

EURODOC survey on the Doctorate¹ structure across Europe (version February 2018)
prepared by the EURODOC Doctoral Training Working Group

Czech Republic

I. General information and application procedure

Which institutions award doctoral degrees?

Higher education institutions (HEIs) provide accredited doctoral degree programmes (based on Government regulation for accreditation²). Doctorates may also be carried out in cooperation with foreign HEIs that offer doctoral degree programmes with related contents. According to the law (the Higher Education Act³) the doctorate is aimed at scientific research and independent creative activities in the area of research or development, or independent theoretical and creative activities in the area of the fine arts.

What forms of doctorate attendance are available?

Doctorates can be performed in a full-time or a part-time⁴ form. Doctoral candidates in full-time form participate in a scientific work and also pedagogical work of given hours a week (based on institutional regulations). While those in part-time form do not have to go to school nor participate in pedagogical work.

What is the formal length of time foreseen for completing a doctorate?

The standard length of doctorate (in full-time form) is 3 or 4 years according to law³. It depends on the accreditation of given doctoral degree programmes. Doctoral candidates who fail to complete their doctorate in the standard length can be transferred to part-time (combined) form.

Doctoral candidates have a right to discontinue their doctorate in case of pregnancy, childbirth, or parenthood (for the recognized period of parenthood). Doctoral candidates lose their student status during that period.

The maximum length for a doctorate can be set by institutional regulations and usually varies between 7 to 9 years. The length of the break for a recognized period of parenthood is excluded from the length of the doctorate.

¹ **Doctorate** is understood as the institutional frameworks and processes geared towards the completion of a doctoral degree.

²<https://www.nauvs.cz/attachments/article/132/Government%20Regulation%20No.%20274-2016%20Coll.%20on%20standards%20for%20accreditation%20in%20higher%20education.pdf>

³ <http://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/tertiary-education/the-higher-education-act?lang=2>

⁴ **Part-time form** in the Czech Republic is called distance or combined form (as a combination of full-and part-time).

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What is the status of the doctoral candidates⁵?

All doctoral candidates enrolled in doctoral programmes are officially students. They can be also employed having both statuses at the same time. For example, if doctoral candidates are additionally funded through research grant(s) or are in a part-time form having a work contract elsewhere.

What are the social benefits for doctoral candidates with student status?

Doctoral candidates in full-time receive a scholarship. Doctoral candidates (as they are students) under 26 years get a discount on public transport (approx. 40-50 %). The health insurance of doctoral candidates is paid by the state (if they are citizens of the Czech Republic). Their parents can also apply for another “discount on a child” or receive social benefits.

Doctoral candidates older than 26 years, who are enrolled for the first time in full-time form of the doctorate (if they are not self-employed or employed) get their health insurance paid by the state. If doctoral candidates are employed they can apply for a discount from income tax (applies for doctoral candidates till 28 years old). If they do not choose to voluntarily pay sickness insurance, doctoral candidates have no right to receive any support in case of sickness. They also do not get any maternity leave, because the scholarship is not taxed, time spend for doctorate also does not count into assessed basis for pension insurance. Other discounts related to the possession of student cards (such as ISIC, Alive, IYTC etc.) do apply.

How are doctoral candidates financially supported?

All HEIs receive 5400 Euro/year (approximately 450 Euro/month) from the government⁶ per doctoral candidate studying in the full-time form and in the standard length of their doctorate (3-4 years). However, the scholarships which doctoral candidates receive can differ from HEI to HEI or from faculty to faculty at the same institution. Because it is up to the autonomy of HEI how will this money be distributed. Doctoral candidates can also receive scholarship from specific internal grants (awarded to student projects) or other grants supported by other institutions. Doctoral candidates at some institutions (or faculties) can get higher scholarship for every duty completed (presentation, publishing, pedagogical work etc.) They can also receive salary, if they are employed by the HEI. In addition, after meeting specific criteria, they can receive accommodation scholarship, special scholarship (for exceptional results) or social scholarship.

Doctoral candidates in part-time form do not receive the basic scholarship, however they can be funded through other research grants.

Studying a doctorate in public university in the Czech language is by law³ free for doctoral candidates of any nationality. However, doctoral programmes accredited for foreign languages (carried out in the English) may require tuition fee, which is paid for an academic year.

⁵ **Doctoral candidate** is a person enrolled in a doctorate.

⁶ In this case Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic.

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What are the admission requirements for a doctorate?

Admission to a doctorate (Doctoral degree programme) is conditional on the completion of a Master's degree programme; in addition, doctoral candidates in the area of fine arts must hold an academic degree. HEIs and faculties are free to specify additional requirements for admission, that can be related to specific knowledge, abilities, talent or results.

Usually, admission into doctorate is based on submission of Master diploma in a field relevant to your proposed research topic. All applicants are required to submit their application form with a non refundable application fee to the respective faculty. Additional specific entry requirements are determined, in accordance with the law³, by the dean of the faculty. Requirements may differ from HEIs. In general, doctoral candidates need several documents apart from application form, such as Master diploma with diploma supplement, curriculum vitae and a list of publications, motivational letter, health certificate, language certificate level B2 if enrolling into English programme and a Czech language certificate level B2 in case of foreign students wanting to study in Czech, birth certificate and a copy of passport.

Then, there is an entrance exam in the form of an interview (or combination of written and oral exam; practical exam may be required as well) to assess the professional abilities of the candidate and the qualification for independent research work. Interview is usually held in English.

The decision on admission to a doctorate provided by a faculty is made by the Dean of the faculty, while for a doctorate provided by a HEI, the decision is made by the Rector.

II. Progression

How is a doctorate organized in your country?

The doctorate is constituted of courses of lectures, seminars, self-study, and in particular solution of the assigned research project (the dissertation thesis). It is organised according to an individual study plan under the supervision of a supervisor and possibly also with the participation of a consultant. The individual study plan in particular includes a list of study obligations, scientific, research or other creative obligations and planned or recommended foreign stays or other research internships or pedagogical activities.

Doctoral candidates who are admitted to the doctorate have to choose compulsory courses related to their thesis subject. These courses cannot not be identical with the ones already taken in the Bachelor's or in the Master's degree programme. The number of compulsory courses depends on the internal regulations of each HEI. An examination date for a subject is set upon agreement with the doctoral candidate.

Once a doctoral candidate passes all exams of the chosen courses (some universities may require the completion of additional training or coursework component). The study part of the doctorate is completed by a public State Doctoral Examination (oral) which takes place in front of an examination committee and the results are also public. The right to examine at the State Doctoral Examination is reserved for professors, associate professors and

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specialists approved by the relevant Scientific, Artistic, or Academic Board. The doctorate is completed by a public defense of the dissertation. Results of the State examinations and the defense are public.

How is doctoral supervision provided?

Doctoral studies are individual, provided under the direction of one supervisor (apprenticeship model) and there is also a possibility to have a consultant (expert in the field of the research topic area). Only associate professors and professors and possibly other experts with scientific academic degree approved by relevant Scientific Board or Artistic Board can work as supervisors of students in the Doctoral degree programme; experts having required artistic erudition can also work as supervisors of doctoral candidates.

The supervisor and the consultant for the given student are appointed and removed by the Dean (or rector in case of the doctorate being accredited under the university) following a proposal of the doctoral degree programme board. The board consists of professors and representatives of the engaged workplaces and external renowned experts in the relevant field. The Chair of a common doctoral degree programme board is a guarantor of a doctoral degree programme.

In particular, the doctoral degree programme boards:

- suggest the programme of lectures, courses and other forms of study in the given study programme;
- suggest that the dean of the respective faculty appoints the supervisors;
- suggest the composition of the entrance procedure boards to be approved by the dean;
- judge and approve the framework study plans (curricula) for students in doctoral study programmes;
- provide the requirements for State Doctoral Examinations;
- suggest that the dean appoints the members of boards for State Doctoral Examinations;
- suggest that the dean appoints the members of boards for defences of dissertation theses;
- suggest that the dean appoints the examiners of dissertation theses;
- observe and evaluate the progress of studies in particular doctoral candidates and give suggestions concerning changes in the amount of scholarships;
- settle any possible disputes between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor.

What are the main obligations of doctoral candidates?

Doctoral candidates have the right to propose a topic for their doctoral thesis and they have the following obligations:

- to conduct the experiments/research as well as to analyse the obtained results; according to the plan established at the beginning of the doctorate;
- to attend and participate in the courses, which are planned in the framework of doctoral programme;
- to make semesterial or annual reports on results of the research project;

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- get their work published in peer-reviewed journals and present it in conferences;
- full-time doctoral candidates have to work for hours per week;

Foreigners are obliged to have a residence permit or long-term visa and a health insurance valid in the Czech Republic throughout the entire period of their doctorates.

Is any mobility compulsory?

No internships are compulsory yet they are highly advisable for self development.

How are courses in transferable skills provided?

There can be some courses organized by the HEI and it is up to the doctoral candidate whether he or she wants to attend them.

How is the progress of the doctoral candidate evaluated?

In some institutions doctoral candidates prepare a semester and/or annual reports on results of the research project and pedagogical responsibilities. These reports can include information about the achieved results according to the project schedule, amount of publications, participation in conferences, congresses, courses, seminars, obtained awards, patents and grants, teaching hours.

Is it possible for doctoral candidates to change supervisor(s)?

It is possible for serious reasons, but it is not a usual practice. After a discussion with both supervisors an application has to be filled in the Dean's office. Both supervisors, head of the department and the dean have to sign the form. Usually the topic of the thesis has to be changed. Another application has to be filled in and signed by the dean and the doctoral degree programme board.

Are supervisors required to have training in order to supervise doctoral candidates?

There is no training the supervisors have to attend.

III. Defence procedure

What requirements should be met to receive acceptance to enter the defence procedure?

Doctoral candidates must pass the subject exams and then the State Doctoral Examination, present their work in journals and in conferences and have their thesis submitted.

What documents are required to start the defence procedure?

Required documents are:

- completed Application for permission to defend the dissertation with the statements of the chairpersons of the relevant branch council and the doctoral study programme;
- hard copies and an electronic version of the dissertation prepared according to the specific requirements;
- supervisor's recommendation and other relevant person's opinion/standpoint,
- structured CV;

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- report of passed course exams;
- list of all doctoral candidate's publications.

What is the defence procedure?

Doctoral theses that have been submitted by candidates for defence must also be made available to the public at least five days before the defence at a place designated for this purpose in the internal regulations of the HEI, and where this is not the case, in the department or other place at the HEI where the defence of the thesis will be taking place.

The defence of doctoral dissertation can be done in Czech, Slovak or English language and it is a public event and open to all, except cases when the doctoral thesis is dealing with international security, military, and/or industrial secrets.

The doctoral candidate presents the results of the doctoral thesis to the defence committee usually via a PowerPoint presentation. Following are the statements of the opponents and the extended debate between the doctoral candidate, opponents, other members of the committee and other participants in the defense. The doctoral degree is awarded if there is a quorum of the committee of the institution and more than a half of them vote positively.

HEIs are obliged to make doctoral theses (that have been defended at their institutions, including the readers' reports and the document on the course of the defence and the results of the defence) public. A HEI can delay the publication of doctoral theses or their parts for the duration of the barrier to publishing, but only for three years. Information about the delay together with the reasons must be published in the same place doctoral theses. After the defence of the doctoral thesis which is to be published with delay in compliance with the first Sentence, the HEI will send one copy to the Ministry to be stored, without undue delay.

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