

Excerpt from the PhD Program Regulations

University of Catania

Decree No. 2788 of 3 July 2013 and subsequent amendments (last amendment Decree No. 53 of 9 January 2025)

Chapter VI – Final Examination

Article 20

Admission to the Final Examination and Postponement of the Final Defense

1. The PhD thesis shall be written in Italian or English, or in another language upon authorization by the Academic Board. The thesis must be accompanied by a summary in English.
2. The thesis, along with a report on the activities carried out during the PhD program and any publications, shall be evaluated by at least two reviewers who are not affiliated with the institution awarding the PhD degree and who possess high academic qualifications. Reviewers may belong to foreign or international institutions. At least one reviewer must be a university professor. Reviewers are appointed by the Academic Board within six months prior to the conclusion of the PhD program. The names of the reviewers may be proposed by the PhD supervisor and co-supervisors.
3. By the 10th day of the month preceding the end of the PhD program, the coordinator shall send the PhD theses to the reviewers. By the 10th day of the final month of the program, the reviewers must submit a written analytical evaluation of the thesis and recommend either admission to the public defense or postponement for a period not exceeding six months if substantial revisions or additions are necessary. After this period, the thesis shall be admitted to the public defense regardless, accompanied by a new written opinion by the same reviewers, taking into account any corrections or additions made. The postponement shall not entail any financial obligation for the University nor entitle the candidate to any additional scholarship or benefits, which terminate with the conclusion of the PhD cycle.
4. All PhD candidates in their final year must submit a formal application for admission to the final examination to the Rector no later than the 20th day of the final month of the last academic year. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the examination. Applications must be submitted exclusively online via the University's digital system.
5. In the case of substantiated scientific needs or force majeure not attributable to the PhD candidate, the deadlines indicated in paragraphs 3 and 4 above may be modified upon resolution of the Academic Board.

Article 21

Public Defense, Degree Award, Thesis Submission

1. The final examination consists of a public defense before a committee established in accordance with Article 22. Following the defense, the committee issues a collective written judgment approving or rejecting the thesis.
2. The committee may unanimously award **distinction (cum laude)** in the presence of results of particular scientific significance.
3. The title of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** abbreviated as "*Dott. Ric.*" or "*Ph.D.*", is awarded upon positive evaluation of a research thesis that contributes to the advancement of knowledge or methodologies in the chosen field.
4. Upon request, the University may certify the awarding of the degree, indicating whether honors (cum laude) were granted.

5. Within thirty days of the thesis defense and approval, the University shall deposit a copy of the thesis, in electronic format, in the Ministry's database. Upon authorization by the Academic Board, parts of the thesis may be withheld from public access if they include data protected by industrial secrecy laws, in accordance with current regulations. Nonetheless, the full thesis must be deposited with the national central libraries of Rome and Florence.

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Article 23

Evaluation Procedure

1. Once the examination committees are established, PhD candidates will be informed so they can send a copy of their thesis (along with the reviewers' evaluations and the report on their PhD activities) to each committee member.
2. Once the examination date is known, the PhD coordinator must notify the candidates at least fifteen days in advance. The exam calendar will be posted at the location of each PhD program.
3. The examination committees must complete their work within ninety days from the date of the Rector's appointment notification. Any resignations by committee members must be properly justified and are effective upon acceptance by the Rector.
4. If the committee fails to complete its work within the aforementioned time limit, it will be dismissed, and the Rector will appoint a new committee, excluding the dismissed members.
5. If a committee member is objectively unable to attend due to reasons beyond their control, they may participate in the examination via videoconference. This circumstance must be recorded in the examination report.
6. The University ensures the transparency of the evaluation procedures, including the reviewers' assessments of the candidates.