

Legal and administrative setup of Doctoral Supervision at the DSSE

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Summary

This document informs about the role and composition of the CET/supervision committee and the general legal and administrative background of supervising doctoral candidates at the DSSE.

The main tasks for the CET are:

- The **CET has to be nominated within the first 2 months of a doctoral candidate's studies.**
- The **CET monitors the research and training progress** of the doctoral candidate. For this, the CET has to **meet in person or via teleconference at least once a year.**
- During the CET meetings, the doctoral candidate gives a presentation, elaborating the scientific methodology and the results of his/her work to date. The presentation should give enough background to be understandable for a non-expert. This presentation also includes a list of publications and conference presentations, a list of courses taken, as well as an updated Research and Training Plan (RTP, see below) for the time until the next CET meeting. The presentation is followed by a scientific discussion between the CET members and the doctoral candidate.
- The CET **makes a recommendation to the Rector, or by delegation the VRR, on the continuation of the thesis work.** This is an integral and important part of the CET's responsibilities. **The CET also comments/advises on the performed and planned research and training.**
- **After each CET meeting, a CET report is prepared** which evaluates the candidates **progress with regard to the goals laid down in the DEA/RTP** (DEA: Doctoral Education Agreement, see below). **The supervisor writes the report.** It is **approved by all CET members.** **The doctoral candidate** acknowledges receipt of the report.
- During the last CET meeting of the doctorate, **the CET requests the authorisation for the defence** from the rector. This is based on a preliminary version of the thesis. This is perhaps the most important task of the CET: deciding whether the thesis is good enough to be defended.

1. Definition

CET is the abbreviation of “*comité d’encadrement de thèse*” (“*thesis supervision committee*”). Each doctoral thesis written at the University of Luxembourg (UL) has to be supervised by a supervision committee.

2. Legal background of doctoral supervision at UL

Doctoral studies in Luxembourg are regulated by national law ([Law of 27 June 2018](#)) and the UL [Study Regulations](#) (“*Règlement des Études*”). Further regulations are laid down in the [Main Statutes of the DSSE](#) (DSSE: Doctoral School in Science and Engineering) and the statutes of its doctoral programmes. All documents can be found at www.uni.lu. Finally, the rules laid down in the UL [Code of Conduct](#) apply.

3. Nomination rules/Composition of the CET

According to Art. 37 (5) of the national law, the CET is composed of three members, all of which have to hold a doctorate. It is the thesis supervisor’s responsibility to initiate the nomination procedure (at service.uni.lu).

Further composition rules are laid down in the UL Study Regulations:

1. One member is the thesis supervisor who is an academic researcher and holds an ADR (“*Autorisation à diriger des recherches*”, i.e. “*supervision rights*”) of the UL as defined in Art. 21 of the national law.
2. At least one member holds an employment contract with the UL covering the maximum duration of the candidate’s doctoral studies **and** has UL supervision rights (ADR), or is affiliated professor at UL.
3. A CET can comprise at most one member without supervision rights. Such members cannot be direct subordinates to any of the other committee members. The inclusion of external experts is recommended.
4. The doctoral candidate’s or supervisor’s spouse or civil partner, parent or other relative up to and including the fourth degree cannot be member of the CET.

In the case of a project in partnership with a private or public entity, an observer with an advisory role can be invited to the CET meetings.

In the case of joint supervision with a partner institution (“*co-tutelle*”), the number of committee members is four, including the two thesis supervisors. It includes at least one representative from each institution (c.f. below Point 5.C).

In case of resignation or prolonged unavailability of one of the CET members, the rector appoints a replacement for the remainder of the candidate’s doctoral studies.

Some funding programmes might impose further rules on the CET composition: In the case of FNR-funded projects, recent guidelines mention the inclusion of a member from a foreign institution.

4. Tasks

a. Responsibilities

The CET **monitors the research and training progress** of the doctoral candidate. The **CET has to meet with the doctoral candidate at least once a year** to assess the candidate’s progress (c.f. ANNEX 2). The CET meeting is a personal meeting or can take place via an electronic communication platform or via a

telephone conference. In any case, the CET members must talk to the candidate; the meeting cannot be replaced by an email exchange. In case of serious deficiencies in the candidate's performance, the CET may recommend the rector to terminate the candidate's doctoral studies. If the rector follows this recommendation, the candidate's doctoral studies are permanently terminated and he/she cannot re-enrol in the same doctoral programme.

The CET also **requests the authorisation for the thesis defence**. This is typically done after the CET meeting in the 3rd or 4th year of the thesis. The thesis defence must take place no earlier than thirty-six months and no later than fifty-two months after the candidate's admission to the doctoral program. To obtain the authorisation, the doctoral candidate submits a preliminary version of the thesis to the CET. This version contains most of the results and text, and must be submitted together with a plagiarism control report. The CET evaluates the preliminary version with regard to the novelty and quality of the results, the clarity of the text, as well as the appropriate consideration of the state of the art and, where appropriate, submits the authorisation request with the last CET report to the rector. The request must also certify that the doctoral candidate has fulfilled all ECTS requirements of the doctoral programme. More information on the defence procedure can be found below.

The doctoral candidate must submit the final version of the thesis for the defence at the latest forty-eight months after admission to the doctoral studies program.

b. Progress monitoring/CET meetings

A doctorate at UL consists of two tasks:

- The main assignment of a doctoral candidate is to engage in research and to draft a related thesis which has to be defended before an academic jury at the end of the doctoral studies.
- Secondly, the candidate has to participate in ECTS-certifiable training activities to acquire methodological (disciplinary/interdisciplinary) and transferable skills. Each candidate has to acquire at least 20 ECTS including at least 5 ECTS in transferable skills. The participation in a *good scientific practise/research ethics* course is mandatory for each UL doctoral candidate.

The programme specific rules for ECTS acquisition and doctoral study completion, e.g. for the publication of journal papers, are laid down in the programme statutes, which can be found online at https://www.uni.lu/fstm/doctoral_school_in_science_and_engineering_dsse.

Within the first six months after the start of the doctorate, a first outline of the individual course of doctoral studies is planned and laid down in the Doctoral Education Agreement (DEA), which also comprises a Research and Training Plan (RTP) (c.f. below Point 5. B and in Annex I).

The progress of the candidate's research as well as his/her acquisition of methodological and transferable skills has to be monitored by the CET by means of the aforementioned annual meetings of the committee and the doctoral candidate.

During the CET meetings, the doctoral candidate gives a presentation of about 30 - 45 minutes (the individual timeframe should be agreed upon with the supervisor before the meeting), elaborating the state of the art, the scientific methodology and the results of his/her work to date. The presentation should also be understandable for a non-expert, since usually one of the CET members is not an expert in the exact field.

This presentation also includes a list of publications and conference presentations, a list of courses taken, as well as an updated research and training plan (RTP) for the time until the next CET meeting. The presentation is followed by a scientific discussion between the CET members and the doctoral candidate. The CET comments/advises on the performed and planned research and training.

Essentially, the CET answers the questions:

- 1) What should the candidate do to present the best possible thesis at the end of the doctoral studies?
- 2) Which are the doctoral candidate's strengths that should be encouraged?
- 3) Which weaknesses should the doctoral candidate tackle?

The CET meeting lasts typically less than two hours, evaluates the candidate's progress, and decides on the continuation of the thesis work. This is an integral and important part of the CET's responsibilities.

After each CET meeting, the supervisor drafts a CET report (online: Service.Now) which evaluates the candidate's progress, strengths and weaknesses. It is commented and amended and finally approved online by all CET members.

The following criteria should be addressed in the CET report (excerpt of the online form):

- Research project
Please assess the progress of the research project and compliance with the project plan. Please comment on any difficulties encountered by the candidate.
- Training
Please assess the progress in the doctoral candidate's training: disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transferable skills; professional development.
- Dissemination activities
Please comment on any scientific dissemination and other relevant activities of the candidate. If applicable, the candidate may provide details of the following relevant activities: submitted or accepted publications, awards, applications for funding/grants, patent applications, other dissemination activities.
- Strengths identified
Please comment on particular strengths in the doctoral candidate's work, weaknesses and future improvements. Please comment on particular weaknesses in the doctoral candidate's work and provide advice on improvements to be made.

It should be concluded with an overall assessment and decision. Possible decisions are: "PhD candidate can continue" or "cannot continue" or "plan another intermediary CET meeting in X months" or "Thesis can be defended".

The doctoral candidate confirms having been informed about the CET report. The CET reports are managed online in Service.Now. A guide on this online application can be found at

https://service.uni.lu/sp?id=kb_Art.&sys_id=c91c69d4dbeed8d08ca9a28bd396197f

5. Miscellaneous

a. Doctoral Education Agreement (DEA)

The Doctoral Education Agreement (DEA) lays down the frame for doctoral training and education in the doctoral programmes of the University of Luxembourg on an individual level. The template has been drawn up in accordance with the University Law, the Internal Regulations (Règlement d'Ordre Intérieur), and the Study Regulations (Règlement des Etudes) in force. The objectives of the DEA are to describe and regulate the rights and obligations of the doctoral candidate and the (co-)supervisors. It should be set up at the latest 6 months after the start of studies, initiated by the supervisor.

The Research and Training Plan (RTP) is an annexe to the DEA and lists the research questions and a research plan together with the training components, the expected ECTS points and any additional requirements for the Doctoral Candidate in accordance with the specificities of the doctoral programme. The RTP should be set up by the Doctoral Candidate and the (Co)-Supervisor(s) at the latest 6 months after the registration of the candidate in the Doctoral Programme. It shall be updated each year following the candidate's annual CET (comité d'encadrement de thèse/ thesis supervision committee) meetings. Updates and amendments to the RTP are proposed by the CET and the Doctoral Candidate following a CET meeting.

b. Defence

The thesis defence must take place no earlier than thirty-six months and no later than fifty-two months after the candidate's admission to the doctoral program. Once the CET deems the thesis ready for defence, it will submit a last CET report, including the request for authorisation for the defence. This request also contains a proposition of the defence jury composition. The defence jury is composed of five members, including at least two members external to the UL and its doctoral programmes. Usually, the CET members can be members of the defence jury. The chair of the jury cannot be the supervisor of the thesis, but must be a (another) professor of the UL (unless it is a co-tutelle setup). At least two jury members must not be co-authors on the candidate's publications. Annex I provides more information on the defence timeline

c. Joint supervision (co-tutelle)

International thesis co-supervision is possible in accordance to Art. 37 (9) National law subject to the condition that all participating institutions hold the right to award doctoral degrees in their home countries.

In this case, the doctoral candidate is jointly supervised and the work is carried out alternating between the different institutions on a schedule agreed upon by all parties in the joint supervision agreement involved.

The rules for ECTS requirements, thesis defence and jury composition can be very different at different universities. A joint supervision agreement must be signed by all parties concerned.

d. Final remark

The admission request for new doctoral candidates, the CET nomination, the [DEA](#), the CET reporting and the defence procedures are managed by the *Bureau des études doctorales* (BED) (phdstudies@uni.lu) and at service.uni.lu/. All ECTS-related matters are managed by the DSSE.

ANNEX 1 Defence Timeline

Legal basis: modified Law “ayant pour l’objet l’organisation de l’Université du Luxembourg”, dated 27 June 2018; Study regulations (RE), version in force (both documents are available on the internet page of the University, note that the official documents are in French). Please check with the BED for updates in the regulations.

	UL DOCTORAL CANDIDATE	DOCTORAL CANDIDATE IN COTUTELLE
<i>Before CET 4</i>	The doctoral candidate sends the electronic version of his/her thesis to the CET and the BED (90% version = “thesis project” RE Art. 51(2) ; plagiarism check)	
<i>CET 4 meeting (advisable 4-6 months before defence, beware of deadlines in case a working contract or visa extension is needed)</i>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Attention for co-tutelle: please check as soon as possible the defence procedure in your partner university</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">BEFORE THE DEFENCE:</p> <p>The 20 ECTS have to be acquired before the last CET meeting takes place (art. 49(2) RE)</p>	
<i>Within 8 weeks after CET 4 and latest at the end of the 48th month (earlier in case of working contract extension)</i>	<p>Delivery of the CET report</p> <p>The supervisor sends to the BED the last CET report asking for the authorization of the defense. RE Art. 51 (2)</p> <p><i>(At this stage, the members of the jury should be proposed and the date of the defense settled)</i></p>	
<i>+4 weeks</i>	The BED sends the thesis and the last CET report to the Vice-Rector for approval.	
	After approval of the Vice-Rector, the BED sends to the doctoral candidate the first page model of the UL (without mentioning the jury members) and his/her defense number. The doctoral candidate returns the cover page for verification to the BED	After approval of the Vice-Rector the BED sends to the doctoral candidate the first page model of the UL (the student must also add the information from the partner university) as well as her/his defense number. The doctoral candidate returns the cover page for verification to the BED
<i>Min. 6 weeks before defence and/or latest at the end of the 48th month</i>	RE Art. 51(6) After approval of the BED, the student sends her/his thesis to the jury (electronic and / or paper version)	
<i>Max. 30 days after the defence (RE art.53(3))</i>	AFTER THE DEFENCE: The president of the jury sends to the BED the results of the defence	
<i>Max. 3 months after the defence (RE art. 54(4))</i>	If the jury requested amendments to the thesis: The doctoral candidate makes the necessary corrections The president of the jury confirms to the BED that the corrections have been made	
	The BED sends to the doctoral candidate the DEFINITIVE page (including jury members) as well as the last administrative steps to validate delivery of the diploma (see below).	See next step
	<p>The doctoral candidate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prints her/his thesis - Sends to the BED 2 copies of the thesis and a pdf of the electronic version of the thesis (RE art. 55) - The doctoral candidate records bibliographic data on ORBI.lu within 6 months after the defence <p>BED issues the diploma: RE art. 59(3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For a defence between January and 30th September: graduation ceremony in December of the same year - For a defence between October and December: graduation ceremony in December of the year after 	

ANNEX 2 Doctorate Timeline (full time doctorate)

For part time studies, please consult the BED. Please check with the BED for updates in the regulations.

DISSERTATION SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE (CET)	
CHRONOLOGY for the supervision of a doctoral candidate	
D = Start of the doctoral programme DT = Thesis supervisor RE = Study regulations , 05/05/2020 Law = Modified law of 27 June 2018 on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg	
D	Enrolment of the doctoral candidate: Validation of the status. Enrolment of the student to a doctoral program (RE art. 45)
D + 2 months	Composition of CET = 3 members , in compliance with article 50 RE and 37(5) Law. In case of joint supervision (art. 50(4) RE), the number of members can be 4, including both thesis supervisors. Reminder: in case of joint supervision , the relevant agreement must be signed latest one year after the student's first enrolment.
D + 6 months	Starting 2020: Signature of the doctoral education agreement, DEA (RE article 47)
D + 11 months	The dissertation supervisory committee meets at least once a year with the candidate to assess the progress of his/her work (article 37(5) of the Law). The report is sent to the Office of Doctoral Studies (known by the French acronym 'BED'). The CET may, in the event of serious shortcomings, recommend to the rector to refuse re-enrolment of the candidate. Report No. 1
D + 23 months	The dissertation supervisory committee meets at least once a year during this second year with the candidate. The report of this assessment is forwarded to the BED. The CET may, in the event of serious shortcomings, recommend to the rector to refuse re-enrolment of the candidate. Report No. 2
D + 34 months D+31 months if non-EU	The committee assess the quality of the doctoral candidate's work and sends its opinion to the Office of Doctoral Studies requesting either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an authorisation for the defence of the dissertation, if the student is deemed capable to finish the dissertation. In such a case, the Office of Doctoral Studies supervises the dissertation defence procedure as per Law art. 37(5) and (6) and RE art. 51. - an extension of 12 months at most, with a possible extension of the working contract. Report No. 3
D + 46 months	The dissertation supervisory committee requests authorisation for the defence of the dissertation. In such a case, the Office of Doctoral Studies supervises the dissertation defence procedure as per Law art. 37(5) and (6) and RE art. 51. Report No. 4 RE art. 51(6): submission of the thesis 6 weeks before the defence, latest D+48 months
D+ 48 months	Last day for the submission of the thesis in its final version (Law art. 37(5))
D + 52 months	The defence must take place before the expiry of the 52nd month, see the detailed defence procedure.