

Operational Regulations of the Doctoral School of Experimental and Preventive Medicine at the University of Szeged

December 10, 2024

These Regulations supplement the provisions of Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education; Government Decree 387/2012 (XII. 19.) on Doctoral Schools, the Order of Doctoral Procedures, and Habilitation; as well as the Regulations Governing the Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees at the University of Szeged, effective as of April 29, 2024.

The Doctoral School of Experimental and Preventive Medicine (hereinafter referred to as the Doctoral School or KIMODI) is a functional educational unit of the Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School of the University of Szeged. Operating with the approval of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, the Doctoral School offers doctoral training intended to lead to the attainment of PhD degrees in the field of theoretical medicine.

These Regulations have been prepared in compliance with the applicable laws and other legal provisions, the Resolution on the Establishment and Operation of Doctoral Schools contained in Annex 4 to the Organizational and Operational Regulations of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee; and the Doctoral Regulations of the University of Szeged (hereinafter referred to as the UDR). This document primarily outlines regulations that provide additional detail on specific matters within the context of the aforementioned provisions. For any situations not addressed by these regulations, the provisions of the UDR shall apply.

Contact details for the Doctoral School of Experimental and Preventive Medicine (KIMODI):

SZTE, SZAOK, Orvosi Genetikai Intézet
Kísérletes- és Megelőző Orvostudományi Doktori Iskola

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Introduction

These Regulations have been formulated with due consideration of the following superordinate legal requirements and regulatory documents:

- Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education (Nftv), including its amendments effective as of September 1, 2016
- Government Decree 387/2012 (XII. 19.) on Doctoral schools, the Order of Doctoral Procedures, and Habilitation
- Regulations Governing the Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees at the University of Szeged, dated April 29, 2024

1. Head of the Doctoral School

- The Head of the Doctoral School shall be appointed in the manner and for the term specified in the University Doctoral Regulations.
- Current Head: Prof. Dr. Márta Széll, Full Professor and Department Head
- Deputy Head: Prof. Dr. Zoltán Rakonczay, Jr.

2. Programs of the Doctoral School and program directors

2.1 Doctoral Program in Neuroscience

- Director: Prof. Dr. Gábor Jancsó, professor emeritus, SZTE SZAOK, Department of Anatomy, Histology, and Embryology

2.2 Doctoral Program in the Regulation, Measurement, and Analysis of Life Processes

- Director: Prof. Dr. Ferenc Bari, professor emeritus, SZTE SZAOK-TTIK, Institute of Medical Physics and Medical Informatics

2.3 Doctoral Program in Neuroendocrinology

- Director: Dr. Habil. Zsolt Bagosi, associate professor, SZTE SZAOK, Institute of Pathophysiology

2.4 Doctoral Program in Gastroenterology

- Director: Prof. Dr. László Czakó, full professor, SZTE SZAOK, Department of Internal Medicine

2.5 Doctoral Program in Medical Genetics and Genomics

- Director: Prof. Dr. Márta Széll, full professor, SZTE SZAOK, Institute of Medical Genetics

2.6 Doctoral Program in Preventive Medicine

- Director: Prof. Dr. Edit Paulik, full professor, SZTE SZAOK, Department of Public Health

2.7 Doctoral Program in Medical Microbiology and Antimicrobial Immunity

- Director: Prof. Dr. Katalin Burián, full professor, SZTE SZAOK, Department of Medical Microbiology, Educational and Research Center

3. Organizational structure and governing body of the Doctoral School of Experimental and Preventive Medicine

3.1 The work of KIMODI is coordinated and overseen by the Council of the Doctoral School (hereinafter referred to as the DC). Voting rights within the DC are held by the following members:

- The Head of KIMODI, who also serves as Chair of the DC and as a program director
- The Deputy Head of KIMODI
- The remaining program directors
- Two PhD student representatives
- One member with consultative rights, serving as the administrator of KIMODI

The term of office for the elected members of the KIMODI DC is three years. In the event of absence, any voting member of the DC may designate a substitute with voting rights.

3.2 The KIMODI DC convenes as needed but meets a minimum of twice per semester. Minutes are recorded for each meeting.

3.3 The decisions of the KIMODI DC are made by majority vote. In the event of a split vote, the Chair shall have the casting vote. Exceptions to this rule apply in respect of the voting procedures related to the conferment of degrees; for further details, please refer to the section on the rules governing the degree conferment procedure. For the KIMODI DC, quorum requirements are met when a majority of voting members participate.

3.4 Voting decisions of the KIMODI DC on non-personal matters are typically conducted by open ballot; however, in justified cases, any member may request a secret ballot, or the Chair may order one.

3.5 In justified cases, the KIMODI DC may render decisions electronically (via email), upon the proposal of the Head of the DC.

3.6 Materials related to agenda items requiring a decision at KIMODI DC meetings shall be made available to members at least two working days prior to the meeting; this may be done electronically. The date of the meeting and the agenda shall be communicated to members no later than five working days in advance.

3.7 The KIMODI DC shall make decisions on the following matters related to KIMODI:

- Enrollment of supervisors

- Approval of topics offered to doctoral students
- Determination of subjects for each semester of doctoral training
- Approval of the annual reports submitted by doctoral students participating in university-organized training programs
- Approval of study trips
- Approval of students' additional employment relationships
- Determination of students' teaching responsibilities, in agreement with the leadership of the relevant institute/department
- Management of KIMODI's revenues in accordance with University regulations

3.8 The KIMODI DC shall make recommendations on the following matters related to KIMODI:

- Commencement of doctoral degree procedures
- Commencement of the public phase of doctoral degree procedures
- Determination of the subjects to be included in the comprehensive examination
- Appointment of the members to the comprehensive examination boards and the public defense boards
- Approvals for the postponement of studies
- Awarding of doctoral degrees
- Appointment of members to admission boards
- Election of new core members
- Establishment of KIMODI's internal organization structure
- Utilization of the admission quota allocated to the Doctoral School by the Faculty

3.9 The administrative affairs of KIMODI shall be managed by the KIMODI DC administrator, under the supervision of the Head of KIMODI or their designated deputy. The responsibilities overseen by the administrator (Secretary) include:

- Compilation and administration of the list of doctoral research topics
- Preparatory administration of materials required for decisions by the KIMODI DC
- Compilation of the list of courses scheduled for a given semester
- Collection and evaluation of students' annual reports
- Preparation of materials necessary for KIMODI DC decisions
- Administrative management of KIMODI data on the Hungarian Doctoral Council website (www.doktori.hu)
- Web administration for the Doctoral School's website
- Preparatory administration for Doctoral School matters requiring decisions at Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC) meetings
- Preparation of statistical reports
- Compilation of quality assurance reports
- Completion of official questionnaires regarding the operations of KIMODI
- Preparation of reports requested from Stipendium Hungaricum (SH) students
- Organization of student forums and the compilation of necessary materials
- Administration of student feedback
- Oversight of follow-up processes related to students

- 3.10** The procedures for handling student complaints, appeals, and legal remedies are as follows: Documenting student complaints and inquiries is the responsibility of the KIMODI administrator, who refers the cases to the Head of KIMODI, who in turn presents them to the KIMODI DC. Appeals against decisions are reviewed through a three-tiered process: beginning with the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC), followed by the University Doctoral Council (UDC), and concluding with the Rector. In matters affecting student status, the KIMODI DC serves as the initial decision-making body, with the aforementioned avenues for appeal remaining available.

4. The studies of doctoral students

- 4.1** Students may submit applications for topics published on the KIMODI website, subject to prior consultation with their supervisors.
- 4.2** Supervisors are appointed by the KIMODI DC, and all advertised topics are subject to its approval. Only instructors holding a doctoral degree may serve as supervisors, provided they have a track record of scientific achievements that exceeds the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree and that the necessary infrastructural and financial conditions for conducting the research are ensured.
- 4.3** Applicants are required to participate in an oral admission interview. The Doctoral School offers admission opportunities three times a year. A maximum of 100 points may be awarded based on the interview, previous academic achievements, degree qualifications, and language examination certificates. These scores are used by the Admission Board to establish the admission ranking. Applicants must hold at least an intermediate-level English language examination certificate at the time of application. However, in the case of outstanding candidates, an extension may be granted for submitting the certificate until the assessment procedure begins. Based on the quotas available to KIMODI, the KIMODI DC and the Admission Board put forward candidates eligible for state-funded scholarships, while other applicants who meet the minimum requirements may be admitted as tuition-paying students.
- 4.4** Students pursue their studies in accordance with the credit system established and regularly reviewed by the KIMODI DC (see Appendix 1). During the first two weeks of each semester, students must register for their courses through the Neptun system. At the end of the semester, they retrieve their course completion forms from Neptun and have them signed by their supervisors and the instructors of the courses they attended. The research progress report, submitted at the end of each academic year (after every second semester), and the comprehensive examination course report, submitted at the end of the second academic year, must be validated by the signature of the Head of the Doctoral School.
- 4.5** The Doctoral School requires that students in both the full-time and individual training programs register in the Hungarian Science Bibliography (MTMT2) database upon entry, specifying their respective institutes and the Doctoral School. At least one of their publications must be affiliated with the Doctoral School. In addition, host institutions are required to request an official university or institute email address for full-time students

within one month of enrolment, and students must provide this address to the Doctoral School. All subsequent correspondence with the Doctoral School will be conducted through this email address.

- 4.6** Students' supervisors are responsible for overseeing their academic progress and studies, including signing the Course Completion Forms for courses related to research, teaching, and publication activities. To streamline administrative processes for students in the individual training program, the validation of semesters one through four should take place when they apply for the certificate of completion of studies. Signatures confirming the completion of individual courses must be recorded in a temporary course completion record book. However, if students submit their application for the certificate of completion of studies during the same semester in which they are enrolled, they are exempt from maintaining the course completion record book.
- 4.7** As a prerequisite for completing the training and research phase of studies and for beginning the research and dissertation phase, full-time students must pass a comprehensive examination, which assesses both academic preparedness and research progress. The examination consists of two main parts: a theoretical part and a dissertation part. The theoretical part evaluates the candidate's knowledge in two medical subjects, typically selected from the three compulsory examination subjects linked to the program. In cases where the research area significantly diverges from these core subjects, two specific medical or health sciences subjects may be designated by the program director and the Head of the Doctoral School. The dissertation part involves the candidate presenting their scientific progress and outlining their research plans. This is done in the form of a PowerPoint presentation (10–15 slides) that demonstrates familiarity with the relevant literature, summarizes research results achieved to date, and sets out a timeline for completing the dissertation and publishing the results during the second phase of doctoral training. The comprehensive examination is evaluated on a two-tiered scale – pass or fail – as defined in the University Doctoral Regulations on Comprehensive Examinations. Full-time students in the KIMODI program do not receive credits for this examination. However, for students in the individual training program, 160 credits will be recorded in the Temporary Completion Record Book upon successful completion of the examination and later entered into the Neptun system, confirmed by the signature of the Head of the Doctoral School. A failed comprehensive examination may be retaken once within the same examination period.
- 4.8** Students in the individual training program enter the Doctoral School by completing the comprehensive examination, which also serves as their entrance examination. A prerequisite for this is that they must already have advanced research work in progress. They prepare independently for the designated examination areas, using the recommended literature and list of topics provided in advance. In accordance with the Doctoral Regulations, they may take the entrance examination up to three times a year, during the summer, winter, and supplementary application periods. Admission requests can be submitted through the Modulo system during the following periods: April 15 – May 15, December 1 – December 31, and August 1 – August 20.

- 4.9** Doctoral studies for both full-time PhD students and those in individual training conclude with the issuance of the completion of studies certificate. Full-time students typically obtain this certificate after eight semesters, at the end of their study period. As a general rule, students must obtain the certificate within two years of passing the comprehensive examination. By this time, they must have accumulated a minimum of 240 credits from mandatory and elective subjects, as verified by the grades and signatures recorded in their Course Completion Record Book. Students who wish to obtain their completion of studies certificate earlier than the two-year timeframe must submit a written request to both the Doctoral School and the PhD Secretariat. This request is one of the prerequisites for the commencement of the assessment procedure.
- 4.10** If a student is unable to commence the assessment procedure within three years of passing the comprehensive examination, as stipulated in the University's regulations, they may submit a request for an extension to KIMODI based on extenuating circumstances. The request is reviewed by the Head of the Doctoral School in consultation with the relevant program director and the student's supervisor – and may either be supported or rejected. Supported requests are forwarded to the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC) for approval. An extension for commencing the assessment procedure may be granted once, for a period of six months or up to a maximum of one year. Extensions may only be requested in justified cases, such as prolonged illness, childbirth, or other circumstances beyond the student's control.

5. Regulations governing the evaluation procedure

- 5.1** The PhD degree may be obtained through the doctoral procedure by both students in the organized training and individuals preparing independently. The regulations governing the procedure are outlined in the University Doctoral Regulations, and in more detail, in the "Regulations Concerning the PhD Assessment Procedure at the Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School, 2024–25"
- 5.2** To obtain a PhD degree, the candidate must first acquire their completion of studies certificate and subsequently submit a doctoral dissertation. A prerequisite for this submission is a request for verification of the D (disciplinary) and Q (quality) classification of the candidate's publications from the University of Szeged Library. This applies only to published works that form the basis of the PhD dissertation. Prior to the public defense, the dissertation must undergo plagiarism screening. Based on the results, the candidate's supervisor must issue a declaration of acceptance; only then may the dissertation be uploaded to the SZTE Repository. In addition to the requirements set forth in the University Doctoral Regulations (UDR), the Doctoral Schools of the Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School have established further requirements, which also apply to KIMODI students.

Conditions for advancing to the defense procedure

Independent scientific work

- One D1 publication, with no additional publications required
(However, none of the co-authors may use the same article to fulfill their own requirements.)

- One D1 publication that is also used by another doctoral candidate, plus one additional publication of any classification, in English, which can be co-authored
- One Q1 publication, plus one additional publication of any classification, in English, which may be co-authored
- If the candidate has not published a Q1 article, then two Q2 articles (one first-authored and one second-authored) are also considered acceptable.
- If the candidate has published only one Q2 publication, then they must submit at least two additional publications of any classification, in English, which may be co-authored.
- If the candidate's first-authored publication is classified as Q3, then three additional publications of any classification in English are required, which may be co-authored

Declaration of co-authorship

If the referenced publications have co-authors, the dissertation must include a section in which the co-authors (or the first author, if this is not the doctoral candidate) provide a statement referring to the specific thesis point and publication. This statement must indicate which of the jointly published results included in the summary booklet and the dissertation show the candidate's critical contribution. The co-authors must also declare that these results have not been used to obtain an academic degree in the past and will not be used for such purposes in the future. The declaration must be signed by the co-authors (or by the first author or corresponding author). The procedure to be followed in the case of foreign or deceased co-authors is regulated by the Councils of the respective Doctoral Schools. The declaration must also be included in the summary booklet.

Foreign language skills

The Doctoral Council of Medicine and Pharmacy at the University of Szeged designates English as the required foreign language, as it is the primary scientific language of the discipline. Accordingly, candidates must possess at least a state-recognized, intermediate-level (B2), comprehensive English language examination certificate by the time they commence the assessment procedure. The certificate must be submitted to both the Doctoral School and the PhD Secretariat by this deadline. In line with the position statement of the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC), KIMODI does not require a second foreign language examination certificate for the assessment procedure. For foreign citizens who are not native Hungarian speakers, their native language may be accepted as fulfilling the foreign language requirement, provided that the language criteria set by the respective doctoral school are met. In such cases, Hungarian is also considered a foreign language.

Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation must be written in English. Its total length must not exceed 50 pages, including all figures, tables, and charts; the bibliography is excluded from this page count. The dissertation must be formatted on A4-sized paper, using Times New Roman font, 12-point size, with 1.5 line spacing, standard margins, and must be printed on one side of the page only. The final version must be submitted in one leather-bound hard copy and in electronic format. In addition, a summary booklet of approximately 10–15 pages must be submitted in A5 size, in PDF format (printing is not required). The summary must be prepared in both English and Hungarian. For international students, submission in English only is sufficient. For detailed specifications, please refer to the document titled “*Formal Requirements Regarding the PhD Dissertation and Summary Booklet at the Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School (2024)*.”

5.3. Assessment procedure

- 5.3.1** The KIMODI DC does not require students to take part in a pre-defense session at their department/institute.
- 5.3.2** The assessment procedure may only begin after the candidate has fulfilled all required conditions, including the submission of necessary publications, proof of language proficiency, and successful completion of the plagiarism screening. Once these requirements have been met, the submission of the dissertation to the official assessors may not be refused.
- 5.3.3** The procedure is initiated by completing the document titled “*Initiation of the Assessment Procedure*,” which must be submitted – together with the required appendices – via email to both the KIMODI Secretariat and the PhD Secretariat simultaneously. Additionally, an Excel spreadsheet listing the members of the Assessment Board must be sent to the Administrator of the Doctoral School, along with the document “*Initiation of the Assessment Procedure – Assessment Board*.” A one-time degree procedure fee applies to tuition-paying students who are preparing independently: HUF 110,000 for employees of the University of Szeged and HUF 150,000 for external candidates (for details, see *Regulations Concerning the PhD Assessment Procedure at the Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School, 2024–25*).
- 5.3.4** The board assessing the doctoral dissertation (work) consists of five members: a chairperson, two official assessors (one of whom must be an external expert), and two additional members (one of whom is also an external expert). Only individuals holding an academic degree may serve on the board. One of the internal members also performs secretarial duties. The chairperson must be a full professor, professor emeritus of the university, or a university-affiliated researcher or instructor holding the title of Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The assessment board is finalized by the Head of the Doctoral School on behalf of the KIMODI DC, based on the joint proposal of the dissertation supervisor and the program leader, and is officially appointed by the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC). Any individual who cannot reasonably be expected to provide an objective evaluation may not serve as an official assessor or board member.

In addition, the candidate must not have co-authored any publications with any member of the board.

- 5.3.5** The assessment procedure is reviewed and approved at the subsequent meeting of the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC), based on the collected and submitted mandatory documents. Students and their supervisors are officially notified of the decision by the PhD Secretariat.
- 5.3.6** The PhD Secretariat officially invites the two assessors to review the dissertation by sending them the SZTE Repository link, the plagiarism declaration, and the IF and D-Q certification documents. Consequently, the candidate must upload their dissertation – along with the summary booklet – to the SZTE Repository in advance. The date of uploading to the SZTE Repository is considered the official submission date of the dissertation. In accordance with the University's Doctoral Regulations and the Organizational Regulations of KIMODI, this submission must take place within three years of the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC) resolution that validated the comprehensive examination.
- 5.3.7** The assessors are given a period of two months, within the teaching period of the semester, to prepare their evaluations. If the assessments are completed earlier, it is not necessary to observe the full two-month period. The candidate receives the official questions posed by the assessors from the PhD Secretariat. In accordance with Government Decree 387/2012 (XII. 19.), *“the candidate will receive the reviews in advance and will respond to them in writing before the defense, and orally during the defense, in the public debate.”* The defense date may be scheduled once two positive assessments have been received; the availability of the candidate's responses is not a prerequisite for announcing the defense. The public defense must take place within two months, during the teaching period of the semester.

The invitation to the defense is prepared by the PhD Secretariat and, following approval by both the candidate and the supervisor, the defense is announced through two official channels: on the website of the Hungarian Doctoral Council (doktori.hu) by the KIMODI administrator, and in the SZAOK Faculty Newsletter by the defense coordinator. The members of the assessment board and the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC) are notified of the defense via email. One week before the defense, the candidate is required to submit written responses to both assessors, as well as a narrative-style CV written in the third person, to the PhD Secretariat. The latter is read aloud by the Secretary during the examination.

- 5.3.8** The debate may only be held in the presence of the chairperson, at least one of the official assessors, and a minimum of four members of the assessment board in total. External members of the board may participate via videoconferencing platforms if necessary. In extraordinary circumstances, and based on individual assessment, the KIMODI Doctoral Council (DC) may approve that the debate be conducted partially or entirely online. The debate cannot be held if one of the assessments is negative and the assessor who issued it is not present. In such cases, the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC) will schedule a new date for the defense, at which time the debate may proceed even without the presence of the assessor who provided the negative assessment.

5.3.9 Following a successful defense, the DDC first votes to approve the dissertation, after which the University Doctoral Council decides on the conferral of the doctoral degree. The PhD title is officially granted upon the University Doctoral Council's decision. Within 30 days from that date, the University of Szeged issues and delivers the doctoral certificate to the holder. Following the decision by the UDC, the administrator of the Doctoral School publishes the result of the defense on the Doctoral School's webpage on the Hungarian Doctoral Council website (doktori.hu).

Szeged, December 10, 2024