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Regulation for Doctoral Studies and Dissertation Council of International Black Sea University

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Article 1. General provisions

1.1. This document regulates issues related to the functioning of the Doctoral Studies and Dissertation Council at the International Black Sea University LLC (hereinafter referred to as the “University”) in accordance with the Law of Georgia “On Higher Education” and the normative acts in force at the University;

1.2. According to Article 2, Subparagraph “t” of the Law of Georgia “On Higher Education”, a doctoral program is an educational program of the third level of academic higher education, a set of educational and scientific-research components, which aims to train scientific personnel and ends with the award of the academic degree of Doctor;

1.3. The goals of the doctoral educational program are focused on the creation of new knowledge and/or the development of existing knowledge, the promotion of the realization and dissemination of knowledge by conducting original, modern and innovative research;

1.4. The doctoral graduate is awarded an academic degree by the Dissertation Council of the International Black Sea University LLC. The formation of the academic degree to be awarded is carried out in accordance with the legislation of Georgia - indicating the direction and/or field/specialty.

Article 2. Definitions of Terms

2.1. University - a higher education institution with the right to implement doctoral educational programs, which is authorized under the legislation of Georgia or a higher education institution of a foreign country, which is recognized in accordance with the legislation of the same country;

2.2. HEI - a higher education institution;

2.3. School - a basic educational unit within the structure of a university;

2.4. Center - the National Center for the Education Quality Enhancement of the State Educational Service of Georgia;

2.5. Dissertation Council - a dissertation council at a school, which is established in accordance with the procedure established by this Regulation;

2.6. Field dissertation council - a council approved by the school's dissertation council from among its members in accordance with the procedure established by this Regulation;

2.7. Research Ethics Commission – a commission that determines the compliance and ethics of research conducted by a doctoral student with the Georgian legislation and principles defined by international standards;

2.8. Secretariat – the scientific secretariat of the Dissertation Council;

2.9. Doctoral student – a person studying for a doctoral degree;

2.10. Dissertation – a scientific work that a doctoral student defends to obtain the academic degree of Doctor.

Article 3. Planning, development, and implementation of the doctoral program

3.1. The doctoral program is approved by the order of the rector and is implemented in accordance with the internal normative documents of the university and the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia;

3.2. The doctoral educational program promotes the development of such competencies and transferable skills for doctoral students as planning and implementation of research and scientific activities, critical analysis of scientific literature, data analysis, teaching (pedagogical skills), and expression of opinion in popular scientific language;

3.3. At least 5 affiliated academic personnel of the relevant field are involved in the implementation of the doctoral educational program, including at least 3 professors and/or associate professors. The university ensures the involvement of scientific personnel in the implementation of the program, if any;

3.4. Based on the specifics and development of the field, the doctoral student's supervisor must have published at least 1 scientific paper (in professional fields - creative/performing project) in a peer-reviewed journal with a foreign international index determined by the University within the last 3 years, which corresponds to the general topic/research area of the doctoral student's doctoral thesis;

3.5. Other issues related to the planning and development of the doctoral program are regulated by the "The Rule of Planning and Development of Educational Programs" in force at the University.

Article 4. Structure and Duration of the Doctoral Program

4.1. The duration of the doctoral program is not less than 3 years and includes no more than 60 credits – a study component (professor's assistantship, research skills, seminar and other components provided for by the program) and a research component carried out for no less than 2 years (thesis preparation and defense, other components provided for by the program). In addition, the number of credits assigned to the study component may be modified taking into account the specificity of the doctoral educational program, the amount of competencies (which the component aims to develop), and the necessary condition that its total volume does not exceed 60 credits;

4.2. A student who has failed to complete doctoral studies within the time limits specified by the program is entitled to continue his/her studies/research in accordance with the "Regulations of the Educational Process".

Article 5. Language of instruction

5.1. The language of instruction for doctoral programs is Georgian, and for English-language programs - English.

Article 6. Program Director

6.1. The head of the doctoral program is an affiliated academic or scientific staff of the university who has the necessary knowledge, experience and appropriate competence in the field of study of the program for the development and implementation of the program;

6.2. The head of the program is a member of the field dissertation council and is directly involved in the implementation of the doctoral program;

6.3. The head of the program is responsible for the implementation and development of the program. In addition, (s)he is obliged to cooperate with the school for the effective conduct of the educational process;

6.4. The head of the program is obliged to ensure that doctoral students are informed about the requirements of the program and, within the framework of his/her competence, to support the research activities of the doctoral student;

6.5. The program director is obliged to be guided by the university's internal regulatory documentation in this process and act in compliance with other requirements stipulated by Georgian legislation.

Article 7. Enrollment in a Doctoral Program and Appeal of Results

7.1. A person who has obtained a Master's or equivalent academic degree in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia, or whose higher education obtained in a foreign country is recognized in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia and is equivalent to a Master's degree, shall be enrolled in a Doctoral Program of the University. This paragraph does not apply to a person who has obtained a Master's or equivalent academic degree in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia and is equivalent to a Master's degree. This paragraph does not apply to a person who has obtained a Master's or equivalent academic degree in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia and is equivalent to a Master's degree on the basis of completing a Master's educational program, in particular a 60-credit Master's educational program, provided for in Article 46, Paragraph 23 of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education;

7.2. In accordance with the procedures established by the University, the applicant must submit the documentation required by Paragraph 7.3 within the specified time limits. The list of documents to be submitted, the conditions of acceptance and deadlines are published by the Marketing and Public Relations Department on the official website of the university, and for international students additionally by the International Relations Department;

7.3. The documents to be submitted by the applicant are:

a. Identity card or passport and its copy;

b. A certified copy of the diploma and supplement certifying the master's or equivalent academic degree;

b1. In the case of a diploma issued by a foreign country, it is necessary to submit a translation recognized by the LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement and certified by a notary;

b2. In the case of a diploma obtained by the candidate as a result of completing a program of at least five years within the period specified by the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, the candidate must also submit a recognition document issued in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation, which confirms the equivalence of the diploma to the corresponding level;

C. 2 photographs 3X4 size (printed and digital version on CD);

D. Copy of the certificate of enrollment or military ID card (for military conscripts);

E. A work/publication in the relevant field and/or a document confirming participation in scientific-research projects and events and/or at least 2 years of experience in the relevant field; In addition, the applicant may be required to submit other additional document(s) specified by the relevant program;

F. A copy of an international certificate confirming proficiency in English at level B2 or, in cases provided for by the program, C1 (if any). Detailed information on language competence is regulated in accordance with Article 8 of the same Regulation;

G. Application form;

7.3.1. The list of documents to be submitted by international students is determined in accordance with the "Regulations for Enrollment of International Students";

7.3.2. In case of incomplete submission of the above-mentioned documents, the applicant's application will not be accepted;

7.4. After submitting the documentation specified in this article, the applicant will undergo an interview with the admissions committee of the doctoral program. The applicant must submit a research proposal (not less than 1500 words and not more than 4500 words) in the field of his/her future research. The evaluation of the research project is carried out in two stages. At the first stage, the admissions committee evaluates the research project, and at the second stage, an interview is held, the results of which are recorded in the form of a protocol;

7.5. The admissions committee shall consist of at least 3 members of the field dissertation council, including the Head of the program. The composition of the admissions committee shall be determined by the dissertation council, on which a relevant protocol shall be drawn up. In order to approve the admissions committee, the dean of the relevant school shall apply to the rector of the university and submit the protocol of the dissertation council;

7.6. The research project and the interview are evaluated according to the rubric (criteria) determined by the relevant doctoral program;

7.7. A decision is made on the applicant's enrollment if the average score of the majority of the members of the commission makes at least 51 points (unless other requirements are stipulated by the program). In case of equal final total scores, preference is given to candidates with a higher score;

7.8. The rector issues an order on the person's enrollment in the doctoral program. An agreement is concluded between the doctoral student and the university, which defines their rights and obligations;

7.9. The order on the enrollment of a doctoral student in the doctoral program enters into force after the conclusion of a bilateral agreement with the university. In the event that the doctoral candidate determined by the order of the Rector fails to sign the doctoral study agreement within the period established by the University, then the University has the right to declare the relevant order or part of the order invalid;

7.10. For candidates not residing in the territory of Georgia, the admission interview for the doctoral program may be held remotely (online);

7.11. The applicant is entitled to appeal the negative decision of the Admissions Committee on admission to the doctoral program to the Dean of the relevant school within 3 calendar days of being informed. The appeal procedure is public and ensures an objective and fair decision;

7.12. The applicant must indicate the grounds for the appeal in the application and submit the relevant written argumentation;

7.13. The applicant is entitled to request justification of the decision of the Admissions Committee within the scope of the arguments indicated by him/her;

7.14. In case of a request for justification of the decision of the Admissions Committee, the Dean of the School sends the application to the original Admissions Committee for consideration;

- 7.15. The Admissions Committee is obliged to consider the applicant's application within a period of no more than 3 working days;
- 7.16. During the consideration process, the Committee is obliged to familiarize itself with the application submitted by the applicant and, if requested by the applicant, prepare a written justification for the decision made by it;
- 7.17. In case the applicant does not agree with the written justification of the Admissions Committee, he/she is entitled to appeal the presented justification to the Appeals Committee within 3 working days from the date of receipt of the written justification of the decision;
- 7.18. In case of an appeal against a reasoned decision, an appeal committee is established upon the proposal of the Dean of the School and the order of the Rector, consisting of at least 3 members of the Dissertation Council and at least 1 member of the Field Dissertation Council. The appeal committee makes a decision by a majority of votes. A member of the committee must not have a conflict of interest in the matter under consideration, including not being a member of the original admission committee;
- 7.19. General rules for considering an appeal:
- 7.19.1. The appeal committee is given 3 working days to conduct the assessment;
- 7.19.2. During the assessment process, the appeal committee is obliged to familiarize itself with the applicant's application and the assessment/argumentation of the admission committee. The Appeals Admissions Commission has the right to leave the initial decision in force or make a new decision on the applicant's enrollment;
- 7.19.3. The decision of the Appeals Admissions Commission is final and not subject to appeal;
- 7.19.4. The Appeals Admissions Commission shall notify the interested parties of the decision within 2 working days;
- 7.20. Administrative issues related to enrollment in an educational program are regulated by these Regulations and the "Regulation of the Educational Process". The study/research component(s) to be mastered and recognized by the student under the program are determined by the Field Dissertation Council, based on the presentation of the program supervisor and an interview with the student.

Article 8. Grounds for exemption from the English language exam

- 8.1. An applicant who holds an international certificate of the relevant English language level specified as a prerequisite for admission to an educational program is exempted from taking the English language exam. The level of the exam conducted to determine the language level of the program is determined by the "Language Proficiency Level" document specified by the University;
- 8.2. An applicant is exempted from the obligation to submit the document required by this paragraph if he/she holds an international certificate as specified in paragraph 8.1 confirming proficiency in English at level B2 or C1 and/or has completed an English language educational program (unless the relevant educational program provides for different requirements).

Article 9. Registration for program components

- 9.1. The registration process for the components of the doctoral program is determined by these regulations and the "Regulation of the Educational Process", unless a specific program provides for different regulations;

9.2. For the purposes of this regulation, at least 3 students are required to open an elective course. Exceptions to this rule may be made by decision of the Rector;

9.3. At least 5 students are required to open a doctoral program. In the event of a smaller number of students, the Rector, based on the submission of the School Council, decides on opening a doctoral program.

Article 10. Component Assessment

10.1. Assessment is carried out on the basis of the results obtained in the educational and scientific-research components. The assessment criteria differ for the educational and scientific-research components;

10.2. The assessment method is determined by the syllabus, which is available to the student at the beginning of the semester;

10.3. Component assessment is carried out according to several criteria: for the study component, the forms mentioned are intermediate and final assessment, the sum of which constitutes the final assessment, while the assessment of the scientific-research component is carried out as a whole, in the form of a final assessment. This includes the formative assessment stage (expert assessment and submission for preliminary defense) and the assessment received at the defense;

10.4. All issues related to the assessment of the study component are determined in accordance with the “Regulation of the Educational Process”;

10.5. Issues related to the conduct of doctoral program student examinations are determined in accordance with the “Regulation of the Educational Process” and “The Procedure for Conducting Exams”;

10.6. When moving to the research component, the student is obliged to undergo semester registration. At the end of each semester, the student must submit a presentation to the School Dissertation Council about the work carried out during the semester. The student is obliged to consider the recommendations issued by the Council. These recommendations are considered during the pre-defense.

Article 11. Procedures and Ethical Standards Related to the Research Component

11.1. For approval of the research topic:

11.1.1. The doctoral student selects a dissertation title and prepares an individual research plan together with his/her topic supervisor/co-supervisor and the program director. The individual research plan should reflect the research objectives, structure, and potential schedule for the research;

11.1.2. Upon completion of the study component, the doctoral student shall submit a tentative title and individual research plan to the School Dissertation Council;

11.1.3. The topic title and research plan shall be reviewed and approved by the School Dissertation Council. The student shall make a short presentation to the Council. If the topic title and/or individual research plan are not approved by the Dissertation Council, the doctoral student is given the opportunity to change the topic title/individual research plan, which he/she will resubmit to the Dissertation Council;

11.1.4. The research topic title and research plan approved by the Dissertation Field Council shall be submitted to the Research Ethics Commission for consideration within the scope of its competence;

11.1.4.1. The above condition shall also apply in the case of publication of a scientific article in a foreign peer-reviewed journal with an international index;

11.1.5. The Commission shall determine compliance of the research with ethical norms/standards if the research meets all of the following criteria:

- a) The research is consistent with the fields of study at the university;
- b) The research does not contradict generally recognized moral goals and principles;
- c) The research does not violate human rights and freedoms;
- d) No part of the research contains information that is defamatory of the dignity or reputation of others;
- e) No methods are used within the framework of the research that may lead to violation of the rights of third parties and/or misleading them;
- f) The research does not contradict the current legislation of Georgia and legal principles;
- g) The research is the direct result of the researcher's research activities;
- h) The research complies with generally recognized ethical norms and principles for conducting research in a specific field.

11.1.6. This provision shares the ethical principles and code of conduct for research developed by the British Educational Research Association (BERA)¹, and also shares the ethical principles for internet research developed² by the Association of Internet Researchers.³

11.1.7. This Regulation is not limited to the documents specified in paragraph

11.1.6 and, if necessary, also shares other sources related to research ethics issues;

11.1.8. The number of members of the Ethics Commission must be odd and consist of at least 3 members and its composition includes:

- a) Dean of the School (Chairman of the Commission);
- b) Academic staff;
- c) Head of the relevant program;
- d) Invited expert (as needed).

11.1.9. The Ethics Commission is independent in its activities and is guided by the principles of objectivity, impartiality, and equality of parties when making decisions;

¹ British Educational Research Association [BERA]. (2024). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (5th ed.). www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2024

² British Educational Research Association [BERA]. (2023). *BERA handbook: Member code of conduct*. www.bera.ac.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2023/10/Code-of-Conduct-2023.pdf

³ Association of Internet Researchers. (2019). *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines (3.0.)* <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>

11.1.10. No later than 5 working days after the approval of the composition of the Ethics Commission, a meeting of the Commission shall be convened to discuss the ethicality of the title of the research topic and the research plan and make two types of decisions by open voting:

- a) The research complies with the norms/standards of ethical research;
- b) The research complies with the norms/standards of ethical research subject to the fulfillment of the reservation (conditional consent with amendments), which gives the researcher the right to begin the research only after submitting specific changes to the research plan recommended by the Ethics Commission;
- c) The research does not comply with the norms/standards of ethical research.

11.1.11. The composition of the commission is represented by a deliberative vote; the decision shall be considered adopted if the proposal is supported by the majority of members present at the meeting. In the event of an equal distribution of votes, the vote of the chairman of the commission shall be decisive;

11.1.12. The activities of the Research Ethics Commission shall be reflected in the minutes of the meeting;

11.1.13. If the researcher disagrees with the conclusion of the Ethics Commission, he or she has the right to appeal the conclusion to the relevant school council within 3 working days of becoming acquainted with the decision;

11.1.14. The complaint must be substantiated. The complaint must present all the factual circumstances necessary for its consideration;

11.1.15. When considering the complaint by the relevant school council, conflicts of interest must be avoided. A person who is also a member of the Ethics Commission or was a member of the Commission at the time of the appealed decision may not participate in the discussion of the issue;

11.1.16. The review and decision-making of the complaint shall be carried out within 5 working days from the submission of the complaint without the presence of the complainant;

11.1.17. The relevant school council has the right to make one of the following decisions:

- a) on satisfying the complaint, which means changing and/or completely canceling the conclusion adopted by the Research Ethics Commission;
- b) on refusing to satisfy the complaint, which means leaving the conclusion adopted by the Research Ethics Commission unchanged;

11.1.18. The decision adopted by the council is final and not subject to appeal;

11.1.19. In the event of a positive decision of the Research Ethics Commission, the title of the research topic and the research plan shall be transferred to the Dissertation Council;

11.1.20. The dissertation council approves the research topic, which is registered in accordance with the protocol of the school's dissertation council, and an agreement is signed between the dissertation supervisor(s), the student, and the university;

Article 12. Doctoral Student Supervisor/Co-Supervisor

12.1. The doctoral student supervisor/co-supervisor must be an associate professor or professor of a university or other higher education institution with a doctoral academic degree, who has a professional connection with the local and international scientific/professional community (e.g., joint research/grants/projects, scientific associations/unions/educational/scientific institutions);

12.2. In the 5th-6th semester of the program, in the event that the supervisor leaves the academic position at the university/other higher education institution and does not hold an academic position at any higher education institution, he/she will remain the supervisor of the topic and will be invited to be a member of the field dissertation council;

12.3. The ratio determined by the university between the supervisor/co-supervisor and his/her doctoral students with active status shall not exceed 1:3 within the framework of one higher education institution. A ratio of 1:5 between the supervisor and his/her doctoral students with active status is permissible only in the case when a suspended doctoral student requests restoration of status for the purpose of submitting a dissertation/creative/performance work to be submitted for the award of an academic degree. This ratio may be determined differently depending on the conditions of the scientific grant/project;

12.4. The supervisor/co-supervisor of the doctoral student:

12.4.1. The doctoral student's scientific supervisor/co-supervisor has an academic degree in the relevant field, has experience in supervision/co-supervision, or has completed relevant activities (training, seminar, professional development course, etc.), has also actively participated in scientific research and/or has published a scientific paper (in professional areas - a creative/performing project), which corresponds to the general topic/research area of the doctoral student's doctoral thesis;

12.4.2. The doctoral student's supervisor/co-supervisor is required to have published at least 1 scientific paper (in professional areas - a creative/performing project), which corresponds to the general topic/research area of the doctoral student's doctoral thesis, in a foreign international indexed journal designated by the university, within the last 3 years;

12.5. At the request of the student or the field dissertation council, a person who has been awarded a doctoral degree in the relevant field may be appointed as a co-supervisor of the dissertation. The co-supervisor must be a specialist with local or international experience who is also involved in field scientific activities. The co-supervisor, if necessary, may be appointed no later than the beginning of the last semester of the research component;

12.6. The supervisor/co-supervisor provides the doctoral student with consultations during the research process on the following issues: research design and project management, research methodology, professional development, the process of writing a thesis/scientific research paper/dissertation, the process of integrating into local and international scientific/creative networks, the process of participating in local and international scientific/creative events and presenting results, publishing scientific articles in a peer-reviewed journal with an international index, etc.;

12.7. If the doctoral student applies to the Academic Writing Center with a request to change the supervisor/co-supervisor or the supervisor/co-supervisor refuses to supervise the doctoral student, the issue will be submitted to the Departmental Dissertation Council for consideration;

12.8. In the event of a change of supervisor/co-supervisor in the last semester of the research component, the new supervisor/co-supervisor is given 1 month to study the thesis. By decision of the Dissertation Board, based on the opinions of the new supervisor/co-supervisor, the student will be given a deadline for submitting the thesis for the previous defense. In addition, if the change of supervisor/co-supervisor resulted in the student changing the topic, the thesis defense will be carried out within the deadlines specified in Article 11 of these Regulations;

12.9. After the doctoral student submits the final version of the topic and abstract to the supervisor, the supervisor writes a conclusion no later than 1 month, in which, for the purpose of presenting the topic to the Dissertation Board, he/she confirms:

12.9.1. Relevance of publications to the dissertation;

12.9.2. Relevance of the abstract to the dissertation;

12.9.3. The fact that the student has completed work on the dissertation (which means that the work is characterized by novelty, scientific/theoretical and practical value, includes a literature review and research part, corresponds to the format of a university dissertation and is written in stylistically correct language).

Article 13. Dissertation Council and Sectoral Dissertation Council

13.1. The Dissertation Council shall consist of all professors and associate professors of the School with a doctoral degree, approved by the Governing Council. Members of the Dissertation Council may be associate professors and/or professors with a doctoral degree from another higher education institution. In such a case, the said persons shall submit a copy of the document confirming their academic position at another higher education institution and a list of publications;

13.2. The Dissertation Council shall approve the relevant sectoral dissertation council, the chairman and deputy chairman of the council from among its members for each doctoral program separately. The Dissertation Council is authorized to invite a specialist in the relevant field, who has a doctoral degree in the field, publications and/or at least one year of practical experience in the field within the last five years, as a member of the Dissertation Council;

13.3. The Dissertation Council must include at least 5 representatives of the relevant program. The academic staff of the university must constitute more than half of the members. A professor/associate professor may be a member of two Dissertation Councils at the same time (regardless of whether they are members of the Dissertation Council of the same school or not);

13.4. In order to determine the experts and decide on the date of the defense/pre-defense of the topic, a reduced composition of the Dissertation Council is formed from the composition of the Dissertation Council, which includes the Chairman of the Dissertation Council, the head/co-head of the relevant program, the supervisor/co-head of the dissertation work and the Secretary of the Council;

13.5. The Chairman of the Dissertation Council of the School is elected by the members of the Council, by a majority of votes. The Chairman of the Dissertation Council of the School is automatically the head of the relevant program, and the Secretary of the Dissertation Council of the School is an administrative position and is appointed by the Rector. The Secretary of the Dissertation Council of the School may simultaneously be the Secretary of the Dissertation Council of the Sector;

13.6. The School Dissertation Council/Specialized Dissertation Council is competent to make decisions if the majority of its members are present. A majority vote of the members' present is required to make a decision, except for the case provided in 11.4. of this Regulation;

13.7. The decisions of the Council shall be drawn up in the form of a protocol, which shall be signed by the Chairman of the Dissertation Council, the Secretary and all members present;

13.8. The Chairman of the Council is authorized to convene a meeting. A meeting of the Council may also be convened at the request of the majority of its members. In this case, the Chairman shall schedule the meeting;

13.9. In the absence of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman shall chair the meeting.

Article 14. Rights and Duties of the Dissertation Council

14.1. The awarding of the academic degree of Doctor to a student is carried out by the Dissertation Council of the School, based on the decision of the defense commission;

14.2. The field dissertation council, and in its absence, the dissertation council:

14.2.1. For the purpose of enrolling a doctoral student in the doctoral program, creates an admissions committee, considers the importance of the submitted dissertation topic, participates in the formation of the dissertation title, approves the dissertation title;

14.2.2. Upon the proposal of the doctoral program supervisor, considers the candidacy of the supervisor, and also decides on the issue of termination of supervision;

14.2.3. Considers the individual research plan of the doctoral student;

14.2.4. Approves opponents;

14.2.5. Approves members of the dissertation commission;

14.2.6. Raises the issue of revising the dissertation evaluation criteria before the rector.

14.3. Reduced composition of the specialized dissertation council:

14.3.1. Approves experts;

14.3.2. Determines the date of the preliminary defense/defense of the topic;

14.3.3. The chairman of the dissertation council, and in his absence, the deputy chairman:

14.3.4. Ensures the conduct of the council's activities in accordance with these Regulations;

14.3.5. Convenes and chairs the council meetings;

14.3.6. Leads the topic defense procedure;

14.4. The Secretary of the Dissertation Council:

14.4.1. Prepares and keeps the minutes of the Dissertation Council;

14.4.2. Receives and archives the documents necessary for the defense of the topic in accordance with these Regulations. If the documents are incomplete, the Secretary has the right to refuse to accept them;

- 14.4.3. Provides consultations to the doctoral student regarding the documentation to be submitted, both before and after the defense of the dissertation, and upon request, provides copies of the dissertation, abstract, and publication to experts and opponents in electronic and/or physical form;
- 14.4.4. Provides information to doctoral students in advance about the evaluation criteria and makes recommendations regarding the technical format of the dissertation;
- 14.4.5. Informs doctoral program students and experts about pre-defense procedures.

Article 15. Submission of the thesis for defense

- 15.1. The dissertation is a scientific work defended by a doctoral student for the purpose of obtaining the academic degree of Doctor, which is the result of the doctoral student's independent scientific research and is based on newly acquired knowledge, serving the development of the relevant field. If the doctoral student is a member of a research group, his/her contribution to the research must be highlighted in the dissertation;
- 15.2. The dissertation is written in the language of instruction of the program. The doctoral student must also submit an abbreviated version of the dissertation – an abstract (15-20 pages) in Georgian and English;
- 15.3. The volume, format and style of the dissertation must meet the following requirements:
 - 15.3.1. The number of pages of the dissertation must be at least 110 and no more than 200 (+/- 10%); The requirements for completing the dissertation are described in detail in the “Guidelines for Master's Thesis and Doctoral Dissertation”;
 - 15.3.2. Font size – 12, heading size – 14;
 - 15.3.3. Font for English texts – Times New Roman, for Georgian texts – Sylfaen;
 - 15.3.4. Line spacing – 1.5 cm;
 - 15.3.5. Left margin – 3 cm;
 - 15.3.6. Right margin – 1.5 cm;
 - 15.3.7. Top and bottom margins – 2.5 cm.
- 15.4. The student submits to the Academic Writing Center an application for completion of the work and admission to defense. The student sends the electronic version of the dissertation to the official e-mail address of the Academic Writing Center;
- 15.5. In order to check for plagiarism and text similarity, the Academic Writing Center, with the involvement of the doctoral student's supervisor/co-supervisor and an expert (specialist in the field), checks the doctoral student's thesis using a special anti-plagiarism electronic program (a program used by the university to detect and prevent plagiarism);
- 15.6. The volume of direct quotations in the thesis, verified by an appropriate document, should not exceed 15% of the total thesis; the presence of unverified text in the thesis is not allowed (0%); If the fact of similarity of more than 15% of the text is revealed during the check, in case of detection of the above circumstances, the student must eliminate the mentioned defect within 5 calendar days and send the updated thesis to the Academic Writing Center. Otherwise, in case of violation of the principle of academic integrity by the student, the issue will be regulated in accordance with the “Academic Integrity Policy” in force at the University;

15.7. In case the coincidence coefficient exceeds the established indicator, the doctoral student is given the opportunity to correct the work; for the same work, the text coincidence coefficient is checked no more than twice after the detection of a text coincidence;

15.8. In case of detection of plagiarism, the doctoral student will not be allowed to defend (this issue is regulated in accordance with the “Academic Integrity Policy” document);

15.9. In order to be admitted to the preliminary defense, the doctoral student submits the following documentation to the Secretary of the Dissertation Council:

15.9.1. Statement on the completion of the dissertation;

15.9.2. Publications specified in the relevant doctoral program (if provided for by the program);

15.9.3. Confirmation from the scientific supervisor about the correspondence of the publications with the dissertation, as well as about the completion of the work by the doctoral student and submission of the dissertation for final evaluation;

15.9.4. Electronic version of the dissertation;

15.9.5. Certificate confirming the active status of the doctoral student.

15. 10. At the stage of submission for the preliminary defense, the doctoral student must have made three presentations, in accordance with paragraph 10.6 of the Regulation. In addition, based on the specifics of a specific doctoral program, the doctoral student must meet the requirements specified in the relevant doctoral program;

15.11. Publications specified in paragraph 15.9.2 of this Article must be submitted in the form of a copy (title page of the journal, table of contents and article). In addition, publications accepted for publication are considered only during the pre-defense (the text of the publication and a letter of confirmation of acceptance for publication must be submitted for the pre-defense). A decision on the appointment of the defense date is not made before the publication of the works;

15.12. After the submission of the dissertation and other documentation, within a period of no more than 5 working days, the Dissertation Council of the Department appoints at least 2 experts. In the process of selecting and appointing experts, their anonymity is ensured, which means that their identity is confidential to the doctoral student and/or his/her supervisor/co-supervisor until the submission of the experts' conclusion.

Article 16. Dissertation Experts

16.1. After the doctoral student submits the dissertation, before the pre-defense, the dissertation is evaluated by a reduced composition of the Dissertation Council, appointed by at least two experts in accordance with the procedure specified in paragraph 15.12 of these Regulations;

16.2. Experts must be members of the relevant/related Dissertation Council. A co-author of a doctoral student's publication cannot be his/her expert;

16.3. If the topic of the dissertation is interdisciplinary, one of the experts may be appointed from another Dissertation Council of the University;

16.4. The Secretary of the Dissertation Council shall submit a copy of the dissertation and publications in electronic and/or physical form to the experts within 1 week after the decision of the Dissertation Council is made, after the experts have been approved;

16.5. Experts must submit a conclusion to the Secretariat of the Dissertation Council within 1 month of their appointment as experts. The conclusion must pay attention to the format and style

of the dissertation, their compliance with this Regulation; the doctoral student is entitled to consider the recommendations and remarks of the expert;

16.6. The expert's conclusion must include an assessment of the following issues:

16.6.1. The need for the dissertation topic, its novelty, its scientific and practical significance;

16.6.2. On the structure (including an introduction, a literature review, discussion and research parts, statistical processing of data and conclusion);

16.6.3. Expert recommendation (on technical improvements, minor substantive improvements, substantial improvements, or approval/rejection).

16.7. The assessment must consider the requirements set out in Article 19 of these Regulations.

Article 17. Pre-defense of the dissertation

17.1. The pre-defense of the dissertation is carried out by experts after the evaluation of the dissertation. The date of the pre-defense is set by the Departmental Dissertation Council and notified to the student;

17.2. The pre-defense is attended by the doctoral student, his/her supervisor/co-supervisor, experts, the chairman/acting chairman of the Departmental Dissertation Council and at least 1 member of the Departmental Dissertation Council;

17.3. The pre-defense is held only once for one dissertation topic. The student is entitled to consider the recommendations made by the experts and members of the council at the pre-defense (formative assessment) before submitting the dissertation for defense.

Article 18. Dissertation opponents

18.1. After the student submits the final version of the dissertation, based on the decision of the Dissertation Council on moving to the next stage of the dissertation defense, the dissertation is evaluated by a local and international opponent. The Review of the international opponent is not mandatory if the doctoral student has an international supervisor. Opponents must have a doctoral degree and their scientific work and publications must correspond to the topic of the dissertation. An emeritus professor or associate professor of another higher educational institution/university of a foreign country and/or a researcher of a scientific research center who must not be an employee of the university should be invited as an opponent. In addition, the local and international opponent must have published at least 1 scientific paper in a peer-reviewed journal with a foreign international index within the last 3 years, which corresponds to the general topic/research area of the doctoral student's doctoral thesis;

18.2. The appointment of opponents is carried out after the preliminary defense. During the appointment process, the Head of the program is obliged to select the candidates of local and international opponents in accordance with the requirements set forth in paragraph 18.1 of these Regulations, and submit them to the Dissertation Council for the purpose of making a final decision;

18.3. During the selection and appointment of opponents, their anonymity is ensured, which means that until the presentation of the opponents' conclusion, which is carried out before the defense of the dissertation, the identity of the opponents selected for the doctoral student and/or his/her supervisor/co-supervisor is confidential;

18.4. Opponents must submit the conclusion for review within 1 month from the date of receipt. The conclusion must reflect an assessment of the need, novelty, scientific and practical significance of the topic. The opponent must express an opinion on the awarding of an academic degree to the doctoral student. The conclusion must consider the requirements established by Article 19 of these Regulations;

18.5. A co-author of the doctoral student's publications or a member of the scientific group where the research was performed cannot be his/her opponent;

18.6. A person who is officially dependent on a doctoral candidate cannot be his/her opponent;

18.7. Opponents cannot work in the same organization;

18.8. The Secretary of the Dissertation Council shall ensure the transfer of copies of the dissertation work, summary and publications in electronic and/or physical form to the opponents, which shall be carried out within 5 working days from the appointment of the opponents;

18.9. The Secretary of the Dissertation Council shall provide the doctoral candidate with copies of the opponents' conclusions no later than 10 working days before the date of the dissertation defense;

18.10. The opponent who has made a negative conclusion must attend the defense;

18.11. If the opponent whose conclusion is negative fails to appear for the defense, the defense shall be postponed for a period of no more than 1 month. In case of repeated failure of the opponent, 30% of the fee will be withheld and a new opponent will be appointed, in accordance with the procedures specified in these regulations;

18.12. If all conclusions are positive, at least 1 opponent must attend the defense. If none of the opponents can attend the defense, the defense will be postponed for a period of no more than 1 month. The decision on this matter is made by the School Dissertation Council, and the opponents will be informed by the Secretary of the Dissertation Council.

Article 19. Evaluation of the dissertation by experts and opponents

19.1. In order to receive a positive assessment, the doctoral dissertation must be characterized by originality and be the result of independent work. It must include a literature review, it is advisable to review the current state of the issue in both historical and modern times, a discussion section and research (survey, case analysis, experiment). carried out by a researcher or doctoral student or software developed by a doctoral student) with relevant statistical data. Explanations of all important concepts (especially new ones) must be presented. The dissertation must meet the following characteristics: novelty, relevance, scientific/theoretical and practical value. Hypotheses, questions and problems raised during the research must be properly substantiated. Recommendations and proposed conclusions must stem from the analysis contained in the dissertation;

19.2. The dissertation must be written logically, in clear language, and in compliance with the norms of professional ethics. The technique of citation, verification, and printing format must be observed;

19.3. The dissertation must meet and comply with ethical norms/standards of research (research complies with ethical norms if it does not contradict generally recognized moral goals and principles; does not violate human rights and freedoms; no part of the research contains information that is defamatory of the dignity or reputation of others; methods that may violate the rights of third parties and/or mislead are not used within the framework of the research; the research is the direct result of the student's research activities; the research complies with generally recognized ethical norms and principles of conducting research in a specific field;

- 19.4. Publications must reflect the main material of the dissertation;
- 19.5. The criteria/components for evaluating a doctoral dissertation may be additionally determined by the relevant program.

Article 20. Defense Commission

- 20.1. The program director shall submit candidates for members of the defense commission to the field dissertation council for approval;
- 20.2. The field dissertation council shall approve the members of the defense commission;
- 20.3. The defense commission shall consist of at least 7 members with voting rights. All experts and opponents shall be members of the dissertation commission. The academic staff of the university shall constitute more than half of the members. In addition, the defense commission may include at least 1 external evaluator;
- 20.4. Considering the specifics of the field, if necessary, the defense commission may include international evaluators of appropriate qualifications and competence, representatives of the governmental/non-governmental sector and/or the labor market;
- 20.5. The defense commission shall elect a chairman from among its members by a majority vote before the defense process begins;
- 20.6. The secretary of the dissertation council shall at the same time be the secretary of the defense commission, without the right to vote, unless his/her qualifications correspond to those of the defense commission;
- 20.7. The departmental dissertation council shall decide on the defense date and notify the student thereof. Information about the defense shall be posted on the university website after the opponents submit their review on the dissertation, but no later than 10 working days before the defense;
- 20.8. The supervisor/co-supervisor of the doctoral student's thesis is not a member of the defense commission, but shall attend the defense;
- 20.9. At least 10 working days before the defense of the thesis, the members of the defense commission shall be provided with an electronic version of the thesis and abstract;
- 20.10. The Defense Commission is competent to make decisions if 2/3 of its members, but not less than 5 members, are present;

Article 21. Preparation for defense and defense of the dissertation

- 21.1. The defense date is set by the Departmental Dissertation Council in accordance with the procedure specified in paragraph 20.7 of these Regulations;
- 21.2. The dissertation must be evaluated no later than the end of the next semester after its submission for defense;
- 21.3. The secretary of the council is obliged to notify the doctoral student in writing of the date of his defense and to transfer to him the opponents' conclusion at least 10 working days before the defense;
- 21.4. The prerequisite for granting the academic degree of a doctor is passing the stages of formative assessment and an average of the points awarded by the defense commission of at least 51 points;

- 21.5. In case of a student's assessment with 41-50 points, the student is given the opportunity to improve the dissertation and submit it for final assessment within 1 year (after at least 1 semester). The improved thesis must relate to the same topic;
- 21.6. In case of a student's assessment by the commission with less than 41 points, the student loses the right to submit the same dissertation;
- 21.7. For the purposes of the commission's evaluation of the thesis, excellent means a score of 91-100, very good - 81-90 points, good - 71-80 points, average - 61-70 points, satisfactory - 51-60 points, unsatisfactory - 41-50 points, completely unsatisfactory - 40 points and less;
- 21.8. Documentation related to the doctoral student is kept in the archive of the Dissertation Council. The doctoral student has the right to familiarize himself with any documentation related to him;
- 21.9. The defense of the topic is public and is held in the language of instruction of the program. Information about the defense is published on the university website at least 10 working days before the defense. The information must also include the abstract submitted for defense.
- 21.10. The defense procedure includes:
- 21.10.1. The University will provide a complete audio/video recording of the dissertation defense process;
- 21.10.2. Presentation of the doctoral student (30-50 minutes, which also includes information and arguments on the consideration/non-consideration of the recommendations of the formative assessment);
- 21.10.3. Public presentation of the assessments received at the formative assessment stage and the conclusions of the opponents;
- 21.10.4. The doctoral student's answers to the questions indicated in the conclusion;
- 21.10.5. Scientific discussion;
- 21.10.6. The supervisor's speech;
- 21.10.7. Opinions of those present;
- 21.10.8. Closed session of the dissertation assessment;
- 21.10.9. Public announcement of the results of the dissertation assessment;
- 21.10.10 The doctoral student's concluding speech;
- 21.11. Each session includes only one dissertation defense;
- 21.12. If the defense cannot be held at the scheduled time for a valid reason, at the request of the student and/or members of the defense commission, based on the decision of the Dissertation Council, it may be postponed for a period of at least two weeks, but not more than 1 month. A corresponding announcement about this will be published on the university website.

Article 22. Evaluation of the dissertation

- 22.1. The dissertation is evaluated based on the criteria specified in this Regulation, as well as in the relevant program.
- 22.2. The defense is evaluated by the commission at a closed session. Based on the dissertation and its assessments (including the assessment received at the stage of formative assessment), the members of the council conduct an anonymous assessment using the "Doctoral Dissertation Assessment

Criteria”. Based on the arithmetic average of the assessments of the council members, the commission decides on the final assessment with the “Public Defense Protocol”;

22.3. There are two types of assessment: “defended” or “failed to defend”.

22.4. The following system is used to evaluate the dissertation:

22.4.1. If the student receives an assessment:

22.4.1.1. Summa cum laude – excellent work;

22.4.1.2. Very good (magna cum laude) – a result that exceeds the requirements in all respects;

22.4.1.3. Good (cum laude) – a result that exceeds the requirements;

22.4.1.4. Average (bene) – an average-level thesis that meets the basic requirements;

22.4.1.5. Satisfactory (rite) – a result that, despite shortcomings, still meets the requirements – he will be awarded the academic degree of Doctor;

22.4.2. If the student receives a grade of – unsatisfactory (insufficient) – an unsatisfactory-level thesis that fails to meet the requirements – he has the right to improve and submit the thesis for re-defense within 1 year.

22.4.3. If a student receives a grade of “completely unsatisfactory” (sub omni canone), a result that completely fails to meet the requirements, he/she is not entitled to re-defend the same dissertation.

22.5. The results are announced by the chairman of the commission.

Article 23. Awarding of an Academic Degree

23.1. After defending the dissertation and completing all components specified in the program, a doctoral student shall be awarded the academic degree of Doctor (Ph.D.). The degree shall be awarded by the Dissertation Council of the School, based on the decision of the Defense Commission;

23.2. The formation of the academic degree to be awarded shall be carried out in accordance with the qualification formation rules established by the National Qualification Framework - with reference to the directions and/or field/specialty.

Article 24. Document certifying the academic degree of a doctor

24.1. After the rector issues an order recognizing a doctoral student as a graduate, before the diploma is printed, upon the request of the doctoral student, the Regulation of Student Services and Registry Office shall issue a certificate of awarding the academic degree of a doctor.

Article 25. Cancellation of the thesis

25.1. The academic degree of Doctor may not be awarded or an already awarded degree may be canceled, as well as the diploma confirming the academic degree of Doctor may not be issued or an already issued diploma may be canceled, if the fact of submission of falsified research data or academic dishonesty (plagiarism) is established. The decision on the cancellation of the academic degree of Doctor and diploma is made by the Dissertation Council of the School;

25.2. In the absence of a main educational unit (school-structural unit), the issue is considered by a specially created commission.

Article 26. Appealing the results of the research component assessment

26.1. The student is entitled to appeal the assessment of the research component within 4 calendar days from the date of learning the result by submitting a statement to the relevant school using the “Exam Results Appeal Form”. The appeal procedure is public and ensures an objective and fair decision;

26.2. The student must indicate specific justification/circumstances in the statement and present relevant arguments;

26.3. By means of the statement, the student is entitled to request:

26.3.1. Revision of the defense regulations without re-evaluation;

26.3.2 Re-evaluation of the research component.

26.4. Procedure for reviewing the complaint in case of a request for revision of the defense regulations:

26.4.1. In case of a request for a review of the defense regulations, the Dissertation Council is authorized, based on the circumstances indicated in the student's complaint, to decide to have the defense regulations reviewed by the evaluator or the Appeals Commission established in accordance with paragraph 27.5;

26.4.2. In case of a defect identified by the Appeals Commission, the component is returned together with the conclusion of the Dissertation Council;

26.4.3. The Dissertation Council, based on the conclusion of the Appeals Commission, is authorized to discuss the re-evaluation of the research component, leaving the assessment unchanged, or re-conducting the defense;

26.4.4. In case of a request for a re-evaluation of the component, the Dissertation Council creates an Appeals Commission consisting of at least 3 members. The Appeals Commission makes a decision by majority vote. A member of the commission must not be the supervisor/co-supervisor of the thesis, reviewer, opponent, or a member of the initial defense commission.

26.5. General rules for considering a complaint:

26.5.1. The commission is given 15 (fifteen) working days to conduct the assessment;

26.5.2. During the assessment process, the commission is obliged to familiarize itself with the justification of the initial assessment, as well as, if necessary, hear the arguments of the defense commission. The commission has the right to leave the assessment in force or to file a motion for the need to review the assessment;

26.5.3. In the event of a need to review the assessment, the Dissertation Council shall consider the motion of the commission and, if it is agreed, a re-defense shall be scheduled. The assessment may remain the same, be reduced, or increased. The decision is final and not subject to appeal. In case of non-disclosure of the petition, the Dissertation Council shall present an argumentation;

26.5.4. The Dissertation Council shall notify the interested parties of its decision within 2 working days.

Article 27. Publication of the dissertation

27.1. The doctoral student is obliged to publish the dissertation in printed or electronic form within 6 months after the defense of the dissertation;

27.2. One printed or electronic copy of the dissertation must be transferred to the University Library;

27.3. The dissertation must be published in electronic form on the website of the University Library.

Article 28. Transitional and final provisions

28.1. Financial obligations related to the doctoral educational program are determined by the “Rules for Payment of Educational Services Fees”;

28.2. Issues not specified in this provision are regulated by the Law of Georgia “On Higher Education”, “Regulation the Educational Process” and other normative documentation of the University;

28.3. The rules established by this Regulation shall not apply if the relevant program determines a special regulation of the issue;

28.4. 13 (thirteen) annexes shall be attached to this Regulation as an integral part (in particular, the Plagiarism Report; Research Topic/Interview/Presentation Evaluation Form; Application Form for Master's and Doctoral Programs; Dissertation Evaluation Criteria for Experts; Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation Criteria; Dissertation Topic/Interview; Public Defense Protocol; Dissertation Work Process Evaluation Form for Students; Dissertation Work Process Evaluation Form for Supervisors/Co-Supervisors), the purpose of which is to regulate the assessments provided for by the Regulation and determine the criteria. However, considering the specifics of the field, schools may develop different criteria/components for both the entrance exam and the dissertation evaluation;

28.5. Amendments to this Regulation may be made in the manner established for its adoption;

28.6. Amendments to this Regulation shall not apply to doctoral students enrolled in the doctoral educational program in accordance with the procedure established by law until August 1, 2024;

28.7. This Regulation shall enter into force by order of the Rector;

28.8. The Vice-Rector for Research and the Vice-Rector for Education shall exercise control over the implementation of this Regulation.