

Quality Assurance Plan – University of Veterinary Medicine Budapest

Doctoral School of Veterinary Sciences

Introduction

The quality assurance system of the *Doctoral School of Veterinary Sciences (DSVS)* is based on the provisions of Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education and Government Decree 387/2012 (XII.19) on doctoral schools, doctoral procedures, and habilitation. It follows the accreditation procedures of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee for doctoral schools and the principles of modern quality assurance, with particular attention to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015), developed under the coordination of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), based on the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle.

1. General Quality Assurance Criteria

The DSVS ensures the fulfillment, monitoring, and continuous development of quality assurance criteria for doctoral school activities, in accordance with the institutional quality assurance regulations. The process diagram of the DSVS's training and quality assurance activities is included in Annex 1.

Operational quality assurance tasks are organized and coordinated by the secretary of the doctoral school and supervised by the head of the DSVS, who, together with the program leaders, is responsible for communicating the quality policy to all internal and external stakeholders, setting annual quality objectives, monitoring their achievement, and ensuring feedback of measurement results into operational processes for continuous improvement.

The head of the DSVS reports annually to the Doctoral Council and the Senate on the functioning of the quality assurance system, the implementation of the quality policy and objectives, and the results achieved through development efforts.

The quality assurance of the doctoral school fundamentally covers two main areas: monitoring the doctoral training and tracking the fulfillment of quality assurance expectations related to the doctoral degree acquisition process, in accordance with the ESG 2015 guidelines as follows.

1.1 Quality Assurance Policy

DSVS ensures the existence of a publicly available quality assurance policy (Annex 2), developed and implemented with the involvement of both internal stakeholders (students, instructors, and non-teaching staff) and external stakeholders (users, employers, partners). The policy reflects the close relationship between research, learning, and teaching. It is part of the institutional quality culture, has formal status, and is publicly accessible.

The quality policy is prepared by the Doctoral School Committee (DSC), submitted to the Doctoral Council for review, and approved by the Senate. It is made available to all stakeholders via the DSVS website and other customary institutional channels.

1.2 Development, Approval, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Training Programs

The DSVS has well-established and practiced procedures for the development and approval of its training programs. The primary goal in designing these programs is to ensure that PhD students can conduct high-level scientific work. To achieve this, they acquire skills in planning and executing primary and secondary research, as well as in the analytical and synthetic processing of scientific literature.

Further expectations include mastering scientific methodology and applying it during research. These skills must be demonstrated by the doctoral candidate through the preparation and defense of their dissertation. The curriculum outlined in the DSVS Training Plan and the course descriptions support the acquisition of these competencies, clearly stating the expected learning outcomes. These are reviewed annually.

During the development and annual review of the Training Plan, feedback from students, instructors, and external stakeholders (e.g., labor market actors, research institutes, partner institutions) is considered. This feedback is collected and processed regularly and systematically through surveys (Annex 3).

A key consideration in designing the Training Plan is to ensure gradual progression for students, with clearly defined expected workloads expressed in credits. The Training Plan is approved by the Doctoral School Committee (DSC) and published on the DSVS website.

Research topics are closely linked to the fulfillment of PhD activities, and the DSVS applies a standardized procedure for announcing them. The development, approval, monitoring, and evaluation of training programs and research topics are governed by the Doctoral Regulations.

1.3 Student-Centered Learning, Teaching, and Assessment

In the development and implementation of its training programs, the DSVS prioritizes the conditions necessary for student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment.

This includes:

- Considering the diversity of students and their needs,
- Providing flexible learning pathways,
- Applying various teaching methods where possible,
- Using multiple pedagogical approaches flexibly,
- Regularly evaluating and refining teaching methods and pedagogical strategies,
- Encouraging autonomous learning while ensuring appropriate instructional guidance and support,
- Promoting mutual respect in student-teacher relationships,
- Having appropriate procedures for handling student complaints,
- Attempting to create student-centered timetables.

Regarding assessment, the DSVS ensures that instructors use diverse examination methods where possible, publish assessment criteria and grading methods in advance, and that evaluations objectively reflect the extent to which students have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

The DSVS aims to ensure that, where feasible, assessments are conducted by more than one examiner, applied consistently and fairly to all students according to predefined procedures, and that students have formal appeal opportunities regarding evaluations.

The detailed rules for student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment are set out in the Doctoral School Regulations.

1.4 Admission, Progression, Recognition of Studies, and Awarding of Qualifications

The DSVS has and consistently applies a predefined and published procedure covering the entire student lifecycle, including admission, progression, recognition of studies, and awarding of qualifications.

The DSC continuously evaluates the progress of PhD students and simultaneously assesses the performance of their supervisors. At the end of each semester, supervisors submit a written report on the doctoral candidate's performance and research progress. Based on this, students receive credits for research activities related to publication or dissertation writing.

The supervisor sends the progress report electronically to the secretary of the Doctoral School, who records it in the Neptun academic system. The report assesses whether the student is progressing according to the original research plan submitted at enrollment. If the student significantly falls behind, the supervisor outlines a catch-up plan for the upcoming period.

Depending on the results of the periodic evaluation, the DSC may recommend changing the supervisor or transferring a state-funded doctoral student to a self-funded program.

Each year, doctoral candidates present their research results at the Academic Report Conference. This presentation serves as an assessment of their progress.

The DSC places special emphasis on verifying the scientific performance required to initiate the doctoral degree procedure. Students demonstrate their research achievements through publications, which are primarily managed by the supervisors. The publication requirements are outlined in the Doctoral School Regulations. The DSC and the Doctoral Council verify compliance with these requirements during the application for the degree procedure and the appointment of the public defense committee.

To initiate the degree procedure, students must submit the relevant application and attachments to the DSC. This application also serves as registration for the so-called *complex exam*, which must be successfully completed before the degree procedure can begin. The DSC decides whether to accept the application.

Upon graduation, students receive official documents describing the qualification obtained, including the achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content, and status of the completed studies.

The procedures for:

- admission,
 - progression,
 - recognition of studies,
 - awarding of qualifications
- (including for individual preparatory candidates) are defined in the Doctoral School Regulations.

1.5 Instructors and supervisors

The DSVS places strong emphasis on ensuring that instructors and supervisors possess appropriate competencies. The DSC annually reviews and evaluates the suitability of instructors and supervisors.

Instructors must hold at least the title of associate professor or demonstrate equivalent scientific performance. They are appointed by the DSC for a specific period to carry out teaching, research, and supervisory duties within the DSVS.

Instructors may also be full-time employees of domestic or international research institutions, universities, companies, or other organizations that have signed a written cooperation agreement with the DSVS (external instructors).

All supervisors are listed in the ODT (National Doctoral Council) database. If someone teaches in multiple doctoral schools, they must declare the percentage of affiliation with each school on their ODT profile.

Each semester, the quality of teaching and supervision is evaluated through online student surveys. These evaluations help improve the quality and effectiveness of education and supervision in the DSVS. They also contribute to identifying and correcting deficiencies.

Only doctoral students enrolled in the DSVS are eligible to evaluate instructors, and only course leaders can be evaluated. The evaluations provide an objective picture of the quality of education in the DSVS. Anonymity is guaranteed, and students are protected from any negative consequences for their feedback. The head of the DSVS ensures this protection.

Student evaluations cover:

- a) the quality and standard of teaching,
- b) the teaching material,
- c) scientific teaching methods,
- d) material and technical conditions,
- e) student-teacher relationships,
- f) other factors influencing teaching quality.

Survey processing is coordinated by the DSVS secretary and carried out by the student representative of the Doctoral Student Union (DHÖK), who discusses the results with the head of the DSVS. The head provides feedback to instructors and initiates actions if necessary. Each supervisor and instructor has the right to review the aggregated results of their evaluations.

Further regulations regarding instructors and supervisors are defined in the Doctoral School Regulations.

1.6 Learning Support and Student Services

As an autonomous organizational unit of the University, the DSVS has adequate financial resources to support learning and teaching activities. It provides appropriate and easily accessible learning support conditions and student services for its students.

The DSVS continuously strives to offer modern support systems to ensure that students feel their study period is successful. These supports are partly infrastructural—ranging from libraries and learning facilities to IT systems—and partly human resources, including tutors, advisors, academic administration, and other support professionals.

The preparedness of support and administrative staff plays a key role in service delivery. Therefore, the DSVS pays special attention to employing staff with appropriate qualifications and language skills.

The DSVS promotes and supports international mobility for students. It also offers various scholarships, opportunities to participate in conferences, and possibilities for publication. Information about these opportunities is shared through the institution's internal communication channels (email, intranet, website, bulletin boards, etc.).

Each January, the DSVS organizes a Scientific Forum and Doctoral Student Conference in both Hungarian and English as part of the Academic Report. During the forum, PhD students present their scientific results to a committee appointed by the DSC. The most outstanding presentations are published in national or international scientific journals.

Former doctoral students who have earned their degree are also invited to the Academic Report, making the event a reunion for alumni. The DSVS places great emphasis on maintaining relationships with graduates through its alumni program.

The diverse student body, including adult learners, part-time students, working students, international students, and students with disabilities—is considered when designing and operating learning support and student advisory services. The DSVS also considers the principles of student-centered learning and flexible teaching and learning methods.

Conditions for handling student requests and complaints are ensured, and the relevant procedures are defined in the University's Doctoral Regulations.

In case of ethical issues related to research, the provisions of the Veterinary Science Code of Ethics must be followed.

The DSVS provides its support activities and facilities within the framework of the University's infrastructure and conditions.

1.7 Information Management

The DSVS regularly collects, analyzes, and evaluates relevant information to manage its training programs and other activities. Specific goals related to each ESG criterion are summarized in the document titled *Quality Objectives* (Annex 4), which also serves as a source of indicators for evaluating the DSVS's performance.

To make evidence-based decisions and understand the effectiveness of various processes—identifying where attention, intervention, or development is needed—reliable data must be available. Efficient data collection and analysis processes related to programs and other activities are part of the internal quality assurance system and include the following sources of information:

- Key performance indicators;
- Student's state and condition;
- Student progression, success rates, and dropout rates;
- Student satisfaction with training programs, instructors, and supervisors;
- Availability of learning support and student advisory services;
- Career paths of graduates;
- Instructor/supervisor satisfaction;
- Satisfaction of non-teaching staff;
- Feedback on satisfaction from external partners.
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The DSVS applies various methods for data collection and processing, as described in previous sections. Students, instructors, and non-teaching staff are all involved in the data collection process. The management, analysis, and feedback of the available data to the appropriate operational processes fall under the responsibility and authority of the head of the DSVS.

1.8 Public Information

It is beneficial for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders, and the public to have access to information about the activities of the DSVS.

To this end, DSVS provides information about its activities, training programs, admission requirements, expected learning outcomes, qualifications that can be obtained, teaching, learning, and assessment procedures, success rates, learning opportunities offered to students, and the employment outcomes of graduates.

The DSVS primarily ensures the publication of clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and easily accessible information through its website and other official documents. Additionally, it publishes the required information on the public platform of the National Doctoral Council (ODT) at doktori.hu.

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Approved by: Doctoral School Council of Veterinary Science

ANNEXES:

1. Flowchart of the DSVS's training and quality assurance activities
2. Quality Policy
3. External Partner Satisfaction Survey
4. Student Evaluation of Instructor/Supervisor Performance
5. Quality Objectives