FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

FACULTY EDUCATION AND EXAMINATION CODE FOR DOCTORAL MATTERS ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-2027

FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

(Approved by The Council of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences on 18 March 2026)

PREAMBLE

The Council of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences approved the official Dutch version of the Faculty's Doctoral Regulations on 18 March 2026. These regulations contain faculty-specific requirements concerning the doctorate and the doctoral study programme at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. The regulations should be considered a supplement to the general regulations that are included in the current 'Education and Examination Code for Doctoral Matters'.

ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

- **Doctoral advisory committee (DAC)**: The committee that is responsible for the support, follow-up and assessment of the doctoral student over the course of their study and research period. The DAC consists of the supervisor(s) and persons with a special expertise in the research domain who provide added value to the doctoral project.
- **Education Administration and Student Information System (OASIS)**: Institution-wide administrative system for (re)enrolment in the doctoral programme.
- **Plato**: Digital administration of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences for follow-up of the PhD research portfolio and submission of the doctorate for defence.
- **Project counselor**: Faculty advisor who neutrally and independently monitors the doctoral trajectory and the supervision of the doctoral student. This role is designated as 'faculty mentor' in Oasis.

FACULTY-SPECIFIC DOCTORAL REGULATIONS

SECTION I – APPLICATION FOR ENROLMENT

Article 1. In order to be admitted to the first enrolment for the doctorate at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, the following administrative steps must be completed:

- The application for enrolment is started by the administrative supervisor responsible via Oasis.
- A master's degree (or equivalent diploma) is the minimum requirement for admission to the doctoral programme. At the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, a predoctoral training programme is not possible.
- Proposal of a doctoral advisory committee (DAC) and project counselor is mandatory (see Article 3 and 4). The commitment of the DAC and project counselor is explored in advance by the administrative supervisor responsible.
- The curriculum vitae of the doctoral student is included.
- The *one-page research proposal* is added after approval by the administrative supervisor responsible and by using the appropriate template.
- Within the first three months after the start of the doctorate, the application for enrolment is submitted to the faculty by the administrative supervisor responsible.

Late applications for enrolment (i.e. more than three months after the start of the doctoral programme) must be justified. If the justification is inadequate, the administrative supervisor responsible will be heard by the (vice) chair of the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

An application for enrolment that is based on an *'import doctorate'* is always assessed by the plenary Faculty Doctoral Committee. A doctorate is considered to be an import doctorate when the candidate asks a professorial staff-member to be the administrative supervisor responsible of a work of which the professorial staff-member is no co-author. The administrative supervisor responsible guides the doctoral student in the elaboration of the doctoral dissertation while assessing and giving feedback on the introduction and discussion section, the practical implications, guidelines for further research, and the lay-out as prescribed by Ghent University and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

The Faculty Council decides on the application for enrolment for the doctorate after advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee. The doctoral student is obliged to re-enroll annually until de doctorate is successfully defended.

SECTION II – DOCTORAL GUIDANCE

At the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, each doctoral student (with a first enrolment since academic year 2022-2023) is guided by a DAC and a project counselor. The DAC and project counselor are responsible for the guidance and support of the doctoral student. They are actively involved in both the process and product of the doctorate as well as in the professional development of the doctoral student.

Article 2. Each doctoral student has at least one supervisor who is an active professorial staff member or visiting professor with a research assignment and who is designated as the 'administrative supervisor responsible'. In addition, a second supervisor - who must also hold a doctorate with dissertation (or an equivalent diploma, subject to approval by the Faculty Doctoral Committee) - may be appointed from within or outside Ghent University. At least one of the supervisors is affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

To appoint a third supervisor, a request can be submitted to the Faculty Doctoral Committee. This request must be supported by a written justification clearly indicating that:

- A third supervisor is absolutely necessary for the success of the project.
- Each of the three supervisors is responsible for supervising a substantial and specific part of the research.
- Each of the three supervisors makes a unique contribution based on their expertise that is complementary to that of the other supervisors and contributes to the success of the doctorate.

The three supervisors are therefore affiliated with at least two different research groups. This element must be clearly stated in the motivation. The administrative supervisor responsible may be heard on this matter by the Faculty Doctoral Committee. In addition, the third supervisor must also hold a doctorate with dissertation (or an equivalent diploma, subject to approval by the Faculty Doctoral Committee). When applying for an interdisciplinary PhD or Joint PhD with our faculty/university as main faculty/main institution, a maximum of 4 supervisors can be allowed (with minimum 1 from each faculty/university).

The supervisors are confirmed by the Faculty Council upon submission of the dissertation for defence based on advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

Article 3. Each doctoral student must be supervised by a doctoral advisory committee (DAC), proposed by the administrative supervisor during application for enrolment and appointed by the Faculty Council based on advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee. The DAC consists on the one hand of the supervisor(s) and on the other hand of additional persons with a special expertise in the research domain who add value to the doctoral project (see table I). All members of the DAC must hold a doctorate with dissertation. There is one exception, if the member of the DAC can provide substantial research expertise regarding the subject of the doctoral dissertation (content-wise and/or methodological). The research expertise will be assessed by the Faculty Doctoral Committee to determine whether the researcher without doctoral dissertation can be a member of the DAC.

The DAC consists of at least three and at most five members, including the supervisor(s). Consequently, for an enrolment with 1 supervisor, at least 2 additional members of the DAC are required. When applying for an interdisciplinary PhD or a Joint PhD with our faculty/university as the main faculty/main institution, in addition to the possible 4 supervisors, 1 additional member of the DAC must be appointed. Not all members of the DAC belong to the same research group.

Table I. Overview composition doctoral advisory committee (DAC).

	Supervisor(s)	**Other members DAC**	
Monodisciplinary PhD	1 supervisor	minimum 2	maximum 4
	2 supervisors	minimum 1	maximum 3
	3 supervisors	minimum 1	maximum 2
Joint / Interdisc. PhD	Max. 4 supervisors	minimum 1	

Article 4. In addition to the DAC, an engaged project counselor (role of 'faculty mentor' in Oasis) is chosen. He/she will monitor the doctoral trajectory and the guidance of the doctoral student from a neutral and independent point of view (during at least 4 years). The project counselor is an active professorial staff member or guest professor with research assignment (not a 100% postdoctoral researcher) affiliated with the faculty who is proposed by the administrative supervisor responsible during the admission procedure. The professorial staff member must have guided at least two successfully defended doctorates as a (co)supervisor. Also emeriti can be chosen as project counselor.

When choosing the project counselor, a balance is sought between the independency in guiding the doctoral student and a certain degree of understanding of the research domain. The main task of the project counselor is to answer the following question based on the yearly mandatory evaluation meeting of the DAC: '*Is the PhD trajectory progressing favorably?*' (see Article 6).

At the end of the doctoral trajectory, the project counselor becomes the chair of the Examination Board. It is possible that the input of the project counselor results in co-authorship of one or more publications of the doctoral dissertation. In this case, the project counselor will transfer the chairmanship of the Examination Board to a member of the Faculty Doctoral Committee. The project counselor informs the new chair about the doctoral trajectory (a.o. by transferring the reports of the yearly evaluation meetings).

In case of an interdisciplinary PhD or Joint PhD with our faculty/university as partner faculty/university, the main faculty/university will be followed to choose the project counselor/chair of the Examination Board.

Article 5. One cannot be appointed as supervisor, member of the DAC, or as project counselor for the doctorate of a family member, partner, or someone with whom one has a personal involvement.

Article 6. The doctoral student, DAC and project counselor meet as soon as possible (preferably within one month after enrolment) to discuss the research skills and competences that need to be achieved during the doctoral trajectory. To discuss the expectations and responsibilities, the checklist 'Establishing a good relationship from the beginning' from the PhD Onboarding Track offered by the Doctoral School can be used.

Furthermore, the DAC meets at least once a year in an evaluation meeting. In consultation with the supervisor(s) and the project counselor, the doctoral student initiates the organisation of these meetings in a timely manner. The project counselor monitors the planning and ensures a thorough discussion during the meeting. The doctoral students gives a presentation according to the annual self-reflection report that must be uploaded in Oasis, either in preparation or as a reflection. During the evaluation meeting, the quality and the impact of the research as well as the independence and growth of the doctoral student are evaluated and monitored. For an interdisciplinary PhD, it is checked whether the progress of the doctoral trajectory aligns with the minimum criteria of interdisciplinarity. The project counselor draws up a report of the evaluation meeting according to the following template and keeps it up to date annually. The DAC uses the report of the evaluation meeting to assess the self-reflection report.

The timing of the evaluation meetings is flexible. It is however recommended to schedule the evaluation meetings in such a way that everyone involved has the opportunity to use the evaluation and feedback of the meeting for the self-reflection report procedure in Oasis. In the penultimate year of the doctoral trajectory, the conditions to submit the doctoral dissertation for defence are determined in a 'final doctoral plan'. For interdisciplinary PhDs, it is verified whether the minimum criteria of interdisciplinarity are met in order to defend the combined doctoral title.

Article 7. It is possible that during the doctorate, changes in the previously approved doctoral guidance are wanted. Changes to the doctoral advisory committee and project counselor must be requested via the form for 'adjustment of promotership – doctoral advisory committee' and submitted to the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

The Faculty Council decides on the application for 'adjustment of promotership – doctoral advisory committee' after obtaining advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

Article 8. Following a doctoral training programme is highly recommended but is not mandatory. However, every doctoral student must complete the PhD Onboarding Track offered by the Doctoral School.

Article 9. Each doctoral student prepares a data management plan and keeps it up to date.

SECTION III – SUBMISSION OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Article 10. Submission of the doctoral dissertation to the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences for defence is done via Plato. The doctoral student follows the step-by-step procedure 'Roadmap submission for defence'.

The following criteria are the minimum requirements imposed by the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences for the submission of the doctoral dissertation. As stated in Article 15, the Examination Board autonomously assesses the value of the submitted dissertation. Compliance with these minimum conditions is therefore essential as *submission criterion* but not necessarily sufficient to succeed for the defence procedure.

The doctoral student must submit a PhD research portfolio that clarifies on the one hand the skills of the PhD student following the different stages of a research cycle, and on the other hand the competences via which he/she has developed oneself professionally. As submission criterion to submit the doctorate for defence, the following applies: *'The doctoral student has developed into an independent researcher and has acquired the scientific expertise and competences as reflected in the PhD research portfolio. Based on the doctorate, the doctoral student has delivered an original scientific contribution. The contribution leads to a doctoral dissertation with several research chapters, with at least one original research publication as (shared) first author in a peer-reviewed international scientific journal, an oral or poster presentation at an international scientific conference (i.e. a conference organized by an international organization) and a substantial initiative of societal outreach. The doctoral student is ready to defend the work in a closed and public defence.'*.

Consequently, the doctoral trajectory leads to an original scientific contribution that results in at least:

- A doctoral dissertation with several research chapters of which at least one publication as (shared) first author in a peer-reviewed international scientific journal;
- One oral or poster presentation at an international scientific conference;
- One substantial initiative of societal outreach;
- A PhD research portfolio;
- A closed and public defence of the doctoral work.

Based on inspirational frameworks, the doctoral student must keep a PhD research portfolio up to date during the doctoral trajectory via Plato. The PhD research portfolio describes the acquired research skills of the different clusters of a research cycle and the competences on which the doctoral student wants to focus. The different inspirational frameworks can be found on the faculty webpage for doctoral research.

The publication as (shared) first author in a scientific peer-reviewed international journal must contain original research data. Table II gives an overview of the type of publication that can or cannot be accepted to reach the publication criterion. In addition, the doctoral student must demonstrate that the manuscript underwent a thorough review process based on the following timeline: date of submission, duration of the review period, data of submission of the rebuttal letter and revised version, date of proof reading, date of acceptance, and date of publication.

Table II. Overview type of publications (not) accepted to meet the minimum criteria

Accepted	**Not accepted**
Publication with original research data	Case study
Systematic review* and/or meta-analysis	Narrative review
Protocol or technical paper*	Proceeding paper
Letter to the editor (with original data)	Letter to the editor (without original data)
Patent or submitted patent application**	

(*) In case of a systematic review, protocol or technical paper, a manuscript with original research data is also required. The manuscript with original research data must be accepted/published or submitted for publication. (**) When submitting the doctoral dissertation for defence, the doctoral student explains his/her contribution to the patent.

Article 11. The doctoral student must demonstrate that he/she has achieved the research skills and competencies to independently perform scientific research at an international level. The doctoral dissertation reflects the output of various years of research and is generally based on several articles or manuscripts with the doctoral student as first author. The articles or manuscripts are published, submitted, or ready for submission in international peer-reviewed scientific journals. For each article or manuscript, a statement of authorship of the doctoral student is provided in the doctoral dissertation.

Article 12. Prior to the public defence, the doctoral student must submit the final version of the data management plan in the manner requested by the Doctoral School.

SECTION IV – EVALUATION OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Article 13. The project counselor takes on the role of chair of the Examination Board. In the case of co-authorship, the project counselor hands over the chairmanship to a member of the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

All members of the Examination Board must hold a doctoral dissertation. There is one possible exception, whereby the member can present a major research expertise on the specific subject of the doctoral dissertation (content-wise or methodological). The research expertise is evaluated by the Faculty Doctoral Committee, which will judge independently whether the researcher is rightly included as a member of the Examination Board. Therefore, just meeting the criteria does not guarantee acceptance of the application.

The Examination Board consists of 6 or 7 members (including the chair). If a research expert without a doctorate is admitted, the Examination Board must consist of 7 members. The majority of the members of an Examination Board consist of professorial staff members or postdoctoral researchers at Ghent University and/or Ghent University Hospital. No more than two members of the Examination Board may belong to the same research group. At least two members are not affiliated with the faculty and/or the Ghent University Hospital, and at least one of these two members is not affiliated with Ghent University.

The members of the DAC may not be part of the Examination Board, but can be heard by the Examination Board. In addition, a maximum of one co-author of one of the manuscripts included in the dissertation may act as a member of the Examination Board. First and last authors of the manuscripts included in the dissertation are not allowed to be members of the Examination Board. Likewise, co-authorship with the chair of the examination board is not allowed.

The Faculty Council decides on the submission of the doctoral dissertation for defence after advice from the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

Article 14. One cannot be appointed as a member of Examination Board for the doctorate of, or under the supervision of, a family member, partner, or someone with whom one has a personal involvement.

Article 15. The Examination Board autonomously assesses the value of the research and the manuscript and suggests any changes to be made. It is important to note that meeting the minimal criteria to submit the doctorate for defence is considered *an admission criterion* to the examination procedure. Subsequently, the Examination Board must evaluate whether the submitted work is worthy of a doctorate and the doctoral title: '*Doctor of Health Sciences*'.

The doctoral student's knowledge, the (revised) manuscript, and the answers of the doctoral students to the written questions are assessed in a closed defence during which the doctoral student is questioned about the work. The questioning and deliberation take place in the absence of the supervisors. Based on the result of the closed defence, the Examination Board decides whether the manuscript can be printed and whether the doctoral student can be admitted to the public defence. If the doctoral student is not admitted to the public defence, a subsequent closed defence must be organised. At least four members of the Examination Board must be present in order for the meeting of the Examination Board to be valid.

In the case of the public defence, the Examination Board also deliberates in the absence of the supervisors. It also applies that at least four members of the Examination Board must be present in order for the meeting to be valid.

Article 16. The doctoral dissertation must be uploaded in UGent Biblio.