

EURODOC survey on the Doctorate¹ structure across Europe (version February 2018)
prepared by the EURODOC Doctoral Training Working Group

Croatia

I. General information and application procedure

Which institutions award doctoral degrees?

Universities in Croatia award doctoral degrees and Faculties perform doctorate. From around 130 doctorate programmes, majority is held by the public Universities.

What forms of doctorate attendance are available?

Full-time doctoral studies are most common. There are also part-time studies available, usually for doctoral candidates² that are employed in industry. In case of self-funded studies, doctoral candidate can choose either option.

What is the formal length of time foreseen for completing a doctorate?

Full-time doctoral studies usually last for three years, and for justified reasons, decided upon by the Panel of Doctoral Studies (members of this Panel differ from faculty to faculty - In some cases they are composed of group of lecturers at that doctoral programme, sometimes they have a member of doctoral candidates in them, and sometimes they have members from private sector); it may be extended for up to five years. A part-time doctorate lasts for a maximum of five years, and for justified reasons, decided upon by the Panel of Doctoral Studies; it may be extended to seven years. Upon the expiration of eight years of enrolment, the doctoral candidate will lose the right to defend its doctoral thesis. In case the quality of doctoral work, evaluated through the annual evaluation procedures, conducted by the Doctoral Study Council is not satisfactory, the Doctoral Study Council may decide to abolish the right of the doctoral candidate to continue the study.

What is the status of the doctoral candidates?

The doctoral candidate admitted to the university doctoral studies can be:

- a research assistant or a teaching assistant whose study costs are covered by the employing institution of Science and Higher Education;
- a recipient of a Croatian or international scholarships;
- a doctoral candidate whose study costs are paid by the person's employer; or
- a doctoral candidate who carries its own the study costs.

What are the social benefits for doctoral candidates with student status?

Social benefits for doctoral candidates are largely limited, since they don't have the same status as student in undergraduate (Bachelor) and graduate (Master) programmes. This is

¹ **Doctorate** is understood as the institutional frameworks and processes geared towards the completion of a doctoral degree.

² **Doctoral candidate** is a person enrolled in a doctorate.

primarily reflected in the benefit of student accommodation (student dorms) and subsidy for nutrition in student restaurants to which doctoral candidates are not eligible.

Social benefits are limited by the status of employment, i.e. unemployed full-time doctoral candidates are in the same position as other unemployed Croatian citizens, mostly not having benefits of this type.

Benefits such as sickness or maternity leave for doctoral candidates are determined by the institution of employment such as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), institutes, or companies in the business sector. The same goes for compulsory health insurance, which is also covered by the employer and applies to all employees, regardless of work or postgraduate student status.

It should be pointed out that doctoral candidates with disabilities can get benefits such as direct accommodation in the student dorm, scholarships and financing of the transportation costs.

How are doctoral candidates financially supported?

For doctoral candidates in Croatia there are several forms of financing the doctorate. For a research fellow or assistant, the study costs are covered by the science system. The costs may be covered by the institution/firm where the doctoral candidate is employed. Also, study costs can be fully or partially covered by a scholarship (or with a variety of scholarships), an international project or doctoral candidate covers all costs by himself/herself. There are no government scholarships, but rather doctoral candidates, if they work on the faculty, are treated as employees and receive regular salaries (between 600 and 700 euros per month after taxation).

Scholarships are awarded by various institutions and organizations such as HEIs or local government units (e.g. counties and cities). Also, scholarships can be given by international and non-governmental organizations or private companies. In addition, there is the possibility of obtaining scholarships from doctoral program which doctoral candidate is attending (e.g. scholarships for excellence).

Except for funding doctoral candidates can apply for fellowship, study or research in another institution or country.

What are the admission requirements for a doctorate?

Main admission requirements are determined by the Croatian Council of the doctoral studies, and further requirements are specified by the Faculties/Departments themselves in accordance with the type of doctoral study. A public call for admission to doctoral studies is announced at least one month before the beginning of the course, and criteria for evaluating the candidates includes several domains: success in the graduate study, published papers, professor's and potential mentor recommendation letter, quality of research proposal and motivation letter. After the first round of selection, there is an interview with the candidates and depending on the study programme there can be an additional exam. For all doctoral candidates, Master degree diploma in similar or same field of study as doctoral study they applied to, is required. In case of a related but not the same study programme, it can be required for the candidates to partake in an additional theory exam(s) from a recommended literature.

Admissions to the most doctoral programmes in Croatia are restricted, which means that the maximum number of places available for a specific study programme is subject to an annual

decision by HEI. Students who are citizens of EU member states in most cases may enrol in a study programmes under the same conditions as Croatian citizens, but usually English or German language certificate is required. The start of application procedure is different for each Faculty, but usually ends around October when the first semester of doctoral programmes starts.

II. Progression

How is a doctorate organized in your country?

Each doctorate consists of a set of obligatory courses, evaluated with ECTS credits. Depending on the HEI, doctoral candidates can each year choose a number of non-obligatory courses for additional ECTS credits. There is also a possibility to choose up to several courses from related doctoral programmes. Teaching is mandatory only for doctoral candidates employed at the HEIs.

How is doctoral supervision provided?

Each doctoral candidate is assigned an individual supervisor (mentor) from the home institution, which coordinates/guides the progress of the research project. It is possible to have also an additional consultant(s) in case of collaboration with the industry or if there is a need for an expert in a specific domain. Doctoral candidate can also obtain different information from doctoral services at their Faculty or on the University level (e.g. information regarding international mobility).

What are the main obligations of doctoral candidates?

Obligations differ from doctoral study to doctoral study. Main obligation can be summarized to:

- attend and pass all obligated courses by doctoral programme to collect basic ECTS points;
- collect additional (obligatory) ECTS points by attending conferences, publishing papers, attending courses, schools that are connected with his/her doctoral study, etc.;
- once a year, submit a report on their progress to the Doctoral council (if possible give a presentation of performed research);
- publish a paper in international or national journal (depending on the field it has to be cited in WoS, Current Contents (Thomson Reuters) database (CC) or other relevant database journal base for that research field);
- write a doctoral thesis (monograph or Scandinavian model type);
- defend the thesis in front of the tribunal.

Is any mobility compulsory?

Mobility is not compulsory.

How are courses in transferable skills provided?

Depending on the academic year, faculty can provide some courses in transferable skills. Usually the organizer is the faculty, university or some state offices. If there are any organized during the year, they are on voluntary basis.

How is the progress of the doctoral candidate evaluated?

Doctoral candidate is obligated, once a year, to submit a report on their progress to the Doctoral council (if possible give a presentation of performed research). The report is submitted on the University form.

Is it possible for doctoral candidates to change supervisor(s)?

Yes, it is possible. Doctoral candidate needs to write request on a form (given by University) accompanied by the statement from the former mentor. This is submitted to doctoral service. The decision for mentor change is made by the competent body of the institution responsible for the study at the proposal of the board of the doctoral study.

Are supervisors required to have training in order to supervise doctoral candidates?

For the first-time mentors it is recommended to attend a mentoring workshop in organization of the University or other recognized international schools, but is not a requirement.

III. Defence procedure

What requirements should be met to receive acceptance to enter the defence procedure?

A scientific topic of dissertation needs to be accepted by the Faculty board and University Senate. Depending on the doctoral programme, doctoral candidate needs to have necessary amount of ECTS credits which are usually obtained through completion of doctoral programme courses, attending the conferences, publishing papers, etc. Before the doctoral defense, doctoral candidate (field of science) is obliged to have a paper published or accepted for publishing in a respected international or domestic scientific journal, in the domain which is thematically related to their doctoral thesis. In addition, doctoral candidate needs to be the only or first/corresponding author of this paper. In the case of doctorate in arts, doctorate candidate needs to have a public presentation of their artwork.

What documents are required to start the defence procedure?

The doctoral thesis is usually in a form of a monograph. It can also be in a form of a compilation of published scientific papers (at least three papers) accompanied by the critical review chapter, which consists of an introduction, discussion, conclusion and an exhaustive review of a relevant literature. These scientific papers that are proposed as doctoral work have to be published in journals included in the database Web of Science, Scopus or ERIH, of which at least one in a journal with an impact factor greater than the median factor of journals in that area. Doctoral candidate have to be the first/corresponding author in at least two papers. Merged papers have to bring additional scientific contribution in comparison with the each individual paper. Doctoral thesis can be written in Croatian or any other language. Title, abstract and keywords of dissertation have to be, along with the chosen language, obligatory written in Croatian and English.

What is the defence procedure?

Members of the Commission receive doctoral thesis, and after reading and evaluating, they write a report. Their report has to be approved by the Faculty board and by the University Senate before the defense. Regarding the proceedings of defense, the Chairman of the Commission is responsible for the Defense of the doctoral thesis in consultation with the mentor and the doctoral candidate (negotiates the date, time and place of the public defense of the dissertation). Defense of doctoral dissertation is a public event and anyone can attend. The first stage of doctoral defense is an oral presentation of the research project using needed visualization tools (e.g. PowerPoint). The second part is an oral exam where members of the Commission, composed of at least three members (one of them must be from the different institution), pose their questions, and doctoral candidate has up to 20 minutes to write his/her response draft. After presenting his/her answers to the Commission, they can ask him/her sub-questions or additional questions if required. Then the discussion is opened for the auditorium and anyone can ask further questions. At the end of discussion, members of the Commission have a closed discussion, after which they publicly announce the grade for thesis.

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