



MINISTERIAL DECREE n. 301/2022

Doctoral programmes Accreditation Guidelines

- HAVING REGARD** to Law 473 of 13 August 1984 on the "Rules on scholarships and Doctorates in universities";
- HAVING REGARD** to Law 398 of 30 November 1989, on the "Regulations on university scholarships
- HAVING REGARD** to Law 210 of 3 July 1998, n. 210 on the "Regulations for the recruitment of researchers and tenured university professors", and in particular article 4 concerning the research doctorate;
- HAVING REGARD** to Law 240 of 30 December 2010, n. 240 on the "Regulations concerning the organization of universities, academic staff and recruitment, as well as delegation to the Government aimed at encouraging the quality and efficiency of the university system";
- HAVING REGARD** to Law 508 of 21 December 1999, n. 508, on the "Reform of the Academies of Fine Arts, of the National Academy of Dance, of the National Academy of Dramatic Art, of the Higher Institutes for the Artistic Industries, of the Music Conservatories and of the state recognized Music Institutes";
- HAVING REGARD** to the Regulation governing the definition of the educational systems of the Institutions higher education in art, music and dance, pursuant to article 2 of Law 508 of 21 December 1999, adopted with decree of the President of the Republic n. 212 of 8 July 2005;
- HAVING REGARD** to the Regulation on the structure and functioning of the National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System (ANVUR), adopted by decree of the President of the Republic n. 76 of 1 February 2010;
- HAVING REGARD** to the Regulation on the procedures for the accreditation of Doctoral Institutions and Programmes and the criteria for the establishment of PhD programmes by accredited bodies, adopted with decree of the Minister of Education, University and Research n. 45 of 8 February 2013;
- HAVING REGARD** to the note from the Minister of Education, University and Research prot. 3315 of 1 February 2019, on "New guidelines for the accreditation of PhD programmes" pursuant to the aforementioned regulation of Ministerial Decree n. 45/2013;
- HAVING REGARD** to Decree-Law 1 of 9 January 2020, n. 1, converted, with amendments, by law 5 March 2020, n. 12, concerning the establishment of the Ministry of University and Research;
- HAVING REGARD** to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, presented by the Italian Government to the European Commission and approved by the same with decision of 22 June 2021 pursuant to Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council no. 241/2021 of 12 February 2021, which establishes the recovery and resilience mechanism, and in particular the specific objectives of Mission 4, Reform 1.4, relating to the "Reform of doctorates";
- HAVING REGARD** to Decree-Law n. 89 of 9 June 2021 on "Urgent measures to strengthen the administrative capacity of public administrations functional to the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) and for the efficiency of justice", converted, with amendments, by Law n. 113 of 6 August 2021;
- HAVING REGARD** to the Regulation containing the procedures for the accreditation of Doctoral Institutions and programmes and the criteria for the establishment of PhD programmes by accredited bodies, adopted with Ministerial Decree n.226 of 14 December 2021, and, in particular, article 4, paragraph 3, according to which "on the proposal of ANVUR, in compliance with the criteria set out in this

regulation, as well as in consideration of the results of the monitoring referred to in article 16, of the data contained in the Registry referred to in article 14 and of those collected in the accreditation procedures referred to in article 5, and taking into account in particular the general guidelines for the university system and the Standards for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the Ministry periodically updates the indicators for the accreditation and evaluation of PhD programmes and the related guidelines”;

HAVING REGARD to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, approved by the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, 14-15 May 2015;

HAVING REGARD to the "Proposal for Guidelines for the evaluation of research PhD programmes pursuant to art. 4, paragraph 3, of Ministerial Decree 226/2021”, approved by the ANVUR Governing Board with resolution no. 44 of 1 March 2022;

CONSIDERING that it is necessary to proceed to the definition of the Guidelines for the accreditation of PhD Programmes, pursuant to the aforementioned paragraph 3 of article 4, of Ministerial Decree n. 226 December 14, 2021; **HAVING REGARD** to the decree of the President of the Republic of 12 February 2021 with which Prof. Maria Cristina Messa was appointed Minister of University and Research;

DECREES

Art. 1

1. The Guidelines for the accreditation of PhD Programmes attached to this decree, of which they form an integral part, are approved.

GUIDELINES FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PHD PROGRAMMES PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 4, PARAGRAPH 3, OF THE REGULATION REFERRED TO IN DM DECEMBER 14, 2021, N. 226

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

- 1. TYPES OF DOCTORATES**
- 2. IN PARTICULAR: DOCTORATES IN ASSOCIATED FORM**
- 3. THE QUALIFICATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE DOCTORATE (ref. art. 4, paragraph 1; art. 6, paragraphs 4, 5 and 6; art. 8, paragraph 4; art. 9; art. 10; art. 11) .**
 - 3.1 THE PHD PROGRAMME BOARD**
 - 3.2 THE TRAINING PROGRAM**
 - 3.3 DOCTORAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS**
 - 3.4 DISCIPLINA TRANSITORIA**

INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines are aimed at providing Universities with operational indications for the submission of applications for accreditation of new programmes starting from the XXXVIII cycle. The Guidelines apply to the evaluation of the new doctoral programs of the XXXVIII cycle and to the doctoral programs of the previous cycles in the following cases:

- modification of the programme name;
- activation of new curricula of already accredited programmes, with accreditation limited to the new curricula;
- change in the composition of the PhD Programme Board, by more than 25% of the initial one;
- Modification of the PhD programme Coordinator;
- all programmes accredited for the 2017/2018 academic year (cycle XXXIII) and that have not been subjected to subsequent verification or re-accreditation by ANVUR.

These Guidelines will also be used as a reference scheme for setting up the new telematic interface through which the proposals of the new PhD programmes will have to be submitted. The periodic evaluation activity referred to in article 5, paragraph 5 of the DM will be carried out on the basis of the results of the annual monitoring carried out by ANVUR also involving the internal evaluation bodies of the Institutions and in the context of the periodic accreditation of the Institutions/ affiliated or associated institutions, taking into account the specificity of doctoral training compared to the first and second university cycle. For this purpose, ANVUR is developing the evaluation model that will be part of the application guidelines of Ministerial Decree 1154 of 14 October 2021 "Self-assessment, evaluation, initial and periodic accreditation of Institution and study programmes".

At the end of each accreditation cycle, ANVUR will be responsible of the publication its website of the list of evaluated of PhD Programmes, without prejudice to the competence of the Ministry in terms of their accreditation.

1. TYPES OF DOCTORATES (according to. art. 3, art. 10, art. 11)

Based on the Ministerial Decree no. 226/2021 the telematic interface will allow the formulation of accreditation request for the following types of doctorates:

- Doctorates in non-associated form (art. 3, paragraphs 1 and 3 of the Ministerial Decree) Doctorates in associated form (art. 3, comma 2 of the Ministerial Decree)
- Industrial Doctorates (art. 10 del Ministerial Decree)
- Doctorates of national interest (art. 11 of the Ministerial Decree)

2. IN PARTICULAR: DOCTORATES IN ASSOCIATED FORM (art. 3, par. 2; art. 4, par.1 (b point2); art. 5; art. 10; art. 11)

With regard to this type of doctorate, it should be noted that the main priority is the qualification of the institutions associated (through agreements or consortiums) with the proposing University. It should be noted that in the case of agreements that do not allow the accreditation of three doctoral cycles (i.e., a maximum of five years, as per Article 5, Paragraph 4 of the Ministerial Decree), they must still guarantee at least one complete doctoral cycle. Any accreditation is valid for a number of cycles equal to those agreed upon, without prejudice to the effects resulting from periodic assessment and evaluation, as outlined in Article 5, Paragraph 4, second sentence of the Decree. It should be emphasized that in the case of doctorates initiated by a university in association with only one other institution, the participation of the latter with at least 2 scholarships is required; this requirement is reduced to 1 scholarship for each institution if there are at least two external institutions involved. It is understood that the proposing University must ensure at least 2 scholarships in any case. With regard to the assessment of the associated institutions' qualification, ANVUR will verify:

- a) for foreign universities, that they are duly authorized in the reference country to issue PhDs or equivalent qualifications.
- b) for Italian or foreign Research Institutions
 - As far as the Italian research institutions are concerned, the requirement is satisfied if the institution participated in the last VQR conferring at least 70% of the expected products in the scientific areas of reference of the doctoral programme, obtaining an evaluation for at least half of them at least "excellent", or if in the scientific area of reference it is above the average VQR evaluation relating to research institutions.
 - As far as foreign research institutions are concerned, the requirement is satisfied if the institution carries out a qualified cultural and scientific activity in the fields of reference of the doctorate, which can be demonstrated both by the importance of the same in the country of origin, and by collaborations with other national or international institutions (for example, involvement in other doctoral projects in their or other countries).

For both Italian and foreign institutions, the adequacy of scientific structures and equipment will be assessed in relation to the scope and level of involvement of the institution in the doctorate.

c) for AFAM Institutions:

AFAM Institutions must possess demonstrable research and development activities consistent with and functional to the research doctorate, proven by the possession of at least one of the following requirements:

- have taken part in the last 5 years or participate in research groups financed on competitive grants in projects consistent with the topics of the PhD;
- have received international recognition in the last 5 years in areas consistent with the doctoral topics.

The agreement or the consortium agreement must report the elements that characterize the participation of the AFAM Institution in the doctoral programme (in terms, for example, of complementarity with academic activities). With regard to the possibility that these Institutions can autonomously issue doctoral, multiple or joint titles, it will still be necessary to wait for the adoption of the Decree implementing art. 15 of the DM.

d) for companies:

The company must possess a demonstrable research and development (R&D) activity that is coherent and functional to the proposed research doctorate (for example scientific publications, and/or patents and/or training activities for doctoral students, and/or participation in research and development projects with Italian research institutions and/or presence of a research center and/or investment of a significant fraction of its budget in R&D and/or obtainment of external funding to conduct R&D activities, participation in mobility projects with universities and research institutions). In the frame of doctorates activated in collaboration with companies, the PhD programme can also be defined as industrial, on the basis of the provisions of art. 10 of the DM, as further specified in paragraph 3 of the Guidelines, in relation to the PhD Programme Board and the training project. It should be noted that the agreements with companies aimed only at financing individual doctoral scholarships but not activated pursuant to art. 3, paragraph 2, the demonstrable research and development activity will not be verified. e) d) in the case of public administrations, cultural institutions and research infrastructures of European or international relevance, the specificity of the proposed research and development or innovation programmes will be verified.

The agreement or the consortium agreement must report the elements that characterize participation in the doctoral programme (in terms, for example, of complementarity with academic activities).

In the case of doctoral programme that have received accreditation at European/International level (joint PhD program), ANVUR will express a positive opinion on the accreditation of these programmes together with the decision of recognition/funding at European level and the sending of the relative documentation, which can also be used for evaluation purposes in the context of periodic accreditation.

It should be noted that doctorates in associated form also include PhDs of national interest, which require the stipulation of agreements or the creation of consortia between several universities and the institutions indicated in art. 3, paragraph 2 of the DM.

3. THE QUALIFICATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE DOCTORATE (ref. art. 4, paragraph 1; art. 6, paragraphs 4, 5 and 6; art. 8, paragraph 4; art. 9; art. 10; art. 11).

In addition to the characteristics of the institutions participating in the doctorate, for the purposes of accreditation the central element of the evaluation is represented by the scientific qualification of the programme and its sustainability in terms of resources and available structures.

3.1 THE PHD PROGRAMME BOARD (ref. art. 4, paragraph 1, letter a); art. 6, paragraphs 4, 5 and 6; art. 10, paragraph 2).

It should be remembered that the PhD Programme Board, in compliance with the minimum number of 12 members and taking into account, where possible, gender balance, must be made up of at least half of its members by full-time university professors of I or II level belonging to scientific fields consistent with the objectives of the programme. For example, in the case of a total number of members equal to 21, at least 11 must be full-time university professors.

The minimum number of PhD Programme Board members is reduced to 6 in the case of Schools of Advanced Studies. In relation to industrial doctorates and in order to take into account the specificities envisaged by article 10 of the DM, it is required that within the PhD Programme Board there is at least one highly qualified scientific or professional member from each company involved in the doctoral programme.

As far as the qualification and commitment of the members of the PhD Programme Board are concerned, it should be noted that:

- a) The members of the PhD Programme Board can participate in a maximum of 2 national boards, one of which in associated form (including industrial doctorates or doctorates of national interest). For members of PhD Programme Board relating to doctoral programmes of Schools of Advanced Studies, participation in 2 Boards of the same institution is permitted, without prejudice to the possibility of participating in a further college in associated form, as indicated above.
- b) the Researchers pursuant to art. 24, paragraph 3, letter b) of law 240/2010 are considered as permanent researchers.

With regard to the verification of the scientific qualification of the PhD Programme Board, it will be evaluated, in particular:

- researchers and associate professors, possession of at least two ASN threshold values relating to associate level;
 - for full professors, possession of at least two ASN threshold values relating to full professor level.
- In any case, it should be noted that this evaluation will have no impact for the purposes of the ASN, but will only be relevant for verifying the requirement relating to the PhD Programme Board.
- For foreign institutions' researchers, it will be verified (through the information uploaded by the proposing institution) that they possess at least one threshold value relating to full professor level or at least two threshold values relating to associate professor level or to have won a competitive EU grant for a research project consistent with the topics of the doctorate.
 - For AFAM institutions members, it will be verified (through the information uploaded by the proposing institution) that they meet at least one of the following requirements:

- have participated in the last 5 years or participate in research groups financed on competitive grants in projects consistent with the topics of the PhD;
- have received international recognition in the last 5 years in areas consistent with the topics of the PhD.

With regard to the figure of the PhD Programme coordinator, it should be noted that:

- normally the coordinator must be a full professor and, in case of justified unavailability of the latter, the role can be played by an associate professor;
- the coordinator may also be a Research Manager of an Italian or foreign Research Institution;
- the coordinator can carry out this role in only one PhD programme Board at national level;
- the scientific qualification must be certified either by the possession of the requisites for carrying out the functions of ASN commissioner or alternatively by the possession of all three threshold values for access to the functions of full professor.

As far as the members of the PhD programme Board not belonging to universities or research institutions are concerned, they can take part to the PhD programme Board for a maximum of one third of the participants; for these figures, a high and proven scientific or professional qualification is required, which will be ascertained as indicated below:

- high scientific qualification: having participated as author or co-author in scientific publications related to the topics of the doctorate, or having a research doctorate or having participated in competitive research projects within the topics of the doctorate, being the holder of patents in the field of doctoral topics, have gained experience in tutoring doctoral students;
- high professional qualification: hold a responsible role in their own institution and have contributed professionally to the debate at least at a national level in the field of research of the doctorate.

It should be noted that the 25% change in the composition of the PhD Programme Board makes it necessary to re-accredit the programme. Therefore, a new accreditation will be carried out if less than 75% of the initially accredited members remains in the Board itself.

3.2 THE TRAINING PROGRAM (art. 4, comma 1, lettere e, f, g; art. 10, commi 2 e 3; art. 11, comma 2; art. 17, comma 4).

The characteristics of the training program are closely related to the type of doctoral programme (paragraph 1) that the University will refer to.

Specifically, the following is required:

- for all doctoral programs, the educational activities provided should be:
 - clearly distinct from those taught in first and second level degree programs;
 - closely aligned with the research activities envisaged in the PhD program, including its various curricula;
 - quantitatively appropriate, with an average annual workload of at least 20 hours per cycle, taking into account the specific research field;
 - clearly indicated in the training program, referring to advanced research activities and high-level training, including seminars, as well as activities conducted within laboratories or research infrastructures. It should also encompass interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary training activities shared among multiple doctoral programs. This may include language and computer skills enhancement, teaching methodologies, research management, knowledge of European and international research systems, dissemination and valorisation of results, intellectual property, open access to data and research outputs, and fundamental principles of ethics, gender equality, and integrity.

- within the framework of the doctoral regulations, it is required that the university implements a quality assurance system for the design and management of doctoral training in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The implementation of this aspect, for which ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research Systems) will provide appropriate guidelines to universities, should be gradually adopted and will be assessed during the periodic evaluation of doctoral programs.

These guidelines also apply to proposals for doctoral programs consistent with the themes of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), including innovative doctoral programs for public administration and innovative doctoral programs for cultural heritage. For these programs, different modes of implementation may be established compared to those prescribed for nationally relevant doctoral programs.

In addition to the above, the following requirements are requested:

- For industrial doctorates, each participating company should indicate the scientific and training objective/project it aims to achieve through participation in the doctoral program;
- For nationally relevant doctoral programs, it should be detailed, as specified in Article 11, Paragraph 2, Letter a) of the Ministerial Decree, how the doctoral program aims to contribute to the progress of research in terms of (alternatively):
 - Specific objectives of the National Research Program (PNR) and related national plans;
 - Specific objectives of priority areas of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR);
 - Innovative paths for public administration or cultural heritage included among the objectives of the PNRR.

For nationally relevant doctoral programs, the following should also be clearly described in accordance with Article 11, Paragraph 2, Letters b) and c):

- High-quality training paths and the access methods to research infrastructures identified for the project, involving at least one university and at least 4 entities as referred to in Article 3, Paragraph 2 of the Ministerial Decree.
- The mechanisms to ensure effective sharing of training and research activities among doctoral students, as well as the regulations regarding financial support, exchange, and mobility of faculty and doctoral students. This should also include provisions for potential co-supervision arrangements.

3.3 DOCTORAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS (Article 4, Paragraph 1, Letter b); Article 8, Paragraph 4; Article 9; Article 10, Paragraphs 4 and 5; Article 11, Paragraph 2, Letter d)

The following paragraph provides more detailed information regarding aspects related to services for doctoral students and resources allocated to the organization of the program.

The following general rules should be noted:

- a) For not associated doctoral programs, at least 3 scholarship positions must be provided, and the average number at the university level should be at least 4. This provision does not apply to Schools of Advanced Study.
- b) In the case of associated doctoral programs, the minimum number of scholarship positions is 4. Specifically, in the case of an association between a University and another institution, each must fund 2 scholarships. In the case of an association between a University and multiple institutions, the University must fund at least 2 scholarships, and the other institutions must fund at least 1 each. It should be noted that the required co-financing can be provided directly by the participating institution through a convention/consortium or made available by external entities through specially formalized agreements.
- c) In the case of nationally relevant doctoral programs, the minimum number of scholarship positions is 30 for each doctoral cycle, with a minimum of 1 scholarship per participating institution.
- d) Other forms of financial support are considered equivalent to scholarships, such as research grants (only if the university's regulations on research grants do not require a Ph.D. degree to obtain them), scholarship positions funded by other Italian or foreign entities, apprenticeship contracts, positions reserved for employees of companies or public and private administrations that maintain salary benefits.
- e) Any positions without scholarships can be provided in compliance with a ratio of 1 position without a scholarship for every 3 positions with scholarships. However, for doctoral programs fully funded under the PNRR calls, all positions must be covered by scholarships.
- f) For all doctoral positions (with and without scholarships):
 - An additional budget of at least 50% of the scholarship amount, based on a research period abroad of up to a maximum of 12 months, must be ensured (this period can be extended to 18 months for jointly supervised or associated doctoral programs with foreign institutions).
 - An additional budget of at least 10% of the scholarship value must be allocated to support research activities. Regarding nationally relevant doctoral programs, the additional budget value must be 20% of the scholarship amount and must be guaranteed through ministerial co-financing.
 - In the case of doctoral programs in cooperation with foreign institutions, regarding the possible period of stay abroad, an increase in the scholarship or equivalent resources/services covering the entire cost of the stay abroad must be guaranteed.

3.4 TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS (ref. Article 3, Paragraph 3)

With regard to institutions that award qualifications equivalent to the doctoral degree, as provided for in Article 74 of the Presidential Decree of July 11, 1980, No. 382, for newly established programs, the accreditation procedures and requirements applicable to Schools of Advanced Studies will be followed, with the commitment of the aforementioned institutions, as referred to in Article 3, Paragraph 3, of Ministerial Decree No. 226/2021, to participate in the upcoming Research Quality Assessment (VQR).

For already established programs, the ordinary equivalence process provided for in the aforementioned Article 74 of the Presidential Decree No. 382/1980 will continue to be applied for the next three academic years.