

INITIAL ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOOLS

SUBJECT: Transparency Requirements – Regulations of the PhD courses

The **Regulations of the SISSA PhD courses** (D.D. n. 699 of 29.11.2017) is reported in attachment.

Further regulations concerning teaching or students are available on the SISSA website at: <https://www.sissa.it/it/regolamenti>

Documents and explanatory texts uploaded in the SUA_Scuole database are available on the Quality page of SISSA website, in the section relative to accreditation: <https://www.sissa.it/cevs>

Regulations of the SISSA Philosophiae Doctor courses

Art. 1 (Purpose)

1. "Philosophiae Doctor" courses (hereinafter called "Ph.D. Courses" or simply "Courses") provide the necessary skills to perform highly qualified research activities at Universities, public and private institutes, contributing to the establishment of the European Higher Education Space and the European Research Space.

Art. 2 (Scope of application)

1. The present regulations discipline the activation and the functioning of the SISSA Ph.D. Courses.

2. Courses are established within the framework of a SISSA Scientific Area (hereinafter called "Area"), with the potential collaboration of other Areas. Several Courses can be established within an Area.

3. Courses can also be started in cooperation with other Universities or on the basis of an agreement with public entities or individuals with high cultural and scientific qualifications and owning suitable structures, equipment and staff members.

4. Each Course is disciplined by its own Regulations based on the present one.

Art. 3 (Course Bodies)

1. The Teaching Board and the Coordinator are the bodies of each Course.

2. The Teaching Board is made up of the teachers and researchers who perform didactic activities in the Ph.D. Course. The Coordinator is a tenured full professor or, if none is present, a tenured aggregate professor, being a member of the Teaching Board, appointed to manage the Course in view of his/her skills and experience.

3. The Teaching Board plans the Course didactic activities and the corresponding research introduction activity. The Teaching Board shall:

a) define the training goals and topics of the Ph.D. Course;

b) determine the lecture cycles to be held within the framework of the course, their teachers and contents. Classroom lecture cycles are divided into:

- Lectures aimed to the transfer of knowledge, held during the first year, of total duration between 15 and 80 hours.
- Monographic courses: specialised in-depth courses, for a limited number of students attending the second and third year, of total duration between 20 and 60 hours.

c) on a yearly basis, draft the Course didactic activities, divided into lecture cycles, to

be approved by the Area Board and the Academic Senate for its publication on the School website by the month preceding the beginning of the Course itself. For each lecture cycle, divided into mandatory and optional lectures, the name, teacher in charge, attendance period and expected duration have to be specified, in compliance with the Regulations on the SISSA teachers' and researchers' academic duties and, in particular, with articles 2 and 3;

- d) approve students' syllabuses, which may even include lecture cycles of other Courses;
- e) approve the choice of supervisors by students and the related research project for their Ph.D. thesis;
- f) decide on students' admission to the following year;
- g) express opinions and proposals concerning students, where envisaged by the regulations in force.

4. The Coordinator is responsible for the management, organisation and coordination of didactic activities and introduction to research carried out during the Course. The Coordinator shall:

- a) summon and chair the Teaching Board and draft its agenda;
- b) coordinate the Course training activities;
- c) manage the funds allocated to the Course, if any;
- d) adopt urgent measures lying within the framework of the competence of the Teaching Board, submitting them for approval to the following Board meeting.

5. The composition of the Teaching Board is proposed by the Area Boards where the Course has been established, and it is approved by the Academic Senate before the beginning of each academic year. Teachers and researchers of Areas different from the one managing the Course may also be members of the Teaching Board. In addition to this, experts of ascertained high scientific skills not belonging to the School, belonging to other Universities or research institutes, can also be members of the Teaching Board, provided that they do not account for over 40% of the members of the Teaching Board employed by SISSA. In any case, up to one fourth of the members of the Teaching Board can be research executives, heads of research and researchers from research institutes or equivalent positions in foreign institutes.

6. In addition to the full members of the Teaching Board identified in the previous paragraph, other teachers and researchers, carrying out didactic activities in the Ph.D. Course, can also take part in meetings of the Teaching Board, as aggregate members. Teaching Board aggregate members are proposed by the Area Board where the Course is established and are to be approved by the Academic Senate.

7. The students' representative of the Course in the Area Board takes part in the Teaching Board meetings to deal with didactic and organisation issues.

8. The Coordinator is appointed by the Academic Senate, upon proposal by the Teaching Board, and is chosen among the full members of the School. The Coordinator's term in office lasts for two years, it can only be renewed for a second consecutive time.

Further terms are only possible after an interruption of at least one mandate.

9. The Coordinator can appoint a Vice Coordinator who will replace him/her in every function in case of absence or impossibility to act. The Vice Coordinator is chosen among the full and aggregate professors of the School who are members of the Teaching Board.

Art. 4
(Suitability requirements and Course establishment)

1. The Area Board is entitled to propose the establishment of a Ph.D. Course. The Evaluation Committee expresses an opinion about the fulfilment of suitability requirements. Subsequently, the proposal is submitted for approval to the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors, which verify the consistency of the Course with the training planning, as well as the availability of human and financial resources needed to activate it.

2. Courses are established by a Director's Decree, following the acknowledgement of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (hereinafter referred to as "MIUR").

3. Upon proposal by the Director or the reference Area Board, the Board of Directors, following an opinion by the Academic Senate, can decide to close a Course. The closure is implemented by a Director's Decree.

4. Every year, the Evaluation Committee checks that all requirements are met for each established Course; if a negative assessment is put forward about a Course, the Director is immediately informed.

5. Following publication of the Evaluation Committee report, the Director summons the Course coordinators to read the report and draft any strategies aiming to improve the quality of the Courses.

6. Any recommendations by external committees are submitted to the Evaluation Committee, which takes them into consideration for its activities.

7. Accreditation requirements are as follows:

a) presence in the Teaching Board of at least three full members or at least two full members and two aggregate members, who are professors or researchers of the School in the scientific reference subjects of the Course;

b) achievement of documented research results of international level by the members of the Teaching Board, with particular reference to those achieved in the five years before the date of accreditation application;

c) in order to allow for the creation of a suitable learning context, the availability of at least three fellowships for each doctorate cycle, as well as a total number of students compatible with the Course actual training capacity;

d) availability of suitable and stable financial support to sustain a Course, with specific reference to the availability of fellowships and support to research within the framework of Ph.D. Students' activities;

e) availability of specific and qualified operating and scientific structures for students'

study and research activities, including, depending on the type of Course, scientific laboratories, a suitable number of books, databases and resources for electronic calculations;

- f) planning of activities, possibly in common among several doctorates, of disciplinary and multidisciplinary training and linguistic and IT improvement, as well as in the field of research and knowledge of European and international research systems, research enhancement and intellectual property.

Art. 5

(Course assessment)

1. Courses are assessed yearly by the Evaluation Committee, which also examines the judgements expressed by students during the year and at the end of courses. The International Scientific Advisory Committee of the School, which normally meets every three years, also plays a consultancy role with reference to Ph.D. Courses.

2. The Students' Secretariat provides the School bodies with the following information about each Course every year:

- a) for entrance exams of the last three years: number of enrolled candidates, number of candidates who showed up, number of places assigned, number of withdrawals on the part of admitted students;
- b) average number of months from admission to the achievement of the Ph.D. title for the students who have achieved it in the last three years.

Art. 6

(Admission requirements)

1. The Courses can be accessed, having passed an entrance exam, by people of any age and citizenship with a "Laurea Specialistica/Magistrale" (or a degree awarded before the reform of Ministry Decree No. 509 dated 03.11.1999), obtained at an Italian University, or an equivalent academic title obtained abroad, recognized suitable by the Admission Committee and the Academic Senate.

Art. 7

(Call for applications)

1. The call for applications is issued by a Director's Decree; it is advertised in the Official Journal of the Italian Republic, the Euraxess site and the National Employment Database, as well as by timely communications to the Ministry, for spreading it at a national and international level by on-line means. The text of the call is in Italian and English.

Art. 8

(Admission procedures)

A. "Standard" admission

1. Admission to the Courses is through public selection, which must be concluded by the deadline envisaged by the laws in force.

2. The entrance exam aims to ascertain a student's suitability for scientific research, as well as knowledge of the English language, and consists in the evaluation of his/her titles, a written test and an oral test.

For the assessment, the Committee has 100 points, 10 of which are for academic titles, 40 for the written test and 50 for the oral test. In order to be admitted to the oral test, candidates must pass the written test with a score of at least 28. When required by the announcement, candidates living abroad can take the oral test by means of a videoconference. Eligibility is achieved with an overall score (including titles, written and oral tests) no lower than 70. At the end of the assessment of each test, the Committee will make the results public by the end of the day.

Upon a motivated request by the Teaching Board of a Course, the Academic Senate may authorise the admission examination to be held with different methods.

The minutes of the competition are forwarded to the Students' Secretariat, which will forward them to the respective Teaching Boards and from these to the Academic Senate for the approval of the rankings of eligible candidates.

In case of eligible candidates with the same score, the priority titles to be admitted to the courses are those envisaged by President Decree No. 487/94 and amendments thereto. In case of equal qualifications, according to art. 2, paragraph 9 of Law No. 191 dated 16.06.1998, modified by art. 3, paragraph 7 of Law No. 127 dated 15.05.1997, the younger candidate will be preferred.

The deeds of the competition are public; access is permitted in accordance with current legislation.

3. The selecting Committees for students' admission to the Philosophiae Doctor Courses are appointed by the Teaching Boards which manage the Courses, and are made up of at least three professors/researchers, at least one of whom is external to the School.

4. Candidates directly admitted to the oral test and those which handed in an assessable written test may be granted a travel expense reimbursement, determined by the admission announcement.

5. Candidates with exceptional qualifications coming from countries not belonging to the European Union may be admitted to the Ph.D. Courses by academic records only. Within the framework of specific agreements, different admission procedures may be envisaged. Students admitted on the basis of the procedures envisaged by this paragraph must in any case take a qualification examination at the end of the first year, before the Committee mentioned in paragraph 3.

6. Upon proposal by the Teaching Board, the Academic Senate may acknowledge the studies and research carried out at other institutions by candidates who have passed their admission examinations, admitting them to the second year of the Ph.D. directly.

7. Part of the places available may be reserved to:

- graduates in foreign Universities;
- students receiving fellowships from foreign States;
- students from specific mobility or international research programmes.

In such cases, different admission methods and times and a separate ranking can be envisaged.

B. "Direct" admission

1. The following may be admitted to the Courses directly, within the limit of the places available determined by the relevant bodies:
 - a. students identified by means of the selection procedures envisaged by international agreements or research programmes which SISSA takes part in as Coordinator or partner, and lasting not less than the minimum duration according to Italian law for doctorate course;
 - b. students attending doctorate Courses at foreign Universities or research institutes which have struck agreements with SISSA for issuing the title of research doctor in a "joint" regime.

Enrolment takes place following a favourable opinion of the Teaching Board of the Course in question, except for verifying a candidate's admission requirements pursuant to article 6.

C. "Special" selections

1. In case of doctorates established, or fellowships financed on the basis of research programmes, international cooperation between universities, industrial agreements, etc., the Committee and admission methods, assessment methods, admission times, as well as the specific organisation methods are defined in compliance with the provisions of the agreements in question. If they are not envisaged, ordinary procedures remain in force.

Art. 9 (Fellowship number and amount)

1. All the Ph.D. Students receive a fellowship, financed by internal or external funds.
2. The fellowship number, amount and allocation to the Courses are determined yearly by the Board of Directors, on the basis of the assent of the Academic Senate.

Art. 10 (Enrolment)

1. Students of the Courses are university students enrolled in a post-graduate training course. Attendance is mandatory and all the exams envisaged by the rules of their Course must be passed. Each student can be enrolled in a single Course and, after enrolment, he/she cannot be enrolled in another doctorate or graduation course in Italy or abroad at the same time, except if this is envisaged by specific agreements for joint doctorate or for achieving a double doctorate title. Participation in a master's or specialisation course at the School or other institutes is conditional to authorisation by the Teaching Board.
2. Students belong to the Area organising the Course.

Art. 11 (Didactic and research activities)

1. Courses include a first mandatory training activity period, lasting at least six months, and a second period dedicated to research and specialised training activities. Activities are carried out in English. Seminars take place for the whole duration of the course, with periodic invitations to external experts.

Access to single didactic courses may be allowed to a selected and limited number of students from Italian and foreign Universities, such as not to affect the functionality of didactic activities and facilities of the School, upon proposal by the person in charge of the course, following the approval by the Ph.D. Course Coordinator.

Access to didactic activities can also be envisaged within the framework of specific agreements.

2. Optional and mandatory didactic activities are regulated by internal rules of the single Courses, which envisage a personalised training course. During the first academic year, didactic activities are meant to provide basic and specialised knowledge aiming to carry out research activities.

3. Examinations at the end of the courses are held before a Committee, made up of at least two members, at least one of whom is a member of the Teaching Board or is a professor or researcher of the School. The person in charge of the course is the President. Results are reported in minutes signed by the candidate and by at least one member of the committee. Different methods for examinations can be approved by the Academic Senate upon proposal by the Teaching Boards.

4. By the end of the first year, each student agrees on a research line for his/her Ph.D. thesis with one of the available supervisors. The supervisor can be assisted by a co-supervisor. The choice of the supervisor and the research line must be submitted for approval to the Teaching Board. It is possible to change supervisor by submitting a motivated request, and if approved by the Teaching Board.

5. The supervisor must be a professor/researcher of the School or another institute. In the latter case, if he/she does not belong to the Teaching Board, he/she must be assisted by a co-supervisor (guarantor) of the School, and must have obtained the approval of the Teaching Board and of the Board/Council/ of the relevant Area .

If the supervisor is temporarily absent (sabbatical year, disease, leave) for a long period of time or has ceased being a teacher in the School, the Teaching Board will take action, guaranteeing continuity of the research project to the student.

6. In order to solve any problems in the relation between student and supervisor, a student can resort to the Ombudsperson in the ways defined in a specific regulation.

7. Ph.D. thesis projects in collaboration with other Universities can be activated upon proposal by the Teaching Board, following a favourable opinion of the Area Board or, where envisaged, by the Area Council in charge of the Course and approval by the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors with the related financial aspects.

8. Students' research activities concern topics dealt with in the School under a supervisor's guidance, using, if appropriate, School IT tools, Library books and scientific journals collections, School laboratories and all the other tools made available by specific agreements.

Art. 12
(Admission to years following the first)

1. Each Course determines, by its own regulations, the methods for students' admission to the years following the first one.
2. At the end of the first year, the evaluation takes into consideration both the results of the exams at the end of the courses and the assessment of research activities, if any. Admission to the following years is mostly based on the assessment of research activities.
3. Research results are explained and discussed before a Committee made up of at least three members of the Teaching Board. The date of the discussion is set and notified to the student duly in advance. The Committee forwards the research activity assessment results to the Students' Secretariat, which forwards them to each single student. The assessment at the end of the third year of a course must necessarily include some precise indications in case of a student's serious difficulties to discuss the thesis by the fourth year of the course. Critical issues are explained to the student, whose progress will be checked at the end of the first and second term of the fourth year of the course. Any request to postpone the deadline for discussing the thesis for over one month must be submitted by the student to the Teaching Board, normally by the end of the second term of the fourth year of the course. All the proceedings of the previous assessments must be promptly notified to the Students' Secretariat, which will forward them to the relevant bodies.
4. The Teaching Boards resolve on students' admission to the next academic year in the first useful meeting after acquiring the assessment elements and in any case in due time for the following resolutions by the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors.

**Art. 13
(Change of Course)**

The passage of a student from one Ph.D. Course to another is allowed after the favorable opinion of the Teaching Board of the receiving Course, which establishes case-by-case teaching and research obligations of the student in the new Ph.D Course and notify them to him/her in advance.

**Art. 14
(Missions)**

1. Students' missions, even if they do not entail any expenses for the School, must be authorised in advance by the Course Coordinator, according to times and methods envisaged by the SISSA "Missions and expense reimbursement regulations".

**Art. 15
(Internships abroad)**

1. On the basis of specific agreements with enterprises, approved by the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors, Students of a Ph.D. Course can attend business internships, pending approval by their supervisor and by the Course Coordinator.

Art. 16
(Mobility)

1. Ph.D. Course students may spend some study and research periods at Universities, research institutes or enterprises, in Italy and abroad, with the approval of their supervisor and Course Coordinator, for a total amount of time not exceeding 18 months.
2. Specific agreements regulate the co-tutoring thesis procedures, which may envisage activities in other locations for period of over 18 months.

Art. 17
(Integrative teaching activities and other external activities)

1. Starting from the second year, upon authorisation from the Teaching Board, Ph.D. Course students, may carry out integration teaching activities and coaching for undergraduate students in other Italian Universities, provided that this engagement is not in conflict with their research activities. For the second and third year of the course, the maximum limit for integration didactics is 40 hours per academic year.
2. Any other external activities must be authorised in advance by the Teaching Board, on the basis of the regulations in force. In case of breach, the Director may suspend or revoke the fellowship.

Art. 18
(Duration)

1. Each Course normally lasts for a total of four academic years.
If a student's scientific maturity and the results achieved make it possible, a thesis can be discussed before the end of the fourth year.
In any case, the title will not be issued before the minimum term envisaged by the Italian law on the duration of doctorate courses.

Art. 19
(Final examination and awarding the title)

1. The title of Philosophiae Doctor is awarded after a positive assessment of a research thesis contributing to the advancement of knowledge or methodologies in the chosen investigation field, whose original nature is such as to result from one or more articles to submit for publication in highly qualified journals.
2. The Ph.D. thesis is written in English. The final draft, along with an abstract in English, must be submitted to the Students' Secretariat at least one month before the date of the defense, in order to allow a prompt sending it to the Committee members.
3. The thesis and an enclosed student's report in English on the activities carried out during the doctorate course and any publications, is assessed by at least two highly qualified professors/researchers, possibly belonging to foreign institutions, outside the School and the institutes which have contributed to the joint thesis, hereinafter called assessors. Assessors are chosen by the Teaching Board. Assessors express a written analytic judgement about the thesis and propose the public discussion or delay for a

period not exceeding six months, if they believe any significant integrations or corrections to be necessary. After this period, the thesis is in any case admitted to public discussion, accompanied by a new written opinion by the same assessors, in the light of the corrections or integrations made, if any.

4. The public defense of the thesis takes place before a Committee made up of at least five members, at least two of whom are permanent or non-permanent teachers at the School and two from outside the School, appointed by the Teaching Board. At the end of the discussion, the thesis is approved or rejected, with a justified collective written judgement. With a unanimous vote, the Committee may attribute honours (*cum laude*) in the presence of particularly relevant results from a scientific point of view.

In case of negative result, the final test cannot be repeated.

5. As regards the presentation, filing and public access methods of the thesis, see Annex 1 to these regulations.

6. The defense normally takes place by the end of the fourth year of the course or during the following month.

Upon proposal by the Teaching Board and approval by the reference Area Board (or "Council") the deadline can be delayed by up to two months.

For duly proved exceptional reasons, the deadline can be delayed of up to six months, following a motivated resolution by the Academic Senate, upon proposal by the Teaching Board and approved by the reference Area Board (or Council).

In case of delay for over one month, the student's supervisor must ensure coverage of a fellowship with external funds for the period between the end of the fourth year and the discussion of the thesis. If the supervisor cannot guarantee this financial coverage, the funds must be found by the Teaching Board from those available for the Board itself.

Art. 20

(Other certificates)

1. The School can issue "Magister Philosophiae" diplomas and other diplomas or certificates at the end of at least one year of course.

2. Upon request from a student and following a favourable opinion by the Teaching Board, the School can issue the title of Doctor Europaeus, under the terms and conditions envisaged by the European University Association.

3. The issuing of such diplomas or certificates is regulated by the Didactic Regulations of the Courses.

Art. 21

(Absences)

1. Absences exceeding 15 days must be authorised by the thesis supervisor and the Course Coordinator and notified to the Scientific Secretariat.

2. Absence exceeding one month must be authorised by the "Council" (or, in its absence, the Board) of the Area the student belongs to, which will decide whether to suspend the fellowship.

Art. 22
(Fellowship modifications)

1. The Council (or, in its absence, the Board) of the Area to which the student belongs can resolve to increase the amount of the fellowship by 50% for periods of continuous stay abroad lasting not less than one month and, as a whole, not exceeding 18 months.
2. It is possible to suspend attendance of the Course and of the fellowship for up to 12 months in the following cases:
 - a) mandatory civil/military service;
 - b) maternity or paternity leave;
 - c) disease;
 - d) serious personal reasons.
3. Upon request from the student, the deadline for discussing the Ph.D. Thesis can be postponed for a period equal to the suspension.
4. The request for suspension, duly documented, and any displacement of the thesis discussion terms, are to be submitted to the Teaching Board for the relative resolutions. In case of maternity leave, paternity leave or serious disease, in addition to the treatment envisaged by the law, students can apply for a contribution equal to 70% of the fellowship, for a maximum of five months per type of event. In case of maternity leave, this period can be extended up to a maximum of 12 months in case of interdiction, even partial, for safety reasons from Ph.D. related activities (including those related with drafting the thesis).
5. The renouncement of a fellowship by a student before the end of the academic year does not entail the return of the amounts received, on condition that the Teaching Board certifies the regular and profitable carrying out of study and research activities until the time of renunciation. Should this concern a period shorter than that accrued at the date of cancellation, the refund of the amounts received in the period not covered by the certification itself will be required.

Art. 23
(Transparency)

1. The Teaching Board of each Course makes the following information available on the School web pages and keeps it updated:
 - a) Course didactic rules;
 - b) Ph.D. admission test methods;
 - c) envisaged didactic obligations, divided by year: number of courses, titles and programmes, hours of class lectures, hours of course in laboratories, essays, access test to years following the first one;
 - d) structuring the research lines available for doctorate thesis;

- e) procedure of choice of the supervisor and, if envisaged, to choose the thesis topic, even if not codified, at least as envisaged by practice;
- f) publications from Ph.D. theses, at least during the past three years;
- g) alumni's current positions, if known.

List of preference titles pursuant to President Decree No. 487/94 and amendments thereto, mentioned in art. 8 “Admission procedures”

- those awarded a medal for military valour;
- ex soldiers maimed and disabled at war;
- maimed and disabled persons at war;
- maimed and disabled people while performing public and private services;
- war orphans;
- orphans of war victims;
- orphans of people deceased while performing public and private services;
- wounded at war;
- those awarded a war cross or another special merit war title, as well as heads of large families;
- children of ex-soldiers maimed and disabled at war;
- children of maimed and disabled persons at war;
- children of maimed and disabled people while performing public and private duties;
- those who fought during their military service;
- those who have performed any praiseworthy role, for not less than one year, in the administration announcing the competition;
- married and unmarried people on the basis of the number of their children;
- civilian disabled and maimed people;
- voluntary members of the armed forces honourably discharged at the end of the conscription or conscription renewal.