

**University of Pécs
Faculty of Health Sciences**

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Quality Assurance Plan



Head of the Doctoral School:

**Prof. Dr. István KISS MD PhD DSc m.p.
Full University Professor**

Pécs, 2025 –

1. Introduction and Quality Policy Framework

The operation of the Doctoral School of Health Sciences (DSHS) is defined by the Quality Management Regulations of the University of Pécs, the annual quality objectives set by the University, as well as the standards and guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Our aim is to operate a **transparent, fair, student-centered, and continuously improvable** quality assurance system throughout all stages of the doctoral lifecycle (admission → training → research → assessment → defense → alumni).

In the spirit of the university's quality approach:

“**Quality**: the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfills requirements. It can be described by terms such as poor, good, or excellent.” (MSZ EN ISO 9000:2005)

In line with the Faculty's Quality Management Manual, the DSHS works with an **appointed quality assurance officer** and translates the faculty/university quality objectives into the context of doctoral operations (student success, academic staff development, international visibility, digitalization, and sustainability).

2. Governance and Responsibilities

The quality assurance of the Doctoral School of Health Sciences (DSHS) is the responsibility of the **Head of the Doctoral School, the program directors, and the Doctoral School Council (DSC)**. The DSC:

- regularly monitors personal and material conditions as well as compliance with regulations,
- oversees student and faculty progress,
- approves development measures and reports.

The organizational partners in quality supervision are the **Faculty Doctoral and Habilitation Council, the University Doctoral Committee**, and the **University Habitus Evaluation Committee**. The **elected student representative** is a permanent member of the DSC, ensuring the continuous representation of student interests and quality expectations.

3. Admission System and Student Selection (Fairness, Transparency)

The entrance examination is conducted by a committee of independent faculty members appointed by the program directors. The **public** admission requirements are:

- an appropriate MSc/Master's degree in health sciences or a related field,
- certified intermediate proficiency in at least one foreign language,
- prior scientific activity (e.g., student research competition, publications),
- a **professionally grounded research proposal**,
- a **supervisor's letter of acceptance**.

The appendix of the Faculty Doctoral Regulations defines the principles of the **scoring system**, which rewards excellence and scientific potential; it is not intended for “quota distribution” among programs. However, programs with fewer students may be given slight preference. The decision is based on the professional evaluation of the submitted documents and the **academic interview**.

4. Training System, Progress, and Support (Student-Centered Approach)

The DSHS operates on a **credit-based** system. For degree completion, students who began their studies before the 2016/2017 academic year need **180 credits**, while those who started after the 2016/2017 academic year require **240 credits**. These credits can be earned through coursework, research activities, conference participation, and publications.

- **Semester Progress Report:** Submitted jointly by the student and supervisor; evaluated by the DSC.
- **Comprehensive Exam in the 2nd Year:** Assesses theoretical and methodological competencies.
- **Absolatory Certificate:** Faculty/university certification of credit requirements; prerequisite for the **doctoral comprehensive exam** (only for students under the *old* system) and **dissertation submission**.
- **Public Defenses:** Conducted in accordance with the University of Pécs doctoral regulations, with prior announcement.

Student Support: Tutorial support is provided if needed (especially for students with different undergraduate backgrounds or international students). Scholarships (e.g., **Cooperative Doctoral Program**) and mobility opportunities (visiting student programs, partial training abroad) are available. The **Scientific Forum** and **Science Blossoms** (internal conferences) provide feedback on progress each semester; this is planned to be expanded into **PhD Scientific Days**.

5. Research and Publication Quality (Professional Standards, Integrity)

The **quality control** of doctoral operations is ensured particularly through the following measures:

- **consistent** requirement of **high-quality, accredited** publications/publication points for the PhD dissertation;
- conducting **independent review procedures** involving recognized experts (including international experts if necessary);
- participation of doctoral candidates in **national and international grant applications**;
- **career tracking** and professional networking of graduates.

Requirements for degree completion include **at least one first-author international publication with an impact factor** (for social science topics, meeting the specified publication point threshold), as well as the preparation of a **dissertation reflecting a coherent scientific concept** and its **defense before external reviewers**.

Health-Academy

The dissemination of DSHS research results is supported by the **Health Academy**, an international journal established by the Faculty (ISSN: 2061-2850; access: <http://www.etk.pte.hu/menu/296>). This in-house publication serves as an incentive tool and **does not replace** international publication expectations.

Data Recording and Visibility – MTMT

Uploading publications to the MTMT database is mandatory for all core faculty members, supervisors, and students; this ensures transparency of publication performance, citations, and research trends.

6. Faculty and Supervisor Quality (Competence, Development, HR)

Quality indicators for faculty/researchers include:

- **publication activity** (full-length articles, scientometrics, books/chapters, peer-reviewed abstracts),
- **grant performance**, technical/intellectual creations, patents, and expert work,
- **scientific and public service roles** (society offices, committee work, editorial boards, awards).

The ESHS actively supports the professional development of supervisors and faculty through **international conferences, guest lectures, mobility programs**, methodological training, and the rationalization of **teaching and administrative workloads**. The habilitation and career paths of junior colleagues are encouraged through the university's **performance evaluation system**.

7. Program Structure and Multidisciplinarity

The doctoral research areas cover the **multidisciplinary** spectrum of health sciences: cardiovascular and musculoskeletal health, perinatal and reproductive health, oncology-health sciences, sports science, nutrition science, and health sociology/health economics. Students gradually integrate into the **research programs** of their supervisors, and new scientific findings are **continuously incorporated** into the course content.

8. Publicity, Transparency, and Participation

The regulations, programs, course requirements, and **defense events** of the DSHS are public and announced on the faculty/university websites. Invitations to defenses are extended to the faculty and university leadership, doctoral students of the School, partner institutions, and representatives of domestic and international research centers. The **Scientific Forum, Science Blossoms**, and other open events strengthen participation in the scientific community and societal impact.

9. Infrastructure and Digital Support

The foundation of quality is the continuous development of modern **infrastructure** and a **digital ecosystem**: Human Patient Simulation Center, Basic and Analytical Laboratories, Complex Sports Performance Diagnostics and Physiotherapy Center, Big Data/Health Economics capacities, robotics and telemedicine solutions, as well as the library services of the Pécs Knowledge Center. Access is ensured through collaborations and grant funding.

10. Feedback, Satisfaction, and Continuous Improvement

The DSHS prepares an annual **self-assessment report** (incorporating input from students, faculty, and partners). Students and faculty complete **anonymous satisfaction surveys**, and graduates are invited back to a **professional forum hosted by the Head of the Doctoral School**. **Semester reports** and **supervisor-approved semester reports** are mandatory; progress is also evaluated verbally at the Scientific Forum and the Science Blossoms conference.

Based on the feedback, an **action plan** is developed (e.g., new courses, foreign-language offerings, infrastructure development, expansion of international and industry partnerships). The goal is to develop these events into *PhD Scientific Days* to enhance visibility.

11. Alumni and Career Tracking

The career paths of graduates are monitored based on the **alumni network** and **DPR** (Doctoral Program Registry) data. By involving the alumni community, feedback is received on labor market needs and the impact of the training; this serves as a basis for curriculum and methodological development, mentoring programs, and joint projects.

12. Academic Collaborations and International Integration

The DSHS places special emphasis on building domestic and international research networks (academic societies, editorial board memberships, guest professors, Fulbright and other

scholarship programs). The aim of these connections is twofold: to ensure **internationally competitive research** and to support **student mobility**.

13. Closing Provisions

The quality assurance system of the DSHS is **aligned** with the University of Pécs's quality policy and objectives, as well as the ESG principles. The system ensures:

- consistent enforcement of **excellence** and **integrity** (publications, peer review, defenses),
- support for **student success** and **retention** (mentoring, scholarships, mobility),
- strengthening of **faculty development** and **international visibility** (habilitation, Q1–Q2 publications, partner networks),
- integration of **digital innovation** and **sustainability** into education and research.

Prof. Dr. István KISS MD PhD DSc m.p.
Full University Professor
Head of the Doctoral School of Health
Sciences