

URODOC survey on the Doctorate¹ structure across Europe (version June 2019)
prepared by the EURODOC Doctoral Training Working Group

Azerbaijan

I. General information and application procedure

Which institutions award doctoral degrees?

Doctorate are provided by the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS), higher education institutions (HEI) and scientific-research organizations, independently on ownership and institutional-legal form.² There are the Dissertation Councils (DC) to provide the thesis dissertation defenses and are responsible for the quality of dissertations. However, not all institutions in Azerbaijan have DCs. The Dissertation Councils are established by the Higher Attestation Commission and includes scientists from certain HEIs and ANAS.

The Higher Attestation Commission (HAC) is the state body specialized in the field of attestation of high scientific and responsible for delivering the doctoral degree diplomas.

What forms of doctorate attendance are available?

Common form of attendance is a full-time. However, if a doctoral candidate works in industry or state institution, the doctorate can be a part-time. It is possible also through dissertation research, so-called independent research.²

What is the formal length of time foreseen for completing a doctorate?

The full-time doctorate usually takes 3 years, while the duration of a part time is equal to 4 years. The specific case of doctorate known as through dissertation research lasts 4 years.² There is no possibility to have a break during the doctorate, unless in case of health impairment or for any other serious reason.

What is the status of the doctoral candidates³?

Doctoral candidates are officially students. But they can be also employed, in case of additional funding through research grants given by the Science Foundation, ANAS or Socar.

What are the social benefits for doctoral candidates with student status?

There are some state social programs that doctorates also can participate and gain benefit. One of them is Ipotec program that researchers can use. Also, ANAS building apartments that researchers can obtain at low prices.

¹ **Doctorate** is understood as the institutional frameworks and processes geared towards the completion of a doctoral degree.

² "Rules on establishment and admission to doctoral studies", Decision No. 129 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated July 1, 2010

³ **Doctoral candidate** is a person enrolled in a doctorate.

How are doctoral candidates financially supported?

The basic scholarship for Azerbaijan doctoral candidates is not under taxation and is equal to near 90 euro and paid by government. However, a doctoral candidate who completes an individual work plan successfully, can be awarded with the additional scholarships and payments offered by internal funds of HEI or research organizations.²

The universities can charge tuition fees for their doctoral degree programmes, they vary and depend on specialization as well as university (mostly for foreigners).²

What are the admission requirements for a doctorate?

The first stage includes required documents preparation and their sending. Such documents might be an application form, certificate(s) of Masters degree, CV, list of all publications (in the sphere of doctorate), a copy of the identity document, two photos, as well information about work experience, letter of reference from workplace(s), and language certificate (if there is such a possibility).² For foreigners, the additional documents might be demanded, for example language certificate (e.g. Azerbaijani, Russian, and English), recommendation letter (prepared by the graduated institution), translation of the required documents and a certificate of Master degree diploma recognition, etc.

The second stage includes the qualification exams to check candidates knowledge in a particular area and competence in a foreign language (usually, it is English, but might be other languages besides Russian) and Philosophy.² It is possible to submit the certificate to prove the language level (e.g. standardized tests IELTS or TOEFL to estimate the English language). The exams should be passed in written form.

The examination commission is established by the head of the HE or scientific institution that provides a doctorate. The Commission should consist of at least two doctors of sciences or professors in the relevant specialty, prospective supervisor(s) might be also included in it. The Commission makes appropriate decisions related to a candidate admission based on the results of passed exams.²

II. Progression

How is a doctorate organized in your country?

After the admission of a candidate, the supervisor(s) should sign a consent agreement with the doctoral candidate related to research activity. Moreover, the individual work plan should be established and includes information about the title of the dissertation and annual plan of research fulfillment for each year of doctorate. Thus, further the data related to published articles, participation in conferences, training seminars and symposiums, as well as information concerning dates of exams and the obtained marks should be added. The individual work plan is confirmed and signed by the head of the institute and supervisor(s) each year.

According to legislation, the minimum mandatory courses include:

- Informatics (e.g. Computer Science);
- Foreign language;
- Main subject;
- Azerbaijani language (for foreigners only);
- Philosophy (for Individual Researchers only);
- Complimentary subject (if required).

How is doctoral supervision provided?

Doctoral candidates have a supervisor from the institution that controls the progress in the research. The supervisor should be confirmed no later than one month from the day of decisions about the candidate acceptance.² A supervisor must not have more than 5 doctoral candidates at the same time. There is a possibility to have the additional consultant(s) in case of collaboration with industrial sector or an expert in a specific sphere is needed. Moreover, the additional supervisor might be assigned when the research work relates at least two scientific fields or fulfilled in different institutions.

What are the main obligations of doctoral candidates?

A doctoral candidate must fully implement the individual work plan. Thus, there is an obligation to make annual reports on the results of the research and progress in dissertation according to this plan during the meetings of departments, laboratories, etc. Doctoral candidates should introduce the scientific results by articles publication and as an oral presentation and posters at conferences, round table discussions, symposiums, etc.

A doctoral candidate should pass three exams according to doctoral programme before the thesis defence, so-called candidate's minimum on the proper discipline, foreign language, and informatics. As the final stage it is obligatory to complete the scientific research and submit the doctoral thesis to defense.

Full-time doctoral candidates might undertake teaching responsibilities as a part time position (0.5 staff unit) in HEI or other academic organizations if it is agreed with a main supervisor and cause no influence on the academic performance.

Foreign doctoral candidates be obliged to attend a language course (e.g. Russian, English) with duration of 6-12 months or pass the Azerbaijani language exam.

Is any mobility compulsory?

Doctoral candidates have a right to take participation in internships and trainings in other academic institutions as well as outside the academic sector at national and international levels as well as take participation in expeditions for research purposes. However, an internship is not obligatory in the majority of institutions providing doctorates.

However the Science Development Foundation (SDF) provides the "Mobility Grant" to support participation in scientific events and short-term internship abroad. Youth Foundation also gives travel grants for researchers under 29 year for participation in events abroad.

How are courses in transferable skills provided?

The courses in transferable skills are not mandatory.

How is the progress of the doctoral candidate evaluated?

Doctoral candidates should prepare an annual report on the results of the research, which consists of the experimental and theoretical parts and information about publications. The report should be signed by the supervisor and the head of the institution that allows to continue the doctorate.

Is it possible for doctoral candidates to change supervisor(s)?

There is a possibility to change supervisor if a supervisor(s) have not enough time or possibility because of illness, other serious causes and/or conflict situation, and as a consequence cannot fulfill her/his obligations related to monitoring of progress in research and supervision of the endorsed individual working plan, and others.

A doctoral candidate should appeal to the Department of Graduate Studies or head of the institution and this procedure must be documented and fulfilled according to existing rules.

Are supervisors required to have training in order to supervise doctoral candidates?

No, the specific trainings are not required. As a general rule, the supervisor(s) should be a professor or at least doctor of science (as exceptional case to have postdoctoral degree "associated professor").

A supervisor should spend usually 50 hours/year to supervise one full-time doctoral candidate and 25 hours for part-time one. However, this time is increased twice in case of foreign candidates and is equal to 100 and 50 hours/year, respectively.

III. Defence procedure

What requirements should be met to receive acceptance to enter the defence procedure?

To enter the defence procedure, a doctoral candidate have to complete the research and their present in the form of a thesis, to publish the most important results in the scientific journals, and to pass the required candidate's minimum. A doctoral candidate should complete an examination on the particular discipline in organization where the thesis defence will be intended. The candidate's exams have a validity of six years from its passing date.

Only a person with a degree in Medicine and Veterinary has a right to defend a doctoral dissertation in these fields. A doctoral candidate who intends to defence thesis in Pedagogy, should have at least two-year didactic experience in the field of education.

As the first stage, the thesis is debated during a seminar at the institute or the department of ANAS. In case of positive opinions, the next stages are pre-defence and defence

procedures, respectively. A doctoral candidate has two assigned reviewers, i.e. often knowns as opponents (at least one of them must hold title “doctor of science”, while another one can be only doctor). The Dissertation Council nominates reviewers, as an exception, it can be also done by the Higher Attestation Commission.

What documents are required to start the defence procedure?

The doctoral thesis can be in the form of a printed monograph, i.e. dissertation. The language of the thesis can be Azerbaijani, Russian or English for foreigners. The volume of thesis should be 100 - 150 pages (excluding pictures, tables, charts, supplements and references). Its structure and format are strictly defined in “Requirements for dissertations”.⁴

The main obtained results of research work should be published. The minimal amount of articles, is five, including at least one in the international peer-reviewed journal related to area of research.⁵

Before defense, the results of candidate's minimum should be presented in a form of the certificate signed by the rector. There should be two positive reviewers' conclusions as well.

The additional documented which might also be required:

- CV of a doctoral candidate,
- list of other achievements (patents, awards, reports presented at the international conferences, etc.),
- supervisor's recommendation letter,
- abstracts in the English and Azeri languages, and others.

What is the defence procedure?

The thesis defense in Azerbaijan is a multi-stage procedure. The first stage is the preliminary defence, when thesis is introduced in the institution where research was fulfilled. The final stage is the defence with participation of the Dissertation Council. The dissertation is considered to be approved if the specialized Dissertation Council takes such a decision by closed voting. The final approval is confirmed by the Presidium of the Higher Attestation Commission.

The defence of doctoral dissertation is a public event and open to all, and might be in either Azerbaijani or Russian, but legislation allows other languages as well (if it is agreed).

The first stage of a doctoral defence is an oral presentation of the research project using needed visualization tools. The second stage starts with public discussions.

⁴ Presidium of the Higher Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan 19 September 2003 (Protocol No. 12) and (Protocol No. 11) of 6 June 2004

⁵ Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 857, dated 21 February 2003

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Dated 12.06.2019



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⁶Melania Borit wishes to acknowledge the project SAF21 – Social science aspects of fisheries for the 21st Century [project financed under the EU Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA) ITN-ETN Program; project number: 642080; www.saf21.org] for facilitating this work.