EVALUATION STANDARDS FOR A DOCTORATE/PhD ABROAD
(ISCED LEVEL 8)

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Programme content and structure can differ greatly from country to country. Several types of classification facilitate comparisons and enable the adoption of consistent terminology. Hcéres has chosen to use the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) – the "global reference classification for education systems"[1] – which is revised periodically. ISCED 2011 was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2011 and comprises 8 levels.

ISCED Level 8 corresponds to "doctoral or equivalent level", which is defined by the following main characteristics:

"Programmes at ISCED level 8, or doctoral or equivalent level, are designed primarily to lead to an advanced research qualification. Programmes at this ISCED level are devoted to advanced study and original research and are typically offered only by research-oriented tertiary educational institutions such as universities. Doctoral programmes exist in both academic and professional fields."

"ISCED level 8 usually concludes with the submission and defence of a thesis, dissertation or equivalent written work of publishable quality, representing a significant contribution to knowledge in the respective field of study.

"These programmes are typically based on research and not only on course work. In some education systems, ISCED level 8 programmes contain very limited course work, or none at all, and individuals working towards a doctoral degree engage in research mostly independently or in small groups with varying degrees of supervision. In some education systems, doctoral research is undertaken by individuals employed by the university as junior researchers or research assistants who are undertaking their doctoral studies at the same time."

"Entry into ISCED level 8 programmes or junior research positions normally requires the successful completion of specific ISCED level 7 programmes."

"Achievement of an ISCED level 8 qualification is often a condition for entering into faculty posts in educational institutions that offer Level 6,7 and 8 programmes, as well as research posts in government and industry."

Hcéres develops its doctoral evaluation and accreditation process on the basis of a set of values and objectives that the doctoral programme must meet to ensure a certain level of quality.

These objectives are listed in standards divided into four fields:
- Field 1: Doctoral policy
- Field 2: Training, hosting and supervision arrangements for doctoral students
- Field 3: The doctoral students' pathway
- Field 4: Management and continuous improvement of the doctoral programme

These four fields are divided into "standards" which constitute the objectives to be achieved in a doctorate and by the institutions that run the programme. These standards are divided into criteria that clearly describe the type of actions to be carried-out.

These standards therefore enable institutions to develop a self-evaluation of their doctoral programme, and this approach thus becomes part of their overall continuous improvement process.

Finally, these standards are used by the Hcéres evaluation expert panel to assess, according to its own procedures, the quality and effectiveness of the overall functioning of a doctoral programme.

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1 http://uis.unesco.org/fr/topic/classification-internationale-type-de-leducation-cite

FIELD 1: DOCTORAL POLICY

Five standards (1 to 5) define the scope of this field, with the purpose of assessing the policy and characterising doctoral studies.

Standard 1: The doctorate's positioning is consistent with the institution's positioning and strategy.

- C1. The scope of the doctorate covers one or more scientific fields, each divided into one or more disciplines and aligned with research topics carried out by the associated research units or centres, whose quality is widely recognised.
- C2. The doctoral policy implemented in this area defines its objectives and career prospects in alignment with the institution's scientific orientations and thematic priorities.
- C3. The doctoral programme is developed in coherence with graduate-level programmes, as part of a training policy that combines master's and doctoral programmes (in a graduate school).
- C4. The doctoral programme takes advantage of the contributions of multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity into its outcomes and content.
- C5. The doctoral training programme takes into account the challenges of sustainable development, which have a bearing on the doctoral students' positioning and research activities.

Standard 2: The doctorate's organisational structure is consistent with that of the institution and contributes added value to its partnerships.

- C1. The doctoral programme's leaders ensure the implementation of the doctoral training programme by coordinating their efforts in this regard with the institution, affiliated research units, and other partners (international research centres).
- C2. The doctoral programme's academic and socio-economic partnerships are assessed to ensure that they are operational and bring added value.
- C3. With contributions by its partners, the doctoral training programme organises scientific, professional and scientific mediation activities and events.

Standard 3: The doctorate includes research training and research-based training, which contributes to the development of doctoral students' research.

- C1. The doctoral training programme is developed in line with the scientific scope of the institution, and includes training in the various domains required for the development of the doctoral student's research project.
- C2. The faculty researchers and researchers supervising doctoral students contribute to the doctoral training program.
- C3. Research training includes training in research ethics, research integrity and professional ethics, which is diffused in the doctoral students' positioning and research activities.
- C4. The research-based training of doctoral students relies on their participation in their research units' activities and scientific production, both during and after the doctoral thesis.
- C5. The doctoral programme is supported by library services, including in terms of access to physical and digital library resources, and contributions to the training content.
- C6. The doctorate adheres to an open-science-based approach in which the procedures for depositing doctoral theses and the work of doctoral students and PhD holders in open-access repositories are monitored and supported.

Standard 4: The doctorate is based on a policy of professionalization with a view to enhancing its value.

- C1. The doctorate takes account of the social, economic and cultural needs of its environment in order to define its objectives and diversify its job prospects in different sectors, including the academic sector. To this end, it involves social, economic and cultural partners in the development of the doctoral programme.

- C2. The doctoral programme helps to prepare doctoral students for careers in a variety of jobs requiring PhD or equivalent status, including by providing entrepreneurship training.

- C3. The doctorate gives doctoral students opportunities to participate in events (actions/animations/events) of scientific and/or professional nature. For each type of action, conditions for access, validation and evaluation, particularly by doctoral students themselves, are defined and disseminated.

Standard 5: The PhD is open to international audiences.

- C1. The doctorate is based on effective international partnerships, in line with the priorities defined by the institution.

- C2. The doctorate embeds outgoing mobility opportunities for doctoral students, taking advantage of key partnerships with various actors in its environment and offering financial support mechanisms.

FIELD 2: TRAINING, HOSTING AND SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENTS FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Four standards (6 to 9) define the scope of this field. Their purpose is to assess doctoral students' training, hosting and supervision arrangements as implemented by doctoral programme managers. More specifically, the aim is to assess their impact on the activities and results of the doctoral training programme and the manner in which the institution monitors them in light of its objectives.

Standard 6: The doctoral programme defines and implements adapted training contents and methods in order to develop and enhance doctoral students' competencies.

- C1. The doctoral training programme defines and implements training objectives, contents and methods, as well as procedures for assessing competencies acquired by doctoral students as part of a competency-based approach.

- C2. The doctoral training programme recognises the value of the skills/competencies acquired by doctoral students during their training pathway and, in particular, via their research work. It puts particular emphasis on the creation of portfolios for this purpose.

Standard 7: Doctoral students benefit from common, high-quality recruitment and hosting conditions.

- C1. The rules for recruiting doctoral students are defined at the institutional level in association with partners. They include funding policy and procedures for the recruitment and admission of doctoral students.

- C2. The doctoral programme's objectives and the conditions for hosting doctoral students within the institution and in research units are collectively defined and communicated to all partners. They take the diversity of hosted people into account.

- C3. Doctoral students benefit from digital and physical environments within the institution or research unit in which they can carry out individual and collective activities.

Standard 8: Doctoral students benefit from high-quality supervision that enables them to carry out their research activities.

- C1. The rules and procedures for supervising doctoral students are defined within the institution in conjunction with its partners, and are brought to doctoral students' attention.

- C2. The reciprocal commitments of doctoral students and thesis supervisors (or directors) are clearly defined and communicated to them.

- C3. Doctoral students benefit from support mechanisms to enable them to conduct and exploit their research, including material and financial conditions required for the completion of the doctorate.

- C4. Doctoral-student-monitoring and supervision procedures include measures to promote best supervision practices, reduce discrimination and stereotypes, and prevent conflict and harassment.

- C5. The rules and criteria for defending doctoral theses are defined within the institution in association with partners, with the aim of verifying the production of new scientific knowledge and guaranteeing the quality of the doctorate. They may include incentives for scientific production prior to the thesis defence.

Standard 9: The doctoral training mechanisms are adapted to international doctoral students.

- C1. The doctoral training programme includes support mechanisms for the preparation and development of doctoral students' incoming and outgoing mobility schemes.

- C2. The doctoral training programme includes foreign language courses, in support of its internationalisation.

- C3. The doctoral training programme includes training that is conducted partially or entirely remotely, and relies on digital dissemination and teaching tools, especially to promote access for remote audiences, including doctoral students on international mobility schemes or involved in field research.

FIELD 3: THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS' PATHWAY

Three standards (10 to 12) specify the scope of this field and are used to assess the results of the doctorate in terms of its attractiveness, performance and relevance. The aim is also to evaluate how the institution monitors and proposes changes.

Standard 10: The doctoral program ensures its attractiveness as well as the quality of its recruitment.

- C1. The doctorate measures its attractiveness by analysing the trends in doctoral candidates' application and enrolment.

- C2. The information systems about the doctoral program implemented by its coordinators within the institution, as well as the funding opportunities offered in its scope, contribute to its visibility and attractiveness.

Standard 11: The doctoral program ensures the smooth progress and quality of its doctoral students' training path.

- C1. The doctoral program ensures the smooth progress and quality of its doctoral students' training path by implementing support measures and adjustments. These measures particularly include those that guarantee the proper conduct of theses and those that allow for adaptations in the pathways of individuals with specific needs.

- C2. The doctorate foresees regular individual monitoring of doctoral students, according to procedures that are clearly defined, comprehensible and transparent for doctoral students and thesis supervisors.

Standard 12: The doctoral program ensures the quality of its graduates' professional outcomes in relation to its objectives and the realities of the job market.

- C1. The doctoral program ensures the quality of its graduates' futures by relying on the analysis of the results from follow-up surveys regarding their pathways and professional outcomes.

- C2. The monitoring system takes account of the nature, profile, geographical location and changes in jobs held by PhD holders.

- C3. PhD holders' career development results are shared with a view to promoting the doctorate to potential candidates and socio-professional associations.

- C4. By involving doctoral students/PhD holders, the doctoral school and its institutional partners promote the creation of an alumni directory or network gathering its former doctoral students.

FIELD 4: MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE DOCTORATE

Two standards (13 and 14) specify the scope of this field and are used to assess management and continuous improvement of the doctorate. More specifically, the aim is to assess their impact on the doctoral programme's activities, results and monitoring, in relation to its objectives.

Standard 13: The doctorate is supported and boosted by the institution's human resources and financial policies.

- C1. The doctoral supervision policy defined by the institution meets clear and shared criteria.

- C2. The institution's human resources policy, in terms of recruitment, promotion and recognition of activities, takes account of the doctorate's needs and helps to revitalise it.

- C3. The supervisors or mentors associated with the doctoral program, along with the support staff of the doctoral training, benefit from a policy of encouragement and support for incoming and outgoing mobility from the institution, which contributes to the internationalisation of the doctoral program.

- C4. The supervisors or mentors involved in the doctoral program benefit from a policy of support, guidance, and training.

- C5. The doctoral supervisors have financial resources which they monitor and control in relation to their objectives and results.

- C6. The doctorate contributes to the institution's capacity-building efforts.

Standard 14: The doctorate is strengthened by internal evaluation and continuous improvement processes.

- C1. Doctoral supervisors organise the evaluation of the doctoral training programme by doctoral students.

- C2. Doctoral supervisors analyse the results of the evaluation of the doctoral programme and propose corrective actions for its development.

- C3. The programme undergoes regular and periodic external evaluation.

Compliance of Hcéres' standards with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

ESG standard	Hcéres standard
1.1 – Policy for quality assurance	Standard 14
1.2 – Design and approval of programmes	Standard 1, Standard 2, Standard 3, Standard 6
1.3 – Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Standard 3, Standard 8, Standard 9
1.4 – Student admission, progression, recognition of certification	Standard 7, Standard 10, Standard 11, Standard 12
1.5 – Teaching staff	Standard 13
1.6 – Learning resources and student support	Standard 5, Standard 13
1.7 – Information management	Standard 12, Standard 14
1.8 – Public Information	Standard 10, Standard 12
1.9 – Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes	Standard 14
1.10 – Cyclical external quality assurance	Standard 14