



The Guide to PhD study Manual for Doctoral Studentship

Are you interested in PhD studies? The Slovak Academy of Sciences cooperates with up to 11 universities, which means the study conditions can indeed be diverse depending on the chosen study. At the beginning, it is advisable to go through the offer of academic dissertation topics and contact the supervisor directly. Applications are usually submitted in May and the admissions process takes place in June. Information is available both on the website of the chosen institute and at the department/faculty with which the institute cooperates. Study (internal) usually takes 4 years (some programs only 3 years), external 4-5 years.

Admission process

Admissions usually take place in person or online in front of the expert committee of the respective field of study, or while a committee member from the SAS Institute and a potential supervisor are present.

At admissions, there is usually a debate about the applicant's qualifications for a scientific research – his/her work on a diploma topic and previous publications so far, or participation in university department projects and student scientific conferences. Professional internships at home and abroad are a plus. Language skills are also needed, so you may be asked to communicate about these topics in professional English.

Different Universities may have different criteria. Knowledge of the English language is usually the most essential, but at some universities and when focusing on specific topics, knowledge of other languages may also be important.

On the day of the admission procedure at TUKE (Technical University of Košice), the candidate for doctoral studies takes a test in English, German, French or Russian language. The test contains 40 items, being divided into two parts, in which the vocabulary and grammar of the relevant language are tested at the B1+ to B2 level. The test takes 30 minutes and the answers are being recorded in the answer sheet.

The applicant successfully passes the test if he/she obtains at least 21 points out of 40. If he/she does not obtain the specified number of points and is admitted for doctoral studies, he/she can repeat the test at an alternative date, which is usually set at the end of January of the following calendar year (the end of the examination period in the winter semester). Sample tests: <https://kj.tuke.sk/wps/portal/kj/vyucba/doktorandske-studium/vzorove-prijimacie-testy-z-cj>

In the case of natural science and technical fields, a short test in chemistry or physics is also taken during the admission interview (TUKE), which verifies the applicant's knowledge.

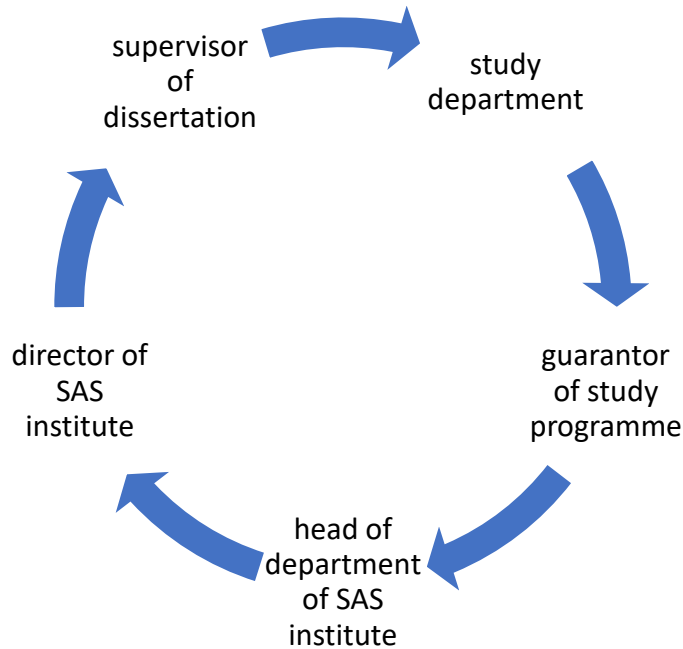


fig. 1 Doctoral studies at SAS is a closed cycle in which the organizations of SAS and the Universities are connected - you will regularly come into contact with the supervisor at SAS, the study department of the faculty, the guarantor person of the study program at the faculty, the Head of the department at the Institution of SAS and the Director of the institution.

Study department

You will have the first contact with the Study department when you first enroll for studies. Subsequently, you will have to register for each new academic year and you will also come to the study department at the end of the academic year to check the acquired credits (usually in July or August, it is recommended to get 40-60 credits per a year). Each year, the student must earn **at least 40 credits minimum** to advance to the next academic year. In the last year, it is no longer necessary to obtain 40 credits when submitting the work, unless the student is extending his/her studies to the 5th year and has a sufficient number of credits (210 credits). The Study department takes care of all administrative requirements of the study and it is always advisable to contact your clerk in case of any problems (e.g. interruption of studies).



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The first academic year

The first duty of a doctoral student is to submit an individual study plan. This is a plan to earn a sufficient number of credits during your studies. Usually, during the first year and the winter semester of the following year, students receive the credits from subjects that they have enrolled in and complete in habilitation of a written work for the state exam (so-called a mini-test). Subsequently, credits can be obtained only from a scientific activity (publications, participation in conferences) and pedagogical activity (teaching exercises, supervision of a bachelor's thesis, etc.).

The mandatory number of credits for these parts during the course of study are usually defined in the study regulations and must be selected proportionally already in the study plan. The professional side of the work and your studies should be guided by a supervisor. An important partner is also the department's guarantor, which establishes, for example, publication conditions for graduation. Each workplace may have its own special order and conditions of attendance, which must be familiarized with at the beginning of the studies.

The first time you commence at the workplace, be sure to get your new email address and make sure that you are included in the "mailing" list for doctoral students. When commencing at the workplace, you will also have to undergo training on health and safety at work, and you should also think about mandatory vaccinations when working in particular laboratories (vaccination against hepatitis). If a company vehicle is available, it is necessary to complete driver's training (and of course have a driver's license) if you want to use it during your studies, for example for business trips (conferences, field research, etc.).

The second academic year

In the second academic year, it is necessary to register for the state exams and the habilitation of the written thesis for the dissertation exam at the end of the winter semester. At the same time, it is necessary to submit a written work for the dissertation exam (minimovka). Before handing in the written work for the dissertation exam, it is also mandatory at some faculties to take a course in professional English, unless the student has a language certificate at least at B2 level and it is up to the student whether he/she wants to take the course in the first or second academic year.

The third academic year

In the third year, the student mainly devotes himself/herself to a scientific activity and work on the results of the dissertation topic. In each case, in the study plan, this year is relatively free and the possibilities to obtain the credits are individual. It is also an ideal time for an internship abroad (some study programs have a mandatory internship abroad).



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The fourth academic year

In the fourth year, the doctoral student works on the final development of the dissertation, which must be submitted at the end of this academic year. Pedagogical activity in the first and last semester of study is voluntary. The minimum number of credits to submit the thesis is 210 (plus 30 credits you get for submitting and defending the dissertation). At the same time, it is essential to meet the publication criteria. Mandatory publication criteria vary at different universities, as well depending on the different focus of study programs. You can find out what publication criteria you have to meet from the guarantor of the study. At individual workplaces, those criteria may differ within the internal regulations.

Interruption of studies and maternal leave

If you want to interrupt your studies, it is advisable to consult with your supervisor first, but it is sufficient to contact the study department. It is necessary to fill in the application, which must be signed by the Head of the workplace or a particular supervisor. There is a must to state the reason for the interruption. You can interrupt your studies from the following month, however, for a maximum of two years (for three years in the case of maternity leave). You must determine the interruption period in advance first. After it expires, you must re-enroll for studies. Study interruptions are associated with the study extension fees. If a student completes the registration more than 4 times, for the 5th registration it is necessary to write a request for the waiver of fees related to the extension of the study. Fees are largely (or completely) waived in case of maternity leave or serious illness.

Should the interruption of studies take place, the status of a student is being cancelled, as well as paid contributions to the health insurance company, and the receipt of the scholarship (stipend) is suspended, but after resuming studies, the payment of the stipend continues until all 48 monthly benefits (for 4 years) of the scholarship are withdrawn by student.

Health insurance and social insurance payments

The full amount of the doctoral scholarship is received by the doctoral student. No fees are deducted from it to the health insurance company (the state pays them for you) or to the social insurance (you can pay them voluntarily). Therefore, it is important to think about this fact, in the case that you, for example, are planning maternity leave, etc.



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Accommodation

Accommodation within the Comenius University (CU) for workplaces in Bratislava: The application can only be completed electronically via e-accommodation (login data the same as for AIS) at <https://ubytovanie.uniba.sk/>

Follow the website for deadlines to submit applications for accommodation and subsequently rooms' selection. Doctoral students have the reserved separate capacities, but they can also choose the rooms determined for Bc. and Mgr. students. It is also possible to choose the rooms reserved for partner accommodation.

Contacts to dormitories of Comenius University (CU)
MLYNY - website <https://mlyny.uniba.sk/> and email: mlyny.ubytovanie@uniba.sk
DRUŽBA - website <https://druzba.uniba.sk/> and email: ubytovacie@druzba.uniba.sk

Accommodation at STU (Slovakian University of Technology) dormitories in Bratislava and Trnava:

Accommodation for students is being offered in Bratislava (ŠD Juraja hronca, ŠD Mladost', ŠD Mladá Garda, ŠD Dobrovičova, ŠD Akademik, ŠD Nikos Belojanis, Hotel Akademik) and Trnava (ŠD Miloša Uhra in Trnava) with more detailed information and contacts at:

https://www.stuba.sk/sk/studentov/studentske-domovy-stu-v-bratislave.html?page_id=657

Accommodation Technical University TU Zvolen: <https://sdj.tuzvo.sk/>

Accommodation in Košice: Students admitted to the first academic year of study must apply for accommodation not later than July 31 of the respective year. Doctoral students have the reserved separate accommodation capacities. A list of students will be made based on the points allocated and accommodation will be allocated based on these points.

Pavel Jozef Šafárik University in Košice - Medická and Popradská streets:

<https://www.upjs.sk/pracoviska/studentske-domovy-jedalne/studentske-domovy/>

Technical University in Košice: <http://www.sdaj.tuke.sk/ubytovanie.html>

University of Veterinary medicine and Pharmacy in Košice:

<http://www.uvlf.sk/studium-bc-mgr-dr/ubytovanie-v-sd-bc-mgr-dr>



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SAS accommodation facilities:

Dormitory in Devínska Nová Ves (Bratislava): Accommodation is possible for PhD students and SAS employees in the three-room apartments having a separate room with a shared kitchen and bathroom. If interested, contact authorized persons at:

http://urad.sav.sk/index.php?p=show&id=56&fbclid=IwAR14E8fiLPNBmxBXx28Pt4SSbeRUBU0clTMbOw9_zjy-KXLzJZDI9T5VDs

For the further accommodation capacities and options please refer to websites of the individual universities, where a particular study program takes place (e.g. Banská Bystrica – [UMB](#), Nitra – [UKF](#), [SPU F](#), Trnava – [TU](#))

Scholarship

As part of their studies, doctoral students receive a monthly scholarship (> 800 euros), which increases after passing state exams in the second year (approximately by 100 euros to > 900 euros). Different SAS workplaces offer variable benefits. When working in a laboratory with hazardous substances, students may get a risk additional fee (rizikový príplatok), or they receive a monthly additional fee for a travel grant (e.g. for field research and participation in conferences during the year), but the additional fees are very individual.

Doktgrant

As part of the studies, it is possible to apply for a doctoral grant "Doktgrant". To file an application, it is necessary to develop a short project. Only a limited number of projects will be selected, which will be financially supported in the amount of maximum €2,000.

Feel free to contact us with various problems during your studies, or other questions, Young Scientists (contact: mladi-vedci@savba.sk). We will try to improve the conditions of students as much as possible. Register on our website <https://mladi.sav.sk/>, like our Facebook page or Instagram and follow all the news!



Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

Do I receive a scholarship outside the academic year too (July-August)?

Yes, the student receives the scholarship every month from enrollment in the first academic year until the habilitation of the PhD. work at the end of the fourth year in August (end of the fifth year for external studies). If the student extends his/her studies, the scholarship is not provided for the extended period.

Am I a student or an employee from the legal point of view?

From a legal point of view, a doctoral student is a student, however, he/she has some duties as an employee.

Being a PhD student, am I entitled to student benefits/discounts?

Partly yes. With a valid ISIC, you can take advantage of commercial discounts and reduced entrance fees to cultural institutions. You are also entitled to student prices for accommodation in Comenius University's dormitories and a discount on meals in the canteens. However, you lose the right to free train transport and a student discount in public transport.

What about health/social insurance?

Health insurance for doctoral students up to the age of 30 is paid by the state. Social insurance is voluntary and you can pay for it as a self-payer in the social insurance institution. Doctoral studies are not counted as years of service for pension purposes.

During my doctoral studies, I would like to conduct a rigorous procedure (RNDr., PhDr., etc.) or a pedagogical minimum training. Am I somehow privileged?

Yes, the full-time doctoral students (not external studies) have a significant discount on the fee for the rigorous procedures and a pedagogical minimum training.

How long does the doctoral study last? Can I finish my doctoral studies before the appointed time?

Doctoral studies usually last 3 years for humanities field and 4 years for technical/science fields. According to the law, it is not possible to complete the studies faster than this time. Otherwise, the student can extend his studies by max. 2 years (so a maximum of 3+2 or 4+2 years in total).

How many credits (grade points) must be obtained for the scientific and pedagogical part of the study?

Within the entire course of study, it is mandatory to obtain at least 40 credits for the study part (the first three semesters of study - enrolled subjects, this includes, for example, a professional English test for 5 credits) and at least 40 credits for scientific activity (publications of scientific articles, monographs, patents, participation in conferences, etc.). Pedagogical activity **is not** mandatory, but obtaining credits from pedagogical activity is very appropriate, as a student can obtain 16 credits per



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a year from it (supervision/review of Bachelor thesis, teaching the subject exercises, publication of scripts and textbooks, etc.). We recommend that you inquire about the details at the faculties and university department committees.

Is it mandatory to take a language training?

During the admission procedure, it is necessary to demonstrate knowledge of the English language, and as part of the study, it is necessary to complete a professional training in the English language in order to improve the writing of professional texts, but also within the framework of presentation skills. This preparation is completed with a test that checks several skills in the English language (listening, reading comprehension, grammar test, conversation). As part of the study, at several universities, it is also convenient to enroll in optional subjects such as conversation in the English language or writing professional texts in the English language, which will help with the overall preparation for the test.

Teaching or/and how shall I teach suddenly?

When applying, you have to expect that you will be part of the learning process from the other side after starting your studies. A student becomes suddenly a teacher? Yes, you should be able to explain and practice the students' practical knowledge. Some institutions (e.g. Comenius University) offer the opportunity to complete practical training in the first semester, where you will learn basic pedagogical principles and types of how to handle teaching exercises as part of your studies.

How to do a “minimovka” (a written work for the state exam)?

Again, the criteria may vary depending on the study focus, but in this work (at least 30 pages of text) you should analyse and describe in detail the methodological procedures that are (will be) applied in the dissertation work. It is also mandatory to describe the current status of your work on the dissertation topic and the preliminary results (if you have already achieved any), however, this point is not mandatory at each workplace.

How to write a dissertation?

First of all, it is important to meet the administrative requirements upon the work and also to study the policy of the particular university rector on writing assigned works, such as:

Comenius University: https://uniba.sk/fileadmin/ruk/legislativa/2018/Vp_2018_02.pdf

STU: https://www.stuba.sk/sk/studenti/legislativa/predpisy-suvisiace-s-vypracovanim-a-odovzdanim-zaverecnych-prac.html?page_id=4563

TUKE: <http://www2.ekf.tuke.sk/diplomovky/metpokyn.pdf>



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The structure of the work may differ slightly depending on the focus, however, 30% of the work shall be methodological - theoretical foundations in the work (processing of the research of up-to-day sources) and 30-40% shall be the results of own research. It is crucial indeed to consult the results of your work with a supervisor or a recommended specialist consultant.

Small changes in the title of the dissertation may be altered after consultation with the supervisor directly at the study department. Major changes, however, must be approved by the guarantor of the study as well as the scientific council at the particular university and may take several months.

Should you have any questions, you can even contact us, Young Scientists of SAS, at mladi-vedci@savba.sk or at facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/mladivedciSAV> or/and group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mladiSAV>.

We will do our best to answer your inquiries successfully 😊