

Quality Assurance Requirements
University of Szeged, Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School (SZTE SZAOK)
Doctoral School of Experimental and Preventive Medicine (KIMODI)

1. KIMODI's Quality Assurance Requirements Related to Management and Organization

1.1 Fundamental principles of KIMODI's quality assurance plan

The multi-stage procedure for obtaining a doctoral degree sets high standards for doctoral candidates, the teaching and research staff who support them, and the administrative personnel involved. To ensure the successful attainment of doctoral degrees, the Doctoral School of Experimental and Preventive Medicine has developed a quality control and quality assurance system that applies to the entire doctoral qualification process and also takes discipline-specific requirements into account.

To meet the quality metric requirements for scientific work – in terms of publications, conference presentations, and dissertations – the following conditions must be fulfilled simultaneously:

- a) It is essential to have highly qualified supervisors with expertise and a strong record of accomplishment in the relevant scientific field, as well as committed and motivated students with appropriate foundational training and qualifications.
- b) The presence of scientific research groups that meet high professional and technical standards is indispensable.
- c) Research topics must be eligible for funding and positioned at the forefront of contemporary international scientific research.

Attaining a doctoral degree requires documented theoretical knowledge, the completion of advanced research work, and resulting publications that meet international standards. In addition, candidates must submit a dissertation that both synthesizes these elements and stands as a complete, independent academic work. Furthermore, they must demonstrate strong presentation and argumentation skills during the defense of their dissertation.

As a sufficient condition for eligibility to defend their dissertation, candidates must have the required number and type of publications, as specified in the *Regulations Governing Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees*, as well as in the KIMODI training plan. Additionally, as a necessary condition, doctoral candidates must be able to effectively present and synthesize their research findings in their dissertations to a high academic standard.

- a) The Doctoral Council of KIMODI (hereinafter: DC) conducts an annual review of the training and quality assurance plan by January 31 each year, ensuring that necessary revisions are implemented on a yearly basis.
- b) The DC approves KIMODI's annual report.
- c) KIMODI publishes key performance statistics from the previous year on its website. These include the achievements of PhD students and supervisors; defense and drop-out

data, as well as changes in the allocation of supervisors. The published information may be reviewed and commented on by the DC, program directors, supervisors, topic proposers, and doctoral students. Feedback may be submitted to the Head of the Doctoral School either orally or in writing, along with suggestions for improvement. All feedback is discussed by the program directors and the DC, and appropriate actions are taken to address concerns and incorporate proposed improvements into the revised training or quality assurance plan.

- d) KIMODI publishes its quality assurance report for the previous year on its website by February 28 each year. If necessary, the updated training and quality assurance plan is also released.

1.2 Information on KIMODI's Quality Assurance Officer and the availability of KIMODI documents

1.2. a) Name of the Quality Assurance Officer

The KIMODI DC has appointed Dr. László Czakó, full professor at the SZTE SZAOK Department of Internal Medicine, as the Quality Assurance Officer responsible for overseeing the quality assurance processes within KIMODI.

1.2. b) Availability of KIMODI's public documents

The public documents of the Doctoral School – including its training plan, quality assurance plan, and relevant forms – are available in both Hungarian and English on the official website for SZTE SZAOK's Doctoral Schools (<https://phd.szote.u-szeged.hu>), as well as on the website of the Doctoral School of Theoretical and Interdisciplinary Medicine (until the new KIMODI website is launched).

1.3. a) Students' rights to submit complaints

KIMODI ensures that doctoral students have a formal channel to submit complaints related to the doctoral program. Complaints may be submitted either by email (as a letter addressed to the Head of the Doctoral School, sent as an attachment) or in person at the Secretariat. The Doctoral Council (DC) addresses the complaint within 30 days and notifies the student of its decision in writing.

1.3. b) Matters concerning student status

Matters related to students' legal status are handled by the Dean of SZTE SZAOK. The Doctoral School's administrator keeps records of student status using the university's electronic administrative system, Neptun.

2. KIMODI's Quality Assurance Requirements Related to Instructors

2.1.1 Academic and teaching requirements for staff in instructional and supervisory roles

KIMODI supervisors and instructors must adhere to the academic and teaching requirements set by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB) and SZTE's *Regulations Governing Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees*. Relevant information is

publicly accessible on the Hungarian National Doctoral Council (ODT) website:
https://doktori.hu/index.php?menuid=191&lang=HU&di_ID=144

2.2. a) 1 Review of activities of current core members and instructors

KIMODI conducts an annual review of the scientific and teaching activities of its current core members, supervisors, and instructors, as listed on the ODT website, and recommends adjustments where necessary.

2.2. a) 2 Admission requirements for new supervisors

The DC assesses the professional credentials of instructors or researchers holding an academic degree who apply for a supervisor or instructor position at KIMODI. Based on this evaluation, the DC determines whether to accept the application. Final approval is subject to the decision of the competent Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC) of the University of Szeged (SZTE).

The DC aims to admit instructors and researchers who meet the requirements for university habilitation. However, researchers without habilitation may also be considered for supervisor roles at KIMODI, subject to individual assessment.

The KIMODI Council requires that all applicants for a supervisor position have authored, since the completion of their dissertation, at least two full scientific articles in English – either as first or last author – classified as Q1 or Q2 in the Hungarian Science Bibliography (MTMT2) database.

2.2. b) Termination of supervisory duties

For internal supervisors (i.e., those employed at an SZTE institute or clinical unit), supervisory duties are terminated when the individual either ends their employment relationship with the University of Szeged or fails to meet the relevant publication requirements for two consecutive years, resulting in the absence of a valid, publicly available profile page on the ODT (doktori.hu) website.

Resignation from supervisory duties: Upon the student's completion of the first academic year, the supervisor may resign from their supervisory role without providing a reason and may transfer supervision to another eligible supervisor. Similarly, the student may request such a change without the need to provide a reason. However, any resignation occurring after the first academic year must be substantiated with appropriate justification, and the continuity of appropriate professional-level supervision for the student must be ensured.

2.2. c) Conditions for involving external supervisors

New external supervisors may be involved in supervision provided they have a documented connection to the University of Szeged and have authored, as first or last author, at least two full scientific publications (Q1 or Q2 articles in English) since completing their doctoral dissertation.

2.2. d) Involvement of co-supervisors in the event of the primary supervisor's long-term absence

If a doctoral student's primary supervisor becomes unavailable for an extended period (e.g., due to working abroad, maternity leave, or other long-term circumstances), the student may request the appointment of a co-supervisor to ensure their research proceeds without interruption.

2.2. e) Public disclosure of student feedback on instructors and its integration into quality assurance processes

The DC provides students with the opportunity to evaluate the teaching and research performance of instructors. Feedback may be submitted in writing to the Head of the Doctoral School, either as an email attachment or in person at the Secretariat of the Doctoral School. Depending on its nature, the feedback will be addressed either promptly or during the annual quality assurance review.

2.3 Strengthening the educational setting and facilitating instructors' acquisition of new skills and methodologies

2.3. a) The DC appoints supervisors, instructors, and core members of the Doctoral School in a way that fosters a supportive teaching environment and promotes continuous development within the given department or research laboratory.

2.3. b) The DC continuously encourages instructors to upgrade the curriculum and to participate in training courses focused on innovative teaching methodologies and their practical application in instructional settings.

3. KIMODI's Quality Assurance Requirements Regarding Scientific Standards

3.1. a) Review of proposed research topics

Research topics proposed within the Doctoral School are reviewed and updated annually by February 15 of each year.

3.1. b) Quality-focused admission of doctoral students

In its admission policies, the Doctoral School outlines its admission requirements in accordance with the *Regulations Governing Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees*, which apply uniformly to both full-time students and those enrolled in individual training. Students admitted under individual training enter the doctoral program by passing a comprehensive examination, thereby bypassing the training-research phase (see Section 5.1. e)).

The DC aims to admit the most qualified applicants. Candidates are evaluated and ranked by the DC based on their admission scores and academic achievements, as well as their motivation and commitment to research.

3.1. c) Provision of theoretical and practical knowledge

In KIMODI's programs, theoretical knowledge is provided through a combination of mandatory and elective courses taught by the most competent instructors, while practical knowledge is gained through research activities overseen by appointed supervisors.

Ongoing research within departments or institutes, combined with active participation in the life of teaching departments – through involvement in practical courses and academic lectures – provides students with the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired by doing coursework within their area of specialization.

4. KIMODI's Requirements Regarding the Doctoral Program Admission Procedure

4.1. a) Requirements regarding the members of the Admission Board

The Admission Board for full-time students in the Hungarian-language programs consists of the Chair of the Doctoral Council (DC), the relevant program directors, and one student representative, with a minimum of four members required. The student representative is invited by the Head of KIMODI to take part in the work of the Admission Board. If any members are unable to attend, the Head of KIMODI is responsible for appointing appropriate substitutes.

4.1. b) Quality assurance regarding the admission procedure for full-time students – thematic considerations, scoring system, and objective ranking criteria

Under the 100-point admission system, full-time applicants must achieve a minimum of 60 points to be eligible for admission. (For further details, see Section IV (17–27) of the *Regulations Governing Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees*, as well as the KIMODI Entrance Examination Form scoring sheet.)

4.1. c) Practical aspects of the entrance examination

The entrance examination is typically conducted in person; however, it may be held online when necessary – for instance, in the case of international applicants. External examiners may also participate in the Admission Board's work remotely. For foreign applicants, the entrance examination is conducted in English.

4.1. d) Admission of students in individual training via comprehensive examination

See Section 5.1. e).

4.2 Documentation of experiences related to the admission procedure

In its annual report, the DC documents its observations concerning the admission procedure, and proposes necessary adjustments – such as changes to the examination requirements or organizational procedures. These proposals are incorporated into the training and quality assurance plan as amendments.

5. KIMODI's Quality Assurance Requirements Throughout the Doctoral Training Process

5.1. a) 1. KIMODI's commitment to ensuring appropriate staffing conditions

KIMODI selects its members, supervisors, and core members in a manner that guarantees the staffing conditions required to support high-quality research. It also ensures that students are acquainted with the most up-to-date academic resources and materials. For mandatory core and program-specific courses, KIMODI expects instructors to deliver high-level lectures for their students. In exceptional circumstances when instructors are unavailable, they are required to provide access to online materials and offer online consultations.

5.1. a) 2. KIMODI's dedication to ensuring appropriate material conditions

The DC selects the supervisors, instructors, and core members of the Doctoral School in a way that fosters an effective teaching environment and supports development within the relevant department or research laboratory (see section 2.3. a)). The Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School provides full-time PhD students conducting research in the institutes and departments of SZTE with a monthly bench fee of HUF 100,000.

5.1. b) KIMODI's monitoring of student progress in doctoral studies

The Doctoral School monitors the progress of its students from enrolment through to dissertation defense using the Neptun database. It also tracks student requests, resolutions issued by the Disciplinary Doctoral Council, and examination-related documents submitted to the Head of KIMODI.

Every semester, KIMODI requires full-time doctoral students to submit their course completion forms and verifies course registrations and the completed courses – checking grades, instructor signatures, and relevant dates.

At the end of every second semester (i.e., at the conclusion of the academic year), the Doctoral School requests the submission of a performance report for the preceding academic year. This report must be approved by the Head of KIMODI.

At the end of the fourth semester, the Doctoral School verifies whether the student has fulfilled the examination admission requirements in accordance with the Doctoral School's training plan and the *Regulations Governing Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees*.

Following the completion of the eighth semester, the Secretariat of KIMODI verifies whether the student has obtained the minimum requirement of 240 certified credits.

The student advances to the **assessment procedure** with the assistance of KIMODI's administrative associate, who sets up the Defense Board – based on the proposal of the supervisor and the program director, and approved by the Head of KIMODI – and also prepares

the documentation required by the Doctoral Regulations for submission to the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC). The dissertation defense information is then made publicly available on the Doctoral School's website and on the ODT platform, on the "Scheduled Doctoral Dissertation Defenses" page, three weeks prior to the defense.

5.1. c) KIMODI's commitment to fostering the academic advancement of its students

The Doctoral Council (DC) actively encourages student participation in both in-person and online conferences, summer schools, part-time training programs, and EUGLOH initiatives, which are currently organized in collaboration with nine European universities. The DC also promotes student engagement in grant opportunities, including the University Research Scholarship Program (EKÖP), University Faculty Scholarships, Scholarships for Excellence, and Richter Scholarships. Applications falling under KIMODI's scope are ranked by the DC. Furthermore, students are encouraged to publish their scientific findings in Open Access format, with support from SZTE available to cover associated costs.

5.1. d) KIMODI's dedication to facilitating the placement and affiliation of student publications

Upon enrolment, students in both the full-time and individual training programs are required to register with the SZTE University Repository and the Hungarian Scientific Bibliography (MTMT2), and to affiliate themselves with their respective university institute. If a student is conducting research outside of an SZTE unit, they must affiliate at least one publication related to their dissertation with the Doctoral School.

5.1. e) The procedure and requirements for the comprehensive examination; the objective definition and regular review of evaluation criteria; requirements for members of the examination committee

For full-time students, KIMODI's Secretariat verifies whether they meet the eligibility criteria for the comprehensive examination, which include meeting the 90-credit requirement and the successful completion of the required core and mandatory courses.

The Doctoral Council (DC), in collaboration with the supervisor and in accordance with the relevant sections of the *Regulations Governing Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees*, is responsible for appointing the Examination Board and determining the examination subjects on an individual basis (refer to Sections V (1–7) of the Regulations).

The Head of KIMODI invites experts in the relevant discipline to serve on the Examination Board, with the final composition subject to approval by the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC).

Students and their supervisors must fulfil the preliminary requirements for the examination, which include the submission of a research report and the supervisor's written evaluation of the student's work, in accordance with the *Regulations Governing Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees* and KIMODI's training plan.

The Examination Board receives the necessary materials – such as the official exam record form and student documentation – at least two days prior to the examination.

The comprehensive examination consists of two components, each contributing 50% to the final result:

Theoretical part – A professional examination (replacing the former doctoral complex examination) in which the candidate must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the subject area and readiness to proceed.

Dissertation part – A presentation of a written dissertation report summarizing the research conducted during the first two years and outlining the proposed research for the following two years. The presentation may include a maximum of 10–12 slides.

5.1. f) Admission of students in individual training to KIMODI based on comprehensive examination

Applicants who have engaged in research activities alongside their regular employment – and have at least one relevant publication – may apply for admission to a doctoral program by taking a comprehensive examination, held twice a year. For further details, please visit the website of the SZTE Doctoral Institute at <https://u-szeged.hu/dokint/hataridok>. Additionally, applications for admission to KIMODI programs may be submitted between August 1 and August 20 each year. Those in individual training must fulfill the same requirements as full-time students taking the comprehensive examination at the end of the fourth semester.

Ensuring adherence to requirements for members of the Comprehensive Examination Board

Members of the Comprehensive Examination Board may consist exclusively of university instructors and researchers who meet the criteria established by the University in its Doctoral Regulations. *“The comprehensive examination shall be taken publicly before an examination board. The examination board shall consist of a minimum of three members. It shall be ensured that at least one-third of the board members are not employed at the higher education institution operating the doctoral school. Only a competent full professor (egyetemi tanár), habilitated associate professor (docens) or habilitated college professor (főiskolai tanár) or researcher with the title of Professor Emeritus or Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences may act as the chair of the examination board. All members of the board shall hold a scientific degree. The candidate’s supervisor shall not be a member of the examination board.”* (Section V (4) of the Doctoral Regulations)

5.1. g) Monitoring the collection, processing, and utilization of data related to student feedback, academic progression, and the implementation of related decisions, with particular attention to student attrition

Data on student feedback and academic progression – particularly regarding non-completion of the program – are monitored in accordance with university regulations.

5.2 Review of topics for mandatory and elective courses

The DC conducts regular reviews of mandatory and elective courses, along with their syllabi. Based on feedback from students and instructors, the courses are updated and revised to

incorporate new knowledge. The revised content is published on the Council's website. At the same time, the training plan is adjusted accordingly.

6. KIMODI's Quality Assurance Requirements for the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees

6.1. a) 1 Verification of compliance with publication requirements in the doctoral degree procedure

As of January 1, 2024, KIMODI implements the new requirements outlined in the *Classification Considering D-Q Ranking Data*, as adopted by the DDC decision of July 2, 2019, with one additional provision introduced by the Doctoral Council. When applying the D-Q ranking system, if a primary article is referenced by more than one candidate in the doctoral degree procedure, it must be clearly specified which portions or findings are attributed to each candidate in their respective dissertations. The same result may not be presented as an independent contribution in more than one procedure or dissertation.

6.1. b) Verification of compliance with foreign language requirements

KIMODI designates English as the mandatory foreign language for its program. As a minimum requirement, students must pass a complex intermediate-level English language examination. The Doctoral School verifies compliance during the admission process. If a student does not yet hold the required language certificate, the Doctoral School will instruct them to complete the examination as soon as possible. Proof of language proficiency must be submitted before proceeding to the assessment procedure.

6.1. c) KIMODI's quality assurances for foreign-language students concerning the doctoral degree procedure

The Doctoral Council (DC) applies the same requirements for the defense of students studying in a foreign language as it does for those pursuing their studies in Hungarian. However, in such cases, all components of the procedure – including the dissertation, official records, and invitation – must be completed in English, both orally and in writing.

6.1. d) Requirements and timeline for the utilization of Klebelsberg Library's plagiarism detection software in the review of dissertations

The DC mandates the use of the Klebelsberg Library's plagiarism detection software prior to uploading the dissertation to the repository or submitting it to the assessors. The results are to be shared with the Head of the Doctoral School, the student, and their supervisor within two weeks. Upon receiving the plagiarism check results, the supervisor will either endorse or oppose the submission of the dissertation. If any suspicion of plagiarism arises, the Head of the Doctoral School, in consultation with the Doctoral Council, will determine the appropriate course of action (refer to KIMODI's Plagiarism Declaration form).

6.1. e) Objective evaluation criteria for the public defense procedure and related requirements, and the frequency of their review

In each doctoral program of the Doctoral School, the Head of KIMODI and/or the program director, along with the supervisors of doctoral students, participate in defenses either in person or online – at least once each year. In this regard, the Doctoral School aligns with the requirements set forth in the *Regulations Governing Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees*.

Objective evaluation is ensured by the appointment of a five-member defense board by the Doctoral Council. The board is chaired by a full professor or a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. All other members must hold an academic degree, and at least one member and one assessor must be external to the university and unaffiliated with the candidate's external institute.

KIMODI reviews the procedures, requirements, and evaluation criteria related to the attainment of the doctoral degree every five years.

The composition of the defense board is approved by the Disciplinary Doctoral Council (DDC), which also ensures compliance with conflict-of-interest regulations. The candidate must not have co-authored any publications with any member of the board.

In the event that one of the assessors submits a negative review, the DDC appoints a third assessor in accordance with the same regulations.

Upon receiving two positive assessments, the DDC schedules the public defense of the dissertation to take place within two months.

Invitees to the public defense include the Head of KIMODI, the student's supervisor, the members of the defense board, the program director, and the members of the DDC, as specified in the official invitation. Additionally, the candidate may invite any other individuals to attend the defense.

The debate is open to the public and includes a presentation by the doctoral student outlining the key theses of their dissertation, lasting no more than 30 minutes. This is followed by the public presentation of evaluations by the assessors. The candidate then responds first to the assessors' written questions, after which spontaneous questions and comments may be posed by members of the audience, including those submitted online.

The board then enters a closed session and votes by secret ballot according to uniform evaluation rules. The thesis is scored on a scale of 0 to 5, and a minimum of 60% is required for a successful defense. The Chair publicly announces and briefly justifies the result shortly after the conclusion of the defense. These procedures are designed to ensure objectivity in the evaluation process.

The DC subsequently accepts the defense, after which the DDC provides its evaluation. The University Doctoral Council then approves the conferment of the doctoral degree through a formal resolution. The student receives the doctoral degree with a final grade based on the average score earned during the defense (refer to the *Regulations Governing Doctoral Training Programs and the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees*, section VI (47)).

In the case of dual degree conferment, the doctoral regulations of the partner institution must also be taken into account, unless otherwise specified by a contractual agreement between the two universities.

7. Quality Assurance Objectives and Indicators

7.1. Objectives

Quality objective No. 1: Enhance the participation rate of doctoral students in satisfaction surveys, aiming for a minimum response rate of 60%.

Quality objective No. 2: Develop and launch a modern Doctoral School website by 2025.

Quality objective No. 3: Expand the availability of regulatory and informational documents on the Doctoral School's website in all languages of instruction. By 2025, ensure 100% availability of documents in Hungarian, 100% of essential documents in English, and at least 50% of forms in English.

7.2. Indicators

Indicator No. 1: Number of full-time PhD students graduating from the Doctoral School by the designated deadline in the specified academic year (2025).

Indicator No. 2: Number of full-time students whose designated deadline for the submission of their PhD dissertation has passed in the specified academic year (2025).

Szeged, December 10, 2024