

Curriculum of the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD

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1. Preamble

The Curriculum of the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD follows Austrian University legislation (University Law 2002, Universitätsgesetz 2002/UG 2002) and the Statutes of the Vetmeduni Vienna (Satzung der Veterinärmedizinischen Universität Wien). Further details concerning implementation of the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD are laid down in the PhD Guidelines.

The Vetmeduni Vienna PhD also provides opportunities to enrol in thematically focussed PhD Programmes within the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD. Specific rulings and guidelines to these PhD Programmes can be laid down within the respective PhD Programmes.

List and explanation of relevant terms used in the guidelines and forms:

- **PhD Programme** (= Vetmeduni Vienna PhD) – Study programme offered by the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna for graduate students
- **PhD Curriculum** – Framework for training of PhD Candidates
- **PhD Implementation Guidelines** – Detailed provisions concerning the PhD Curriculum. To be read and implemented
- **PhD Curricular Committee** – The Vetmeduni Vienna’s committee responsible for the design and certain administrative and quality assurance tasks of the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD Curriculum.
- **PhD Advisory Committee** – Committee of at least two independent supervisors (primary and secondary PhD Advisor) assigned to each individual PhD Candidate providing advice and evaluating progress
- **PhD Candidate** – Graduate students enrolled in the PhD Programme
- **PhD Supervision Agreement** – Mutual agreement between PhD Candidate and PhD Advisory Committee on individual terms and obligations within the regulations of the curriculum
- **PhD Examination Board** – Constituted by the Vice Rector for Study Affairs, responsible to conduct the PhD Defence, comprises two examiners and a chair person (Vice rector or delegate)
- **PhD Defence** – Final step required for completion of the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD consisting of a public presentation of results and a scientific discussion.
- **External reviewer** – Independent external expert in the field assigned with evaluating the PhD Thesis in addition to the evaluation performed by the two supervisors

2. Objectives of the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD/Qualification profile

The aim of the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD is to train highly qualified graduate students to perform independent scientific work in the field of veterinary science and/or life sciences.

It is a comprehensive scientific education programme that enables graduates to generate new knowledge and to become competitive junior scientists.

Research conducted by PhD Candidates is supervised by qualified senior scientists who are internationally recognized specialists in their field, thus making an important contribution to the scientific community and to the University's overall performance in basic and applied research.

A guided and supervised research project is the main focus of the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD, resulting in excellent peer-reviewed publications and forming the basis of a PhD thesis which is presented and defended as the final step toward the PhD once the required coursework has been completed. The programme is designed to allow PhD Candidates to develop their personal skills and acquire a broad range of methodological experience through supervised research and technical courses.

Successful PhD Candidates will have high ethical standards and adhere to the scientific principles following the Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice.

Within their PhD study, PhD Candidates will:

- develop an awareness of the philosophical (theory of science), social and ethical principles of science (including an ethical assessment of their own activities);
- obtain advanced knowledge on planning, conducting, evaluating, documenting and presenting scientific investigations and results;
- conduct a challenging scientific research project, publishing significant findings in international peer-reviewed journals and presenting and defending the results to the scientific community.

3. Recruitment of PhD Candidates and admission to the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD

3.1. General remarks

The Vetmeduni Vienna PhD at the Vetmeduni Vienna is open to PhD Candidates who have successfully completed university studies (comprising 300 ECTS credits or equivalent qualification from universities that do not use ECTS) in veterinary medicine, life sciences or a related discipline.

The admission of PhD Candidates with a university degree comprising less than 300 ECTS credits is possible if they have shown outstanding performance (e.g. grades above average and/or other specific activities that would justify admission). Any exemptions are decided by regulations of the Rectorate according to UG 2002 §64(4a). PhD Advisors then have to provide the PhD Curricular Committee with the rationale for recommending such a decision (cf. "Verordnung des Rektorates gemäß § 64 Abs. 4a UG betreffend die Zulassung von Studierenden mit Bachelorabschlüssen zum PhD-Studium").

3.2. Recruitment process

Recruitment of PhD Candidates is done in accordance with Austrian legislation and international standards and regulations. The primary PhD Advisor selects the most suitable PhD Candidate. As part of the documentation accompanying an application, the primary PhD Advisor has to provide a letter to the PhD Curricular Committee listing the reasons for selecting a particular PhD Candidate.

3.3. Application for admission to the Vetmeduni Vienna PhD

On behalf of the PhD Candidate, the PhD Advisor will submit the application documents concerning the PhD project, the PhD Candidate and the proposed PhD Advisory Committee to the PhD Curricular Committee.

3.3.1. Application requirements for PhD research projects:

3.3.1.1. Peer-reviewed projects (e.g., FWF or EU projects) – A project identifier is available; no further review process required

■ Further information has to be provided as stated in the Implementation guidelines to the PhD Curriculum (PhD Guidelines).

3.3.1.2. Independent/individual non-reviewed research projects

The PhD Curricular Committee will coordinate the review process with two independent reviewers.

■ Further information has to be provided as stated in the PhD Guidelines

3.3.1.3. Evaluation and admission

The PhD Curricular Committee evaluates the PhD project, the PhD Candidate and the proposed PhD Advisory Committee.

- The PhD research project should:
 - be of a scope that allows it to be conducted within the given timeframe;
 - allow for publication in leading scientific journals in the respective field.
- The PhD committee will be evaluated following the criteria outlined in Section 6.3.

The time point of admission of new PhD Candidates will be in accordance with national law and as stated in the PhD Guidelines.

4. General Rules

- i. In accordance with UG 2002 §54, the minimum duration of the PhD study is 3 years. In cases where a timeframe of longer than 3 years is foreseen, the PhD Curricula Committee makes a decision regarding an extended schedule based upon a specific work plan. An application for an extension of the PhD study beyond three years must be submitted prior to admission. Detailed arrangements are specified within the PhD Supervision Agreement (see PhD Guidelines).
- ii. The PhD Curriculum requires training equivalent to 180 ECTS.
- iii. Obtaining the degree “Doctor of Philosophy” (PhD) is based on successful completion of all requirements of the PhD Curriculum. Prerequisites include successful completion of all coursework related to the PhD study, involvement in a top quality research project, preparation of a PhD thesis and successfully passing a PhD Defence.

5. Conferment of the academic degree

After a PhD Candidate successfully completes the PhD Defence in front of the PhD Examination Board, the Vetmeduni Vienna confers the academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) on the student.

6. Advisory bodies and organization

6.1. Vice Rector for Study Affairs / Vice Rector for Research

Admission to and dismissal from the Vetmeduni PhD is decided by the Vice Rector for Study Affairs based on the recommendations of the PhD Curricular Committee.

The Vice Rector for Study Affairs appoints the PhD Examination Board responsible for conducting the PhD Defence.

6.2. PhD Curricular Committee

The PhD Curricular Committee is appointed by the Academic Senate of the Vetmeduni Vienna. It is the responsible committee with regard to Austrian University Law UG2002 §25(8).

The composition and responsibilities of the PhD Curricular Committee is described within the University Statutes. A chair and a deputy chair are elected by the PhD Curricular Committee from among its academic¹ members.

The PhD Curricular Committee approves the PhD Advisory Committee for all PhD Candidates and makes recommendations with regard to the admission of each PhD Candidate.

The PhD Curricular Committee is the point of contact and acts as a moderator for any issues regarding the course of studies for individual PhD Candidates.

The PhD Curricular Committee monitors the interim evaluations of each PhD Candidate and may recommend changes to the PhD research project (see 6.4.1.)

The PhD Curricular Committee approves the PhD thesis on the basis of the reviewers' reports (see 8.2.) and recommends admission of the candidate to the PhD Defence.

6.3. PhD Advisory Committee

The PhD Candidate and the research project are supervised by two PhD Advisors who form the PhD Advisory Committee. The second advisor is chosen by the primary advisor in agreement with the PhD Candidate. The first and second advisors must have different institutional affiliations. The second advisor has to agree to the PhD research project prior to its submission. The PhD Advisory Committee supervises the progress of the PhD Candidate and the project at regular intervals (at a minimum this includes interim evaluations at the end of the first and second years). Supervisory responsibilities are fulfilled in accordance with Good Scientific Practice. The primary advisor is obliged to provide laboratory and office space, as well as financial support as required by the project. (for further details see PhD Guidelines)

Additional PhD Advisors may be appointed.

¹ Academic members are members of the PhD Curricular Committee according to the Vetmeduni Vienna document "Satzungsteil 5 §1 Lit2(1+2)" making decisions with simple majority.

6.4. PhD Candidate

In addition to UG 2002 §59 the following rights and obligations apply to PhD Candidates (for details refer to PhD Guidelines)

- The PhD Candidate commits herself/himself to the rules of Good Scientific Practice (i.e.: adherence to the Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice of the Vetmeduni Vienna).
- All data generated during the PhD project are the property of the institution where the project is performed and must be shared and archived according to the Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice and the advice of the primary advisor.

6.4.1. Interim evaluation

The first-year evaluation by the PhD Advisory Committee of both the PhD Candidate and the progress of the PhD research project is an important quality control element. Based on the progress report and performance of the PhD Candidate, the PhD Advisory Committee has to decide whether the candidate has the potential to successfully complete the PhD study.

A positive evaluation – which must be unanimous – results in the extension of the PhD Supervision Agreement. In cases where the agreement is to be terminated, the PhD Advisory Committee informs the PhD Curricular Committee. The PhD Curricular Committee, in consultation with the Vice Rector for Study Affairs, makes the final decision regarding termination of the PhD Supervision Agreement

Upon request of the PhD Candidate, a transfer to the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Curriculum of the Vetmeduni Vienna may be allowed in accordance with University regulations (cf. Curriculum Doktoratsstudium Veterinärmedizin).

7. Training

The PhD Curriculum at the Vetmeduni Vienna is focused on training by research (PhD research project) and includes a curriculum of courses and seminars equivalent to 23 ECTS over three years.

The training of PhD Candidates is designed to endow students with scientific training, technical skills and a set of complementary skills for scientific career development.

The training provided is interdisciplinary in nature with a focus on scientific rigor and the ability to work in a team of scientists with backgrounds in different research areas.

7.1. Course Work

Based on recommendations of the PhD Advisory Committee, the PhD Candidate is required to take courses amounting to the equivalent of 23 ECTS. These courses may be taken at the Vetmeduni Vienna or at other universities.

The composition of the coursework has to follow the PhD Guidelines in structure and extent.

Details specific to the coursework are part of the PhD Supervision Agreement and may be adapted within the framework of the interim evaluations.

Successful completion of the coursework is a prerequisite for admittance to the PhD Defence.

7.2. Teaching

PhD Candidates are required to assist in teaching courses for undergraduate students at the Vetmeduni Vienna. Preference is given to courses related to the topic of the PhD Candidate's research project. Teaching activities comprise an equivalent of 2 ECTS credits.

7.3. PhD research project

The PhD research project comprises an equivalent of 155 ECTS and is guided by the advisor(s) according to the arrangements specified in the PhD Supervision Agreement. Regular progress reports to the PhD Advisory Committee are also part of the PhD Supervision Agreement.

8. PhD Thesis

8.1. General Remarks

PhD Candidates have to be familiar with scientific publications in their research field. Together with their advisors they select and apply adequate methods to perform their research. PhD Candidates are required to provide continuous documentation of their activities and progress.

A cumulative thesis must be submitted as specified below:

- Research papers must be thematically related and must be based on the PhD research project.
- At least two research publications must have been accepted for publication by internationally recognized peer-reviewed scientific journals.
- At least one publication accepted by a scientific journal must list the PhD Candidate as first author.
- It is preferable for publications to be published in highly ranked journals in the respective field (Z1=top tertile of ISI-listed journals in respective subject category).
- Formal criteria, exemptions and details are specified in the PhD Guidelines.
- Any exemption requires approval of the PhD Curricular Committee.

8.2. Assessment of the PhD Thesis

With the consent of the PhD Advisors, the PhD Thesis is submitted to the Vice Rector for Study Affairs (VizekanzlerIn für Lehre or VRL) according to the PhD Guidelines. The review of the primary PhD Advisor has to be submitted together with the PhD thesis. The further review process is coordinated by the VRL, who will ask the secondary PhD Advisor for a review of the thesis. In addition, at least one additional external review (based on a list of recommended reviewers provided by the PhD Advisors) must be provided. All reviewers are required to provide an individual concluding assessment and a final grade (1-5).

The PhD Curricular Committee approves the reviewers' reports and gives a recommendation to the Vice Rector for Study Affairs as to whether the PhD Candidate may be admitted to the PhD Defence.

9. PhD Defence

9.1. Prerequisites for admission

To apply for admittance to the defence, the following documents must be provided:

- Proof of successful completion of the required courses and seminars (see PhD Guidelines)
- Reviews and grading of the PhD Thesis approved by the PhD Curricular Committee

9.2. Regulation of the examination

The Vice Rector for Study Affairs appoints an Examination Board to conduct the PhD Defence and coordinates the time and location of the defence.

The Examination Board comprises a chair person (VRL or a deputy) and two qualified examiners, preferably two representatives of the PhD Advisory Committee.

The PhD Defence is the last step required for the PhD and is intended to present the PhD Candidate's research activities to the public and demonstrate her/his ability to present, discuss and defend scientific results.

The PhD Defence is conducted by the Examination Board and consists of a public presentation of the research project followed by a scientific discussion with the Examination Board and the audience.

The PhD presentation is held in English and lasts for at least 30 minutes. The ensuing discussion with the Examination Board should last for at least 15 minutes. A public discussion may follow. The entire PhD Defence should not last longer than 75 minutes.

A final grade for the defence is determined by the Examination Board as defined in the Statutes of the Vetmeduni Vienna (Satzung der Veterinärmedizinischen Universität Wien §13).

9.2.1. Outcome of the examination

A PhD defence protocol is prepared which is signed by all members of the Examination Board. It's subsequently submitted to the PhD Curricular Committee via the "Studienabteilung" (Vetmeduni Vienna student's administration office), notifying the PhD Curricular Committee members about the outcome of the examination.

If the PhD Candidate fails the examination, three further attempts are possible. In case of repeated failure to pass the examination, it will be concluded that the PhD Candidate has failed the PhD Examination.

9.3. Grading and formal requirements

9.3.1. Components of the grading system:

- PhD Thesis (70 %)
- PhD Defence (30 %)
- Both parts have to be evaluated positively.

The final grade of the PhD will be calculated as follows:

PhD Thesis: The individual grades of the three (3) reviewers are summarized and divided by 3. Results ending in a final digit above 5 are rounded up, otherwise (5 or below) they are rounded down. (This is grade **R**.)

PhD Defence: In general the Examination Board jointly decides on a grade to be awarded. If not, a grade is determined according to the Statutes §16(8). (This is grade **E**.)

The final/overall grade **G** is calculated as follows: **$G = R \cdot 0.70 + E \cdot 0.30$**

The final grade G is rounded up if its final digit is above 5, otherwise (5 or below) it is rounded down.

10. Commencement

The PhD Curriculum is based on UG 2002 §54 (2).

Coming into force 01.10.2014.

Students who started their PhD studies at Vetmeduni Vienna before the entry into force of the current curriculum are entitled to continue and complete their studies according to the version of the curriculum published in the *Mitteilungsblatt* (University Gazette/Notification Bulletin) of the Vetmeduni Vienna on 25.3.2010.

Independent of this regulation, students who started their PhD studies before the entry into force of the current curriculum are entitled to opt for a change to the new curriculum voluntarily at any time.