

**Internal Regulation of the PhD Program in "Evolution, Ecology and Environmental Health", formerly the PhD Program in "Evolutionary Biology and Ecology", established within the Department of Biology at the University of Rome Tor Vergata.**

This regulation governs the procedures for the election of the Coordinator, the PhD admission process, and the provision of educational activities.

Its approval requires a vote by the Academic Board and the opinion expressed by the PhD student representative.

For all matters not expressly regulated herein, reference is made to national legislation on doctoral studies and to the internal regulations of the University of Rome Tor Vergata (Rector's Decree No. 494/2025).

It may be amended upon proposal by any member of the Academic Board.

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**1. Election of the Coordinator and Appointment of the Deputy**

The coordinator may be elected from among all Full Professors with a high scientific qualification (Art. 4 of Ministerial Decree 226). Only in cases of well-justified unavailability of Full Professors may Associate Professors be considered, provided they meet the requirements set forth by current regulations for access to the rank of Full Professor (Art. 4 of Ministerial Decree 226).

The Senior Faculty Member convenes the election at least 30 days before the voting date. Candidacies must be submitted to the Senior Faculty Member at least 5 days before the election date.

All members of the Academic Board have voting rights. Elections are conducted either in person or via the online procedures provided by the University.

An absolute majority of eligible voters elects the Coordinator. If no candidate is elected in the first round, a second round with the same candidates is held within the following fifteen working days. In this case, the candidate receiving the most votes is elected, or the one with the longest service in the event of a tie.

The Coordinator serves a three-year academic term and may be re-elected consecutively only once (Art. 3 of the University Regulations).

Once elected, the Coordinator may appoint a Deputy, who assumes the Coordinator's duties in the Coordinator's absence.

## **2. Review Group**

The Academic Board establishes a Review Group composed of the PhD Coordinator, at least two faculty members from the Academic Board, and one student representative. The Review Group supports the Coordinator in annual monitoring and cyclical review activities, as well as in preparing related documentation.

## **3. Advisory Board**

The Academic Board establishes an Advisory Board, chaired by the PhD Coordinator and composed of highly qualified scholars affiliated with national and international universities and institutions. It also includes representatives from the labour market and society and the specific scientific and professional profile defined by the PhD program. The Advisory Board provides guidance and advice on the PhD program's scientific and training projects and on identifying employment opportunities. It follows the activities of the Academic Board and meets at least once a year, producing an annual report that includes strategic guidance on the PhD program's activities.

## **4. Admission Procedure**

The selection committee is appointed by decree of the Director General and includes the PhD Coordinator (or a delegate) and four other members appointed by the Academic Board, at least two of whom must be faculty from the University of Rome Tor Vergata and meet the requirements for membership in the Academic Board, as detailed in Section A (Necessary Requirements for Accreditation of PhD Programs in Universities), Requirement A4 (Qualification of the Academic Board), of the Guidelines for Accreditation of PhD Programs and Institutions of the Ministry of Education, University and Research.

At the end of the admission procedures, the committee prepares a general merit ranking, which is posted at the examination venue and published on the University website accessible to all applicants.

## **5. Teaching Activities**

### **5.1. Supervision of PhD Students' Work**

Each PhD student is assigned a supervisor and a co-supervisor, of whom at least one must be from an academic institution. Both may be external to the Academic Board, provided at least one meets the qualifications required for Board membership (Art. 6, Ministerial Decree 226).

The supervisor is responsible for ensuring the availability of sufficient funds and facilities for the execution of the research project proposed by the student; contributes to defining the student's individual educational and research plan; oversees the entire educational path of the student, ensures the periodic evaluations of the student's activity, and acts as thesis advisor.

The co-supervisor supports the student's training path, monitors the student's progress over time, and verifies the formal correctness of all presentations made to the Academic Board, including any intermediate reports.

The grant holder may act as supervisor for additional scholarships based on specific projects, provided that either the supervisor or co-supervisor is from an academic institution and at least one meets the qualification requirements.

At the start of the first year, each student must present a research project to the Academic Board, aligned with a general thematic area and accompanied by the most advanced bibliography in the scientific field of study. The project is subject to approval by the Academic Board following a thorough discussion of its general and methodological aspects. After presenting and discussing their research project, each student is assigned to one of the **methodological panels** identified within the Academic Board. These panels, which may include approved external members, provide continuous support and conduct annual evaluations of students' progress, methodology, and data handling. Each panel completes Section 1 (Evaluation of the Methodological Panel/s) of the PhD Student Annual Evaluation Form.

Following interaction with the panel during the first year, students complete Section 2 (Self-Evaluation) of the same form and submit it to the Academic Board along with a presentation of their progress by the end of the first year. The Academic Board determines advancement to the second year based on the evaluation of Sections 1 and 2 and the completion of Section 3 (Evaluation of the Board Plenum).

The same annual evaluation process is repeated in the second and third years. In the third year, students present the final results of their research and the structure of their thesis, highlighting the objectives achieved. Admission to the final examination is subject to Board approval following the complete evaluation process.

To submit the doctoral thesis for external and final examination, the following are required:

- At least one original, first-author peer-reviewed publication affiliated with the PhD program, which must be published, accepted, or "in press." In exceptional cases, the Board may grant a waiver.
- Final presentation and discussion of the thesis before the Academic Board.
- A final positive evaluation by the Academic Board, based on the quality of both oral and written presentation and the candidate's scientific output during the PhD program.

## **5.2. Mandatory Activities for PhD Students**

In accordance with accreditation requirements, PhD students must attend interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary training activities, including courses in language and IT skills, research management, knowledge of European and international research systems, dissemination of results, intellectual property, open access, and the principles of research ethics and integrity.

To this end, the Academic Board periodically organizes lectures and/or seminars to support students' growth and research activities. Members of the Board are committed to organising or directly delivering the equivalent of at least 1 credit (CFU) of training specifically for the PhD program during each three-year cycle. Certified teaching, academic or industrial tutoring, and thesis supervision

contribute to the institutional obligations of university faculty under Art. 6 of Law No. 240 of December 30, 2010 (Art. 6, Ministerial Decree 226).

Each student is required to complete **90 hours** of coursework during the three-year program. These activities are defined in a Teaching Plan submitted by the student to the Academic Board by the end of the first year. They may include activities offered by the PhD Program and external ones (seminars, workshops, summer schools, conferences). The plan may be modified with Academic Board approval.

## **6. Final Examination**

The doctoral thesis must be written in English.

The thesis, along with a report on activities carried out during the PhD and any publications, is evaluated by at least two reviewers who are external to the University of Rome Tor Vergata and hold high-level qualifications, with at least one being a university professor. Reviewers may be from foreign or international institutions. Within 30 days of receiving the thesis, they provide a written analytical report, recommending whether the thesis may be admitted to the public defence or deferred for up to six months. After this period, the thesis is admitted to the defence with an updated written opinion from the reviewers (Art. 8, Ministerial Decree 226).

The defence takes place publicly before a committee that, where possible, respects gender balance. At least two-thirds of the committee members must be external to the University of Rome Tor Vergata and no more than one-third may be from the institutions participating in the PhD program. At least two-thirds of the committee must be from academic institutions, including foreign universities.

The defence is preferably conducted in English, especially considering the committee's composition.

Following the defence, the committee issues a written and reasoned thesis judgment. If the work is unanimously deemed of outstanding scientific value, honors (cum laude) may be awarded (Art. 8, Ministerial Decree 226).