum of 60 credits divided as follows:

Doctoral Program	Number of credits
Thematic Courses managed by schools/faculty	9
Common courses dealing in general with multidisciplinary themes managed by the CDC	6
Qualifying Seminar ³	0
Thesis and defense (including scientific activities and publications)	45 Crs

§2. The minimum duration to achieve the doctoral studies is six semesters, as from initial registration. A term-based extension, prorogation of maximum four consecutive semesters, even if the student changes her/his research topic, may be granted by the dean of the Doctoral College following a favorable Doctoral Year Review.

Article 11: PhD Thesis Evaluation

§1. Before submitting the PhD thesis for evaluation, the PhD student must complete all program and research requirements including the doctoral courses, scientific activities, and the publication of papers in refereed journals.

The PhD student must write the PhD thesis and submit the full manuscript to the PhD Supervisor(s) in accordance with the PhD dissertation manual. The PhD student is responsible to communicate with the USEK library for ensuring that the PhD thesis meets the required professional standards and format set by the University.

§2. PhD student must publish, as first author, two peer-reviewed scholarly outputs (two articles published or in press or accepted for publication) in refereed and indexed journals. It is to be noted that one of these two scholarly outputs could be published in peer-reviewed proceedings within the frame of international symposiums or a participation in national or international peer-reviewed conferences.

§3. Following the approval of the PhD supervisor (s), the PhD student must coordinate with the DAC to ensure that everyone agrees that the work is ready for evaluation; they decide on a date for the defense.

³ The qualifying seminar is to determine whether a student is ready to defend his/her thesis by attending webinars, seminars, conferences, meeting in synchronous or asynchronous learning modes. Only students in their fifth semester can register in this seminar.

The PhD student and the supervisor(s) begin scheduling the defense date at least ten weeks before the expected date of defense to ensure that all jury members are able to be available on the date and time selected.

The PhD student must enroll in the term in which the PhD thesis is officially submitted for evaluation and in the term of the PhD defense.

§4. The PhD student must initiate the authorization procedure for PhD evaluation and defense authorization. The PhD supervisor(s) must certify, by submitting to the Office of Doctoral College the Thesis Evaluation and Defense Authorization Form (TEDAF), that they have examined the PhD thesis, the PhD student has completed all doctoral studies requirements, and it is ready to be sent to a jury for evaluation. The TEDAF shall be validated by the office of the Doctoral College.

After TEDAF validation, the list of Readers and Examiners for Evaluation of PhD Thesis Form (REEPF) must be initiated by the PhD supervisor(s) in accordance with the functions stipulated in Article 13, endorsed by the school/faculty doctoral studies coordinator, and approved by the dean of school/faculty eight weeks before the prospective date of defense.

Article 12: Jury Designation and Defense Authorization

§1. A PhD thesis will not be considered officially receivable by the Office of the Doctoral College, for jury designation and defense authorization, until all the following steps have been submitted by the supervisor(s):

- the validated Thesis Evaluation and Defense Authorization Form (TEDAF) including (i) the yearly favorable Doctoral Year Review Forms (DYRF) duly completed and signed, (ii) validation of Credits, (iii) two peer-reviewed scholarly outputs (Cf. article 11 §2), (iv) the full manuscript of PhD thesis, (v) the Plagiarism Compliance Statement (PCS), and (vi) Turnitin report.
- the list of Readers and Examiners for Evaluation of PhD Thesis Form (REEPF) duly completed and signed, in accordance with the jury composition requirements stipulated in Articles 12 and 14.

§2. Following the approval of the dean of school/faculty of the Readers and Examiners for Evaluation of PhD Thesis Form (REEPF) , the PhD supervisor(s) shall send the PhD thesis to jury members. The readers' reports (two reports are required) including all revisions and comments will be sent by the readers to the Office of Doctoral College, the PhD student, and the PhD supervisor(s) no later than four weeks before the approved defense date.

In case there are changes or corrections requested by readers, the PhD student and supervisor(s) are held responsible to provide readers with answers and all required corrections of the PhD thesis as well as to communicate to the Office of Doctoral College the written progress reports and/or the final reports received from both Readers.

§3. Following the positive evaluation of the readers, the dean of the Doctoral College authorizes the PhD defense, and a public notice will be posted in different schools/faculty at least 7 days in advance of the defense date.

Article 13: Composition of Jury

A PhD thesis will be evaluated by two readers, and then defended in person, in front of a jury. The rules to follow when setting up panels for a PhD thesis defense in USEK, whether in the framework of an agreement without or with joint guardianship with a partner institution are:

§1. Jury composition:

- The jury must have at least 5 members, including two readers. Resumes, or CVs (with list of works and publications) must be attached to the request for designation of jury.
- The reader must be, at least, holder of the academic rank of associate professor or similar and not to have participated in the work of the thesis. They must be present at the defense of the thesis. At least one of the readers is chosen from an institution of higher education out of USEK, having a proven track record in the research field.
- at least one of jury members shall have the rank of professor.
- an examiner in a thesis jury at USEK shall be, at least, holder of the academic degree of associate professor or similar.
- at least two of jury members shall be from outside USEK including one of the readers.
- supervision cannot be majority or casting vote in the jury.
- invited members are not considered in the composition of the jury and do not take part in the deliberation.
- the chair of the jury is appointed at the thesis defense session, holder of the academic rank of Professor. She/He must be a faculty member from a higher education institution and physically present in the room where the defense is taking place. The reader may not be chosen as jury chair.
- The PhD thesis supervisor(s) and DAC member(s) may not be chosen as either reader for the thesis defense or jury chair.

§2. Jury in joint guardianship:

A PhD student in joint guardianship (cotutelle/codirection) shall be enrolled in the two signatory institutions of the agreement. It is, therefore, appropriate to conduct the procedures for the defense in both institutions jointly and refer, first, to the text of the joint agreement which should stipulate specific provisions.

Article 14: Role of the Members of the Defense Jury

The role of the jury members before, during and at the end of the defense is detailed in the *Jury Charter and Verdicts* (Appendix 3) for the defense of a doctoral thesis drawn up in accordance with the principles set out in this regulation.

Article 15: PhD Thesis Defense

The thesis defense, as well as the deliberation, cannot take place unless the jury members are present physically or remotely via videoconference. It consists of two parts: a presentation by the PhD Student of his/her research followed by a question-and-answer session with the members of the jury.

After the defense, the jury will meet behind the closed doors to discuss and then announce unanimously its decision to grant the PhD student a doctorate and shall indicate the verdict⁴.

§1. The Office of Doctoral College is in charge of the reservation of the venues and the announcement of the defense session to all members of the university.

§2. The PhD thesis is defended in public session, except with an exceptional derogation granted by the university president if the subject of the thesis is of a demonstrated confidential nature.

§3. The student must be physically present in the room where the thesis defense is taking place. However, videoconferencing is permitted if the candidate has limited mobility as a result of a certified medical condition.

§4. In case of videoconference, the supervisor (s) must arrange for the signature to be procured from the proxy and to ensure that the Proxy Signatures Form (PSF) is submitted to the Office of Doctoral College on time before the thesis defense.

§5. Thesis supervisor(s) participate in the defense but do not take part in the jury's decision.

Article 16: PhD Thesis Defense: Deliberation and Verdicts

Following the deliberation, the jury members shall fill and sign the Minutes of Thesis Deliberation. The chair of the jury writes the minutes of the thesis defense co-signed by all the jury members. For those who are not physically present in the room where the defense session is taking place (videoconference); the jury chair shall serve as the proxy and sign his or her name followed by "*on behalf of - full name of jury member - in accordance with the proxy signature*".

Article 17: Confidentiality Period on Thesis publication⁵ and Embargo

§1. Confidentiality: PhD student and/or supervisor(s)⁶ who are applying for patents, are including sensitive controlled material, have a contract on file or are including a non-disclosure agreement may request confidentiality of their PhD theses. Confidentiality can be requested for one or two

⁴ Cf. the Jury Charter and Verdicts

⁵ The Intellectual Property (IP) ownership is dealt with according to the USEK Intellectual Property Policy. The IP is divided into two categories, industrial property and copyright. The advice from the concerned CDC members should be sought if the PhD thesis involves any form of intellectual property.

years and PhD students and/or supervisor(s) who have contracts or agreements on file may request longer periods.

§2. An application for restricted access of a PhD thesis, *Embargo*, may be made by the PhD student and/or the supervisor(s) subject to the approval by the dean of the Doctoral College. Such requests will be considered only on the grounds:

- that the thesis contains confidential and/or sensitive material; or
- that the patent application needs time to be lodged and/or the commercialization process is pending; or
- that it was a condition imposed by the owner of private records and material used by the author; or
- that the PhD student and/or supervisor(s) was in contract relationship with a third party that made the restriction a condition of the contract; or
- that the thesis contains creative, critical, academic, or equivalent material with a required delay for publication, performance, or equivalents.
- that the publication of the thesis carries a significant risk of harm to individuals or Institution.

§3. A Confidentiality Request Form (CRF) must be completed, sent to, and approved by the dean of the Doctoral College before the student submits the final electronic version of the thesis to the USEK Library. The approval must be sought and granted not later than the time at which PhD defense arrangements are approved.

§4. Where an application for confidentiality has been granted, the thesis will be retained and secured in a vault inside USEK, with restricted access and will only be made available to those directly involved in the project.

§5. An embargo on thesis publication cannot be requested after the thesis has been submitted and approved in the workflow system.

Article 18: Final Submission of the PhD Thesis After a Successful Defense

§1. When the PhD student has successfully defended the thesis and made any appropriate corrections, the PhD student must submit the final electronic version of the PhD thesis to USEK library institutional repository. Once the thesis is submitted it becomes freely available online.

§2. No student shall be recommended for graduation until an acceptable final version of the PhD thesis has been submitted.

Article 19: Plagiarism

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use of another person's work (including words, ideas, designs, or data) without giving appropriate attribution or citation⁶.

⁶ Cf. USEK Student Code of Conduct/Article III/§a.3

Plagiarism is an unethical practice in scientific research where an author would borrow texts, graphical representations, concepts, or analyses of other researchers without giving proper credit. Instead, these authors would claim the credit of these ideas for their own in two ways. The first is by taking the actual ideas and saying it was the result of the work they have done. The second method is done by intentionally omitting the resources that these concepts were derived from.

The Holy Spirit University of Kaslik considers plagiarism as a serious breach of academic and professional standards⁷ and a violation of the USEK Code of Ethics, Research, and Student Codes of Conduct. Any individual caught involved with plagiarism is subject to exclusion and/or annulment of their degree.

As such, the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik retains the right to investigate every submission be it a simple report or a doctorate thesis by using the appropriate software that allows the detection of plagiarism. Any individual submitting his/her doctorate thesis who is found guilty of plagiarism will have his/her submission deleted, and they will no longer be able to apply for a new topic at USEK.

Article 20: Implementation and Amendment

§1. The Doctoral Studies Rules and Regulations shall enter into force on the date of their approval by the University Academic and Research Council.

§2. Amendment: the provisions of these articles may at any time be amended, supplemented, or repealed by the University Academic and Research Council.

Article 21: Rules Compliance

§1. The provisions of the Doctoral Studies Rules and Regulations detailed in this document shall apply to USEK Students registered in a PhD Program

§2. Candidates seeking admission to USEK PhD programs and current students are required to comply with these rules and regulations as well as any future amendments, and also to abide by the rules, regulations, and procedures in force at USEK.

⁷ Cf. USEK Code of Ethics/Article II/§II.2