

PhD Study Programme



**at the
University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna**

1. Objectives of the PhD programme

- 1.1. The PhD programme of the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding young scientists. By participating in an internationally competitive research programme, members of the PhD programme are trained to develop personal and scientific skills required for scientific excellence.
- 1.2. The duration of the PhD programme is 3 years which is equivalent to 180 ECTS credits.
- 1.3. After successful completion of the PhD studies and following the PhD examination, the academic degree of "Doctor of Philosophy" (PhD) is awarded by the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna.

2. Requirements for admission to the PhD programme

- 2.1. The PhD programme at the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna is open to students who have successfully completed University studies (comprising 300 ECTS credits) in the field of Veterinary Medicine, Life Sciences or related disciplines.
- 2.2. Applicants have to document above-average academic performance. Their curriculum has to indicate special qualifications and motivation for scientific research.
- 2.3. The admission of outstanding students with a university degree comprising less than 300 ECTS credits is possible (§19 (2) 2 University Act 2002).

3. Admission to the PhD programme

- 3.1. The number of available positions within the PhD programme depends on the funding available with a maximum of 20 PhD students accepted per year.
- 3.2. The selection of participants is carried out by the PhD curricular committee (see 4.).
- 3.3. The study programme normally starts at the beginning of the winter semester (1 October).
- 3.4. The formal admission to the PhD programme at the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna depends on a successful:
 - a) application procedure
 - b) selection procedure
- 3.5. The application documents are to be submitted to the chairperson of the PhD curricular committee and have to include the following documents:
 - an informal application for a PhD position at the University indicating the personal qualifications and motivation for the PhD programme as well as the fields of scientific interest and expectations regarding the future professional career;
 - a curriculum vitae, certificates as well as indications of the knowledge of English.
- 3.6. In the course of the selection procedure, in addition to the grade of the University degree, the personal motivation is of crucial importance. The scope of specific qualifications and motivation for scientific work is assessed in an interview with the PhD curricular committee and participating group leaders (supervisors) (see 4.).
- 3.7. The selected applicants will be invited to submit a final application which should include:

- a Letter of Recommendation by the supervisor (see 4.), specifying the topic of the research project, approval of scientific supervision, confirmation of the work place and financing of the research project;
 - a detailed description of the planned research project presenting the most relevant aspects of the current state of research and the project scheme with a German and English title (in agreement with the supervisor); thus specifying the challenging nature of the research project and the expected scientific contribution;
 - specification of the scientific field in which the PhD degree shall be obtained; this scientific area has to be within the scope of the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna.
- 3.8. Based on the presented documents, the PhD curricular committee decides on the admission to the PhD programme and specifies the subject area for the PhD degree.

4. PhD Curricular Committee

- 4.1. The PhD curricular committee, appointed by the senate of the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, is the responsible curricular committee according to § 25 (8) 3 UG 2002.
- 4.2. The PhD curricular committee is composed of the Vice-Rector for Research, the Vice-Rector for Study Affairs plus six representatives of the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna holding a *venia docendi* (including the speakers of 'Doktoratskollegs') and three PhD students.
- 4.3. The members of the PhD curricular committee are elected by the senate, following a proposal by the group members, for the period of one term of office; the PhD students propose three candidates from their midst. The committee is constituted by the Vice-Rector for Research and elects one faculty member from its midst as chairperson.
- 4.4. The PhD curricular committee approves the PhD advisory board of two persons for each PhD student. This board consists of the supervisor at the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna and secondly a preferentially external scientist qualified for the subject area. The members of the PhD advisory board have a *venia docendi* or an equivalent scientific qualification. In case of several PhD students within the same subject area the respective PhD advisory board may consist of the same persons.
- 4.5. The PhD curricular committee decides on the allocation of PhD grants awarded by the University.
- 4.6. The PhD advisory board has the following tasks:
- 1) Teaching:
 - Advice on the required course work
 - 2) PhD project
 - Supervision and individual guidance of the PhD students within the chosen subject area throughout the entire PhD programme,
 - Evaluation of the PhD students throughout their studies by taking reports and examinations.
 - 3) PhD thesis
 - Supervision of the PhD thesis
 - Evaluation of the PhD thesis
- 4.7. In case of joint doctoral programmes with other universities in or outside Austria or with research institutions not involved in the PhD programme at the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, the PhD curricular committee is

authorized to decide on an individual basis. These arrangements have to exactly match the requirements of the PhD curriculum at the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna.

5. Study contents

The study programme consists of scientific research, interdisciplinary research-oriented courses, subject-specific courses and presentations (see Annex 1). The curriculum is determined and announced by the PhD curricular committee in agreement with the University institutions involved in the PhD programme and in accordance with EU regulations. Interdisciplinary courses are specified by the PhD curricular committee; subject-specific courses are defined by the respective supervisor in agreement with the PhD student and announced in the course schedule.

The courses are mainly held by teaching staff of the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna and complemented by visiting scientists. They are normally held in English. Courses of a graduate college may be part of the PhD programme.

Adequate on-site courses at other institutions of post-secondary higher education as well as at other intra- or extramural institutions may equally be attended.

5.1. The PhD training encompasses the following parts:

a) course work (23 ECTS)

according to the recommendations of the PhD advisory board, the student attends courses with an equivalent of 23 ECTS credits. The courses can be taken either at the VUW or at other universities in or outside Austria. The courses aim at complementing and expanding the expertise of the PhD student.

b) seminar presentation

Every PhD student is requested to deliver annual public seminars.

c) teaching (2 ECTS)

PhD students are required to assist teaching at course(s) taught at the VUW. Preference is given to courses related to the topic of the PhD project.

d) PhD project (155 ECTS)

6. Supervision

6.1. The topic of the PhD thesis is proposed by the supervisor at the selection of PhD students.

6.2. Within the first month, the PhD student and the supervisor jointly propose a second, preferably external member of the PhD advisory board to the PhD curricular committee for approval.

6.3. The PhD advisory board guides the PhD student throughout the PhD programme.

6.4. Every year, following the public seminar, the PhD advisory board meets and discusses the progress of the PhD programme. If required, additional meetings are held.

6.5. The PhD students are guided by their supervisors and hold a progress report meeting with their PhD advisory board at least twice a year. The PhD advisory board evaluates the students' academic progress and briefly reports to the PhD curricular committee once a year.

6.6. The PhD advisory board advises the PhD students regarding their future professional career.

6.7. In case of premature termination of a project, a joint meeting between the PhD student, the supervising group and two members of the PhD curricular

committee is held. The decision on further actions is taken by the PhD curricular committee thereafter by simple majority.

- 6.8. Supervision of the PhD student terminates after passing the PhD examination (see 10.). The final examination has to be taken five years after starting the PhD studies at the latest. In exceptional cases the PhD curricular committee may accept deviant regulations.

7. Scientific Colloquium

The PhD students are invited to a public colloquium by the PhD curricular committee once a year to present their state of research and the current stage of their scientific work. The form and contents of the presentation are assessed by the PhD advisory board.

8. Examinations

8.1. Interim evaluations

Oral interim evaluations are held twelve and 24 months after the start of the PhD studies, jointly with the first and second progress report meeting. The interim evaluation comprises topics from the research project and from the courses taken by the student and will be held by the PhD advisory board.

8.2. Prerequisites for admission to the PhD examination

After completion of the PhD programme, i.e. normally at the end of the third year, the PhD examination is held by the PhD advisory board. On signing up for the PhD examination, the PhD student has to provide the following documents:

1. Certificate about successful attendance in the courses and seminars according to the individual study programme
2. Completion of the interim evaluations;
3. A cumulative thesis must be submitted, provided that the student has published at least two publications as first author or shared first author in internationally acknowledged peer-reviewed journals. At least one publication has to be published in a high-ranking journal (Z1 journal according to the VUW internal ranking list). Accepted papers are equally considered. The publications have to be thematically related and complemented, in terms of a cumulative thesis, by a detailed description of the research topic, a comprehensive summary and a discussion of achieved results with a joint title in German or English. In the thesis the student has to indicate her/his contribution in planning, accomplishment, analysis and written documentation.

9. Assessment of the PhD thesis

The PhD curricular committee evaluates the PhD thesis based on the judgement of the PhD advisory board. The PhD curricular committee also collects an external expertise from a scientist who is not part of the PhD advisory board. The written expert opinions are independent of each other and include a concluding assessment of the thesis and a final grade (1-5).

10. PhD defense

10.1. The PhD defense (disputation) consists of a public presentation by the PhD student in English on the research project of at least 30 minutes, followed by a public discussion of the project of at least 15 minutes. The disputation should take at least 45 minutes, yet not exceeding 75 minutes. For the disputation the PhD curricular

committee extends its PhD advisory board by the external expert of the written PhD thesis or by one member, respectively. On voting for the result, all members of the PhD advisory board are entitled to vote. In case the examination has been failed, two resits within a period of six months are possible. In case of a repeated insufficient performance, the PhD examination has been definitely failed. The PhD curricular committee is notified about the examination result.

10.2. Following the disputation the PhD curricular committee determines the overall result of the doctoral performance including a final grade (1-5) with regard to the assessment of both the thesis (see 9.) and the disputation.

11. Conferment of the academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

11.1. After successful completion of the PhD examination the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna confers the academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) on the student.

11.2. An official document in German and English on the conferment of the doctoral degree is issued.

11.3. The conferment entitles the graduate to hold the academic degree of PhD (Doctor of Philosophy).

12. Copying of the written thesis

12.1. The student is obliged to submit the written PhD thesis to the VUW electronically (on CD-ROM or equivalent) and in five printed copies prior to the conferment of the PhD degree. The PhD curricular committee may require technical adjustments prior to copying of the written PhD thesis.

12.2. The PhD curricular committee may allow for postponement of the publication, e.g. due to patent protection, of at utmost 6 months.

13. Annulment of the promotion performance

In case fundamental requirements for admission to the PhD studies have been violated or if the student has been found guilty of committing fraud during the study performance, the senate may annul the promotion performance.

14. Revocation of the PhD degree

The decision about potential revocation of the PhD degree is taken by the senate according to the underlying legal regulations.

Annex 1:

Distribution of ECTS credits:

Course work (planned individually for each student by the PhD advisory board)	
23 ECTS	
Teaching assistance	
2 ECTS	
Research work	155
ECTS	
Total sum	180
ECTS	