

# Spain

## I. General information and application procedure

### Which institutions award doctoral degrees?

Only Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can award doctoral degrees. It is possible to do a doctorate in a non-academic institution or company, so-called 'industrial doctorate, or in a research institution, but in these cases the doctoral degree is awarded by a HEI.

### What forms of doctorate attendance are available?

Two forms of attendance are available in most of the doctoral programmes: full-time and part-time. Doctoral candidates can change the attendance form during the doctorate. Industrial doctorates are also available. In this case, the doctorate involves collaboration between a non-academic institution or company and a HEI. The doctoral candidate needs to be enrolled in the doctorate programme of the HEI that offers this position.

Doctoral candidates can obtain an 'international mention'<sup>2</sup> in either form. To obtain this mention, doctoral candidates are required to: do a research stay for a minimum of three months in a foreign HEI or a research center, write and present at least part of the dissertation in a language different than the official in Spain (not applicable in the case of Latin American and other Spanish-speaking countries), have at least one foreign expert as member of the defense committee, and have the dissertation evaluated by at least two foreign experts in the field having at least doctoral degree.

Some doctoral programmes are inter-university programmes, meaning that more than one HEI is involved. In this case, doctoral candidates are typically based in one of the participating institutions, but training activities can take place also in the other institutions. The thesis committee might be composed of members of all the HEIs.

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

For full-time, the duration of the doctorate will be of a maximum of three years, from the admission to the doctoral programme until the thesis defense. This duration is extended to five years for those in part-time. Doctoral candidates may request up to two years extension (full-time) or three years (part-time).

Sick and maternity leaves, as well as other causes, are not taken into account in the maximum duration. Doctoral candidates can also request an interruption of their studies for a maximum period of one year, extendable up to one more year.

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

<sup>2</sup> The **international mention** is a title that certifies that the doctor has international experience and their thesis has been conducted in an international context. Any doctoral candidate in any doctoral programme can apply for this certificate if they meet the requisites.

## **What is the status of the doctoral candidates<sup>3</sup>?**

Doctoral candidates are considered as students. However, those awarded with scholarships from a Spanish institution (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Economy, regional governmental institutions, HEIs and some private foundations) can have an employee status.

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

They can take sick and maternity leaves, which will not be taken into account in the maximum duration allowed for the completion of their studies. Doctoral candidates with students do not have any other social benefits. When there's a scholarship, then they have the same benefits as any other professional (free medical assistance, pension, unemployment payment after the scholarship ends).

## **How are doctoral candidates financially supported?**

Doctoral candidates are not financially supported directly by the universities. However, there are different sources of scholarships, a few are from private institutions or foundations, others from the ministry, regional public institutions or HEIs. The amount of these scholarships ranges from 900 to 1300 euros per month before taxes. Some universities also provide extra benefits like funding for conferences and others.

## **What are the admission requirements for a doctorate?**

The law requires doctoral candidates to have passed 300 ECTS credits, which typically involves a Bachelor degree or similar consisting of 240 credits plus 60 credits of a Master's degree. Doctoral programmes can add additional requirements (e.g. language proficiency, interview, work experience, specific training, motivation letter, recommendation letters, etc.).

## **II. Progression**

### **How is a doctorate organized in your country?**

The organization depends on a doctoral programme. However, it typically involves mandatory courses in the first year and mandatory or elective courses as well as activities during the following years. Activities can be general or specific related to area of the doctoral programme.

Doctoral candidates need to present their thesis proposal by the end of the first year and it needs to have the approval of the Academic Committee (the Academic Committee is comprised of professors different than the supervisor that are connected to the doctoral programme).

At the end of each year after the first one, doctoral candidates need:

- to inform the Academic Committee about the training activities they have done;
- to inform about progress in their research and thesis;
- to get its approval to continue in the programme.

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<sup>3</sup> **Doctoral candidate** is a person enrolled in a doctorate.

There are no state exams. Teaching is not mandatory except for those holding the specific scholarships that require to teach a certain number of hours.

### **How is doctoral supervision provided?**

Typically, doctoral candidates have one or two supervisor/s and one or more co-supervisors from the same or different institutions.

The supervisor is responsible for:

- coherence and suitability of the training activities;
- impact and novelty in the field of the doctoral thesis;
- guide in the planning;
- control of a doctoral candidate involvement in other projects and activities.

Normally, the main supervisor is also the tutor who is responsible to assess if doctoral candidate's training activities are in the line with objectives of the doctoral programme. Supervisors can be affiliated also to the different HEIs, but in this case, a tutor should be from the same institution as doctoral candidate.

### **What are the main obligations of doctoral candidates?**

Training activities are not graded with ECTS credits. Doctoral candidates need to get the approval of their thesis proposal at the end of the first year, and of and training activities at the end of the subsequent years. The thesis proposal needs to have the approval of the Academic Committee.

Most of the obligations depends on the doctoral programme. Doctoral candidates are typically required to take a number of courses; attend a number of conferences, seminars and workshops; present their research at the national and international conferences; publish one or more papers about their research; attend and participate in doctoral meetings (e.g. international training schools and/or conferences for the doctoral candidates).

### **Is any mobility compulsory?**

No. Mobility is not compulsory but it is regarded as a desirable part of doctoral training. Spanish and local governments, HEIs and other institutions provide funding for doctoral candidates to visit foreign and national HE and research institutions. For doctoral candidates seeking the international mention, a mobility of a minimum of three months is compulsory.

### **How are courses in transferable skills provided?**

Training activities depend on a doctoral programme. Some programme might provide transferable skills training while others might not provide such activities, but still value them if a doctoral candidate takes courses outside.

### **How is the progress of the doctoral candidate evaluated?**

At the end of each year, written reports containing information about the training activities and research progress should be prepared. Some programmes require doctoral candidates to present also their thesis proposal orally.

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

Yes, it is possible. Doctoral candidates need to request a change in the supervision (either change supervisor or add of co-supervisor) to the Academic Committee of the doctoral programme.

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

No. Doctoral supervisors only need to have accredited research experience<sup>4</sup>.

## **III. Defence procedure**

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

To submit their thesis, candidates need the approval of their supervisor(s), tutor and coordinator of a doctoral programme regarding the final dissertation document and the training activities along the doctorate. Specific requirements might be defined by a doctoral programme. After submission, the dissertation is assessed by the HEI research Committee and the members of the Thesis Committee. If a doctoral candidate receives positive reports from them, he/she can defend the thesis.

If a doctoral candidate seeks the international mention, there is also a need to receive positive assessment reports from at least two experts working in foreign HEIs.

### **What documents are required to start the defence procedure?**

The required documents are following:

- printed manuscript and its electronic version;
- supervisor's, tutor's and doctoral programme coordinator's approval;
- summary of the thesis in English, Spanish and Catalan/Galician/Basque, in the case of HEIs in languages that have these co-official languages; and
- names and information about the members of the Thesis Committee.

The Thesis Committee is composed by three or five expert in the field having at least doctoral degree. In the first case, only one member can be linked to the doctoral candidate's doctoral programme institution/s, while in the second case, a maximum of two members can be linked to it. Supervisors, co-supervisors and tutors cannot be a part of this Committee.

Doctoral candidates might also need to provide their CV or other additional information depending on the programme requirements. If a doctoral candidate seeks the international mention, at least one member of the Thesis Committee has to be affiliated to a foreign HEI and they will also need to provide additional documents: CV of the foreign member(s) of the Thesis Committee and a certificate of their research stay.

### **What is the defence procedure?**

The defence is a public event. It typically involves a 30 to 45 minutes oral presentation

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<sup>4</sup> The Spanish Agency for the Quality Evaluation and Accreditation (ANECA), as well as other regional HE agencies, assess and certify the research experience of university professors. There are different levels and categories depending on the system, and each category has different requisites. These accreditation is required to apply for most of -long term- teaching and research positions.

followed by the Thesis Committee members' comments and questions to which the doctoral candidate needs to respond.

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