



## **RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD IN THE SESSION HELD ON 2 OCTOBER 2023 APPROVING THE MODIFICATION OF THE PhD REGULATIONS OF THE UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA COMILLAS**

*Rules adapted to RD 272/2023, of 4 July*

### **EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

The new scenario introduced by Royal Decree 99/2011, of 28 January ((modified by Royal Decree 576/2023, of July 4), which regulates official PhD studies, makes it necessary to redefine the PhD education system, as well as the development and updating of all university academic regulations governing these studies.

With these PhD regulations, Universidad Pontificia de Comillas adapts the structure of its PhD studies to the aforementioned new scenario, while leveraging the opportunity for change to introduce some aspects that reinforce the academic quality of the University's PhD programmes and their connection with society and business. Universidad Pontificia de Comillas believes in the essential role of the PhD as an element of social progress.

The most noteworthy aspect is the creation of the Comillas International PhD School, responsible for the organisation and management of PhD studies and activities at Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, and reporting to the Vice-Rector for PhD Studies. The main objective of the School is to coordinate the different PhD programmes, their procedures, training activities and the monitoring of students' progress. Such coordination should lead to synergies in the use of resources and an intensification of the interdisciplinary training of PhD students. Likewise, the School will constitute the University's single point of reference for PhD studies, which will facilitate its integration in inter-university networks such as the Aristós Campus Mundus programme, cooperation agreements with national and foreign research entities, or the attraction of international talent to the PhD programme.

A second noteworthy aspect is the fact that the PhD programmes now depend directly on the PhD School, and not on the Centres. This facilitates the creation of inter-centre or inter-university transversal programmes, which stimulates interdisciplinarity and the adaptation of these programmes to the demands of society, and makes it possible to mobilise the potential of the university and its research networks. In this sense, the participation of representatives of companies or other institutions in the academic committees of the programmes is foreseen, and this link is recognised by means of an industrial mention in the PhD degree. In any case, the regulations guarantee the participation of the Centres in the decision-making processes that concern them, as essential partners in the programmes.

Thirdly, these rules incorporate good management practices, aimed at standardising administrative procedures and the processes for monitoring and assessing PhD students. Thus, common requirements are established for access to the programmes, and homogeneous procedures for the selection and admission of students, or the assignment of a tutor or supervisor. In addition, a single document is established for the registration of the activities carried out by the PhD student and common requirements for the research plan, which is constituted as the PhD student's evaluation system.

Fourthly, mechanisms have been introduced to ensure the quality of PhD theses defended at Comillas. In addition to the aforementioned periodic evaluation and monitoring procedure, it establishes the need to request reports from external experts to accredit the quality of the thesis; a public presentation procedure that is extended to all PhD students at the University; a more robust procedure for awarding the "cum laude" mention; and the creation of a Scientific Committee to advise the Director of the PhD School.

Finally, and as a further novelty, the regulations open up the possibility of submitting a thesis as a compendium of publications, for which both the requirements and the necessary precautions are established to guarantee the quality of the thesis in these cases.

## CHAPTER I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

### *Article 1. Purpose and Bodies of the PhD Studies*

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1. The purpose of these regulations is to regulate the organisation of PhD studies at Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, in accordance with the provisions of Royal Decree 99/2011, of 28 January (modified by Royal Decree 576/2023, of July 4), which regulates official PhD studies, and articles 19 and 20 of Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, which establishes the organisation of university studies and the procedure for quality assurance.
2. Doctorate is understood as the third cycle of official university studies leading to the acquisition of competences and skills concerning quality university research and its development.
3. For the purposes of this regulation, accredited research experience is understood as possession of at least one period of research activity recognized by the National Commission for the Evaluation of Research Activity (CNEAI) in application of Royal Decree 1086/1989, of 28 December. August, on the remuneration of university professors, or, in the event that one is not in a position to be able to accredit it in this way, have comparable research merits, as established in the regulations of the university itself.
4. These are the bodies of the PhD programmes at Universidad Pontificia de Comillas:
  - a) The Comillas International PhD School, reporting directly to the Vice-Rector responsible for PhD studies.
  - b) The General PhD Committee, composed of the members of the School's Steering Committee.
  - c) The academic committee of the PhD programme
  - d) The Coordinator of each PhD programme.

### *Article 2. PhD Programmes*

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PhD studies are organised through programmes under the terms established in these regulations and in accordance with the criteria established in Royal Decree 99/2011, of 28 January (modified by Royal Decree 576/2023, of July 4), which regulates official PhD studies.

A PhD programme is a set of activities leading to the acquisition of the competences and skills necessary to obtain a PhD degree. The aim of this programme will be to develop the different training aspects of the PhD student and will establish the procedures and lines of research for the development of PhD theses.

A doctoral student is considered to be someone who, after accrediting the requirements established in these regulations, has been admitted to a doctoral program and has enrolled in it.

### *Article 3. Length of the Studies*

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1. The duration of the PhD studies will be a maximum of four years, full-time, from the doctoral student's first enrolment in the programme until the application for the deposit of the PhD thesis is made.
2. Notwithstanding the above, and with the prior authorisation of the academic committee responsible for the programme, part-time studies may be undertaken. In this case, such studies may have a maximum duration of seven years from the doctoral student's first enrolment in the programme until the application for the deposit of the PhD.
3. If the application for deposit of the thesis has not been submitted after the period mentioned in previous sections, the academic committee responsible for the program

may authorize the extension of this period for one more year, under the conditions established in the corresponding doctoral program and with the approval of the Director of the International Doctoral School.

4. The modification of the mode of study for doctoral studies may only be requested in the ordinary period of duration of said studies. That is, in the event that a request is made to go from full-time to part-time, during the first four years. It is not possible to request said modification once the extension has begun, given its exceptional nature. Once the modification is requested during the first four ordinary years of duration, without these having been entirely consumed, the calculation of the remaining time in the part-time dedication regime will be the result of establishing an equivalence in terms of the time consumed between both ordinary periods of duration, that is, the extension is excluded from the calculation. In this way, to the remaining time that may result from the aforementioned equivalence, an additional year would have to be added exceptionally, with the approval of the Director of the Comillas International Doctoral School.
5. When the doctoral student is a person with a degree of disability equal to or greater than 33 percent, the duration of doctoral studies will be a maximum of six years full-time and nine years part-time.
6. The calculation of these periods shall be interrupted in the case of temporary disability, birth, adoption, custody for adoption purposes, foster care, risk during pregnancy, risk during breastfeeding and gender violence or any other situation contemplated in current regulations, provided they are duly justified, and during the period they last.
7. The PhD student may apply to leave the programme temporarily for a total of two years. This request must be addressed and justified to the academic committee responsible for the programme, which will decide whether the student's request can be granted. If the absence is not due to what was indicated in the previous paragraph, the calculation of the time limits shall not be interrupted.

#### ***Article 4. Organisation of PhD Training***

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PhD training at Universidad Pontificia de Comillas will be organised in accordance with the provisions of article 4 of Royal Decree 99/2011(modified by Royal Decree 576/2023, of July 4).

#### ***Article 5. Access Requirements to the PhD Programme***

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1. In general, to access an official PhD programme, an official Spanish University Decree, or equivalent, and an Official Master's degree or equivalent are necessary, provided that at least 300 ECTS credits have been obtained in these two courses as a whole.
2. Likewise, candidates can be admitted if one of the following applies:
  - a) Holding an official Spanish university degree, or from another country belonging to the European Higher Education Area, which implies having passed a minimum of 300 ECTS credits in official university studies, of which at least 60 must be at Master's level (in the terms established in art. 16 of the now repealed Royal Decree 1393/2007).
  - b) Holding a degree obtained in accordance with foreign educational systems belonging to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), without the need for homologation, that accredits a level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework, provided that said degree entitles access to higher education Doctoral studies in the country of issue. This admission will not imply, in any case, the homologation of the previous degree held by the interested party or its recognition for purposes other than access to doctoral education.
  - c) Holding a degree obtained in accordance with foreign educational systems outside the EHEA, without the need for its approval, after verification by the university that it accredits a level of training equivalent to that of the official Spanish university Master's degree and that it authorizes the country of issue of the degree to access Doctoral studies. This admission will not imply, in any case, the homologation of

the previous degree held by the interested party or its recognition for purposes other than access to doctoral education.

- d) Holding another Doctorate degree.
- e) Likewise, university graduates who, after obtaining a place in training in the corresponding test for access to specialized health training places, have passed with a positive evaluation at least two years of training in a program to obtain an official title in one of the specialties in Health Sciences.

#### ***Article 6. Criteria for Selection and Admission to a PhD Programme***

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1. Selection to a PhD programme shall be made by the academic committee of the PhD programme concerned.  
In order to make the selection, the academic committee will use the criteria previously established in the verification report, which, in any case, will include:
  - a) Assessment of the academic curriculum.
  - b) An assessment of the merits of particular relevance or significance in relation to the PhD programme applied for.
  - c) The endorsement of a researcher as a possible Director of the doctoral thesis.
  - d) Any other criterion or procedure previously explained and justified, which, in the opinion of the academic committee, allows the suitability of the applicant to follow these studies to be ascertained.
  - e) The admission to a programme of a student who has previously left it definitively will require, in order for the calculation of the deadlines to start again, that the new research be objectively and significantly different from that carried out in the previous stage, which must be verified and approved by the academic committee in an explicit manner. A different address from the above will also be required. If these conditions are not met, the readmission shall take into account, for the purpose of calculating time limits, the time already spent in the previous stage.
2. Admission to a PhD programme is decided by the Director of the International Doctoral School, or the person he/she delegates, at the proposal of the academic committee of the corresponding PhD programme and with the approval, in all cases, of the Dean or Director of the Centre or Centres that provide human or material resources to the programme. In the case of the admission of a candidate who accesses the program in accordance with the assumption provided for in article 5.2 c) above, the resolution will be issued by the Rector or Vice-Rector to whom he has delegated, following a report from the Director of the International School of Ph.D. The report must necessarily rule on the equivalence with the official Spanish university Master's degree and on whether it entitles access to doctoral studies in the country in which the degree is issued.
3. Admission to PhD programmes may include the requirement for specific additional training in the terms set out in the verification report. These specific training complements must be completed in the initial period of development of the thesis, within a maximum period of one academic year, and will be considered, for the purposes of granting scholarships and study aid, doctoral level training.
4. At least 5 percent of the places offered will be reserved for students with a recognised degree of disability equal to or greater than 33 percent, as well as for students with permanent educational support needs associated with personal circumstances of disability, who in their previous studies have required resources and support for their full educational normalization.

#### ***Article 7. Enrolment***

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1. PhD students admitted to a PhD programme shall enrol for the academic supervision of the PhD programme every six months.
2. This registration fee must be paid until a favourable decision on the admission to the defence of the PhD thesis has been taken. Failure to pay the registration fee by any of the deadlines established for this purpose will result in the loss of student status and,

therefore, the definitive withdrawal of the PhD student, except where the temporary withdrawal request provided for in articles 3.4 and 3.5 has been submitted and granted prior to such non-payment. If the student applies for readmission to the programme once this definitive withdrawal has taken place, the provisions of article 6.1 e) of these regulations shall apply.

#### ***Article 8. Tutor of the PhD Thesis***

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1. At the time of admission, the academic committee of the respective programme will assign a tutor to the PhD student. The appointment of a tutor may be modified at any time by the academic committee, after hearing the PhD student and, where appropriate, the tutor, provided that there are justified reasons.
2. The tutor is responsible for ensuring that the student's training and research activity is in line with the principles of the programmes and the PhD School.
3. The tutor must hold a PhD and have accredited research experience and be a member of the faculty of the PhD programme. The tutor is responsible for ensuring the interaction of the PhD student with the corresponding academic committee. To this end, it is assigned the following functions:
  - a) To regularly review, together with the thesis supervisor, the PhD student's personalised activities document.
  - b) To approve, together with the thesis supervisor and before the end of the first year, the research plan drawn up by the PhD student.
  - c) To sign the documentary commitment together with the University, the PhD student and the supervisor.
  - d) To issue and submit annually to the academic committee the report provided for in article 11.7 of Royal Decree 99/2011.
4. The University may sign a co-supervision agreement with another foreign University, which determines the supervision of the thesis by two or more PhDs, the activities to be carried out by the PhD student and the terms of the stay of the PhD student in the foreign institution for a minimum period of 6 months. The international co-supervision of the thesis will be stated in the PhD degree, in accordance with the provisions of art. 11.6 of RD 1002/2010 of 5 August, on the issuing of official university degrees (modified by Royal Decree 576/2023, of July 4).

#### ***Article 9. Supervisor of the PhD Thesis***

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1. At the time of admission, the academic committee of the respective programme shall assign the PhD student a PhD thesis supervisor who shall also assume the duties of tutor, unless a supervisor external to the programme is appointed, in which case a tutor shall be appointed in accordance with the provisions of the previous article. The appointment of the PhD thesis supervisor may be modified by the academic committee at any time during the student's PhD studies, provided that there are justified reasons.
2. Any PhD holder, Spanish or foreign, with accredited research experience, regardless of the university, centre or institution in which he/she works, may be the Supervisor or Co-Supervisor of a thesis.
3. The thesis supervisor is responsible for the overall management of the student's research work, the coherence and suitability of the training activities, the impact and novelty of the subject of the PhD thesis in his/her field and the guidance in the planning and its adaptation, where appropriate, to that of other projects and activities in which the student is involved. To this end, it is responsible for at least the following functions:
  - a) To regularly review, together with the tutor, the PhD student's personalised activity document.
  - b) To approve, together with the tutor and before the end of the first year, the research plan drawn up by the PhD student.
  - c) To sign the documentary commitment together with the University, the PhD student and the tutor.

- d) To issue and submit annually to the academic committee the report provided for in article 11.7 of Royal Decree 99/2011.
  - e) If applicable, to endorse the stay and activities required for the inclusion, if applicable, of the “International PhD Mention”, in accordance with the provisions of article 15.1.a) of Royal Decree 99/2011.
4. With the prior authorisation of the academic committee, the thesis may be co-supervised by other PhDs, who must meet the same requirements in terms of research experience as those indicated in art. 1.3, when there are academic reasons that justify it, such as thematic interdisciplinarity or programmes developed in national or international collaboration. Authorisation may be requested at any time during the development of the thesis, and may be revoked at a later date if, in the opinion of the academic committee, the co-supervision does not benefit the development of the thesis. The academic committee may authorize the co-supervision of thesis by doctors who do not comply with the requirements of article 1.3.

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***Article 10. Registration of Activities***

1. Once enrolled in the programme, a personalised activity document must be drawn up for each PhD student for the purposes of the individualised control register referred to in article 2.5 of Royal Decree 99/2011. All the activities of interest for the development of the PhD student must be registered therein in accordance with the criteria established by the General PhD Committee and it must be regularly reviewed by the tutor and the thesis supervisor and evaluated annually by the academic commission responsible for the PhD programme.

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***Article 11. Follow-Up of the PhD Student***

1. Before the end of the first year, the PhD student must draw up a research plan, endorsed by the tutor and the supervisor, which will include at least the following sections:
- a) Identification details of the PhD student and the supervisor or co-supervisors of the thesis.
  - b) Title of the thesis proposal.
  - c) Summary of the proposal.
  - d) Methodology to be used.
  - e) Objectives to be achieved.
  - f) Means and timetable for achieving the proposed objectives and, where appropriate, mention of the specific additional training to be undertaken.
  - g) Bibliography.

In addition, the doctoral student must prepare a personal training plan, which will contain a forecast of the different training activities that will be carried out during the doctoral thesis.

The research plan and the personal training plan must be endorsed by the Director and the tutor, and be sent to the academic committee of the program within the established period and manner. Both may be improved and detailed throughout the doctoral student's stay in the program.

2. Annually, the academic committee of the programme will evaluate the research plan and the activities document together with the reports that the tutor and the supervisor must issue for this purpose. The result of the assessment, favourable or unfavourable, signed by the chair of the committee, will be included in the PhD student's file. A favourable evaluation is a prerequisite for continuation in the programme. In the event of an unfavourable evaluation, which shall be duly motivated, the PhD student shall be re-evaluated within a maximum period of six months, for which purpose he/she shall draw up a new research plan. In the event of a new unfavourable evaluation, the PhD student will be permanently withdrawn from the programme. To this end, the Director of the International Doctoral School shall issue the appropriate resolution, at the proposal of the academic committee responsible for the PhD programme.

#### ***Article 12. Documentary Commitment***

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1. The supervision of PhD students shall be established by means of a documentary commitment signed by the Director of the International Doctoral School, the PhD student, his/her tutor and his/her supervisor or co-supervisors. The commitment must be signed at the time of the assignment of the Supervisor.
2. The documentary commitment shall include a procedure for conflict resolution and shall cover aspects relating to intellectual or industrial property rights that may arise in the field of PhD programmes. The commitment document, once signed by the participants, is filed in the PhD student's file.

#### ***Article 13. Dispute Settlement Procedure***

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1. In the event of non-compliance with any of the points included in the commitment document or of any other disagreement related to the development of the PhD programme with respect to each PhD student, any of the parties may inform the coordinator of each PhD programme, who will act as mediator with a view to reaching a unanimous agreement that will put an end to the controversy. In case the conflict is related to the academic committee or the programme coordinator, the Directorate of the International PhD School will mediate.
2. If mediation has not led to a resolution of the conflict within one month of the mediation being notified, the matter shall be referred to the General PhD Committee, which shall issue a decision within one month, after hearing the parties and the coordinator of the PhD programme.
3. An appeal may be lodged with the Rector against the decision of the General PhD Committee.

## **CHAPTER II. PhD THESIS**

#### ***Article 14. The PhD Thesis***

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The PhD thesis will consist of an original research work carried out by the PhD student in any field of knowledge. The thesis must enable the PhD student to work independently in the field of R&D&I.

#### ***Article 15. PhD Thesis Drafting***

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1. The PhD student may choose to write and, where appropriate, defend his/her thesis in Spanish and/or in English.
2. At the request of the PhD student, the Academic Committee of the programme may authorise the writing and, where appropriate, defence of the thesis in a language other than Spanish and English, if there is justification that this language is customary for scientific communication in the field of knowledge in question.
3. The application to write and, where appropriate, defend the thesis in a language other than Spanish and English must be submitted to the the Academic Committee of the programme prior to the submission of the thesis.
4. By way of exception and without the need for prior authorisation, PhD theses in the fields of translation and interpreting may be written and, where appropriate, defended in the language corresponding to the speciality in question.
5. The title of the thesis must appear in the original language in which it was written and in Spanish, on the cover and on the title page.
6. In the event that the language of writing is other than Spanish, the thesis must contain a summary in Spanish. This abstract must be at least 2,000 words in length and must be bound as part of the thesis.

### ***Article 16. Format***

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The preparation of the PhD thesis must be verified in accordance with the formal requirements determined by the International Doctoral School, in order to establish rules that guarantee uniformity of presentation, cover pages, electronic formats of the thesis, access permissions to its content and others that are considered relevant.

### ***Article 17. The Thesis as a Compendium of Publications***

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1. PhD students may choose to present their thesis as a compendium of publications if, in the period between the approval of their research plan in accordance with article 11.6 of Royal Decree 99/2011 of 28 January and the presentation of their thesis, and with the express authorisation of their thesis supervisor or co-supervisors, they have received a favourable report from the academic committee of the PhD programme, which will decide on a case-by-case basis in view of the research merits of each PhD student. Papers may be previously published or in the process of publication. In any case, these publications must have scientific value in their own right and, at the same time, they must form a scientific unit.  
The PhD student must be the main author of each paper.
2. Prior to the presentation of the thesis and accompanied by a favourable and reasoned report from the thesis supervisor or co-supervisors, the PhD student must apply to the academic committee of the PhD programme for authorisation to present the PhD thesis as a compendium of publications.
3. In order to obtain authorisation from the academic committee of the PhD programme, the PhD student must provide the following documentation:
  - a) Copy of published or contributed works.
  - b) Report by the thesis supervisor, justifying the presentation of the compendium of publications as a PhD thesis.
  - c) Responsible declaration by the PhD student confirming that he/she is the main author of all the papers, and specifying his/her contribution to each article. The declaration must be endorsed by the thesis supervisor and by the other authors of the corresponding work.
4. The provisions of Article 15 regarding the wording of theses and the language of the thesis shall apply to theses formulated in the form of a compendium of publications.
5. Theses submitted in the form of a compendium of publications must necessarily contain the following additional sections:
  - a) A general introduction, presenting the work and justifying the scientific unity of the thesis.
  - b) An overall summary of the research objectives and final conclusions, unifying the partial results presented in each of the papers.
  - c) A complete copy of the work (articles, book chapters, book chapters, etc.). The full reference of the work, the personal details of all authors and, where appropriate, the journal or medium in which the work has been published must be included. The PhD student must specify what contribution he/she has made to the work included.
6. Each PhD programme may establish in the verification report the additional criteria it considers appropriate for the admission of PhD theses in the modality of compendium of publications.
7. In any case, the submission of the thesis by compendium of publications must follow the procedure established in Article 18.

### ***Article 18. Submission and Filing of the PhD Thesis***

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1. Once the PhD thesis has been completed, the PhD student will request authorisation to deposit it in writing addressed to the academic committee of the PhD programme, which must be accompanied by the thesis:



- a) Favourable supervisor's report, and, if appropriate, favourable co-supervisor's report. If none of them has academic links with Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, a favourable report will also be required from the tutor.
  - b) A copy of the PhD thesis.
  - c) The resolution of the academic committee of the programme approving the Application for approval of the data processing and ethical aspects of the PhD thesis.
2. Once authorisation has been requested, the academic committee of the PhD programme will request a report on the PhD thesis from a minimum of two doctors who are experts in the subject from outside the programme and the university.
  3. The experts' reports must decide in one of the following four ways: favourable to the defence, unfavourable, favourable with significant modification requiring further review, or favourable with some minor modification, without requiring further review. In the event that an expert's report is favourable with significant modifications, the PhD student will have a maximum period of six months to complete or modify the sections or contents of the thesis, in the terms indicated by the experts. The expert must approve the changes made. In the case of a favourable decision with minor modifications, the PhD student will have a maximum period of one month to introduce the minor changes indicated by the experts. In the event that the report of only one of the experts is unfavourable, the report of the other expert being favourable with or without minor modification, the academic committee of the PhD programme may decide to request a new report from a third expert. If this report is again unfavourable, it will be considered that the expert assessment of the PhD thesis has not been passed positively. Once the modifications have been made and approved, if applicable, the Academic Committee will proceed to summon the doctoral student to present the thesis. The academic commission may call other experts whose opinion it deems appropriate to hear. Likewise, the academic committee will obtain a report on the originality of the thesis, which will be incorporated into the doctoral student's file.
  4. Once the student's complete dossier has been evaluated, including the activities document, the academic committee of the PhD programme will authorise, where appropriate, the deposit of the thesis, issuing a decision within a maximum period of one month. In the event that authorisation is refused, the PhD student may appeal to the Rector, who will decide on the basis of a report from the General PhD Committee.
  5. Once authorisation has been obtained, the academic committee shall make a proposal for experts in the field who may form part of the panel responsible for judging the thesis in accordance with Article 19. This proposal must be accompanied by a reasoned report on the suitability of the proposed experts, indicating the proposed chairperson and secretary of the thesis examining board.
  6. Once the deposit of the PhD thesis has been authorised, the Academic Committee of the PhD programme will send the following documentation to the Secretary's Office of the International Doctoral School:
    - a) The PhD student's activities document, with the training activities carried out by the student.
    - b) A copy of the PhD thesis.
    - c) The resolution of the academic committee of the programme approving the Application for approval of the data processing and ethical aspects of the PhD thesis.
    - d) The authorisation by the Academic Committee of the PhD programme.
  7. Once the dossier has been received, the secretary's office of the PhD School will:
    - a) Check the formal validity of the file.
    - b) Communicate the presentation of the thesis to all the doctors of the University.
    - c) Order that the copy of the thesis be deposited at the Academic Management and Qualifications Service for a period of fifteen school days, so that it may be examined by any doctor.
  8. Once the public exhibition period has elapsed, the academic committee of the programme will decide on the authorisation of the defence of the thesis. In the event that authorisation is refused, the PhD student may appeal to the Rector, who will decide on the basis of a report from the General PhD Committee.

9. Once the defence of the thesis has been authorised, no more than three months may elapse before the defence of the PhD thesis, unless, for serious and duly justified reasons, the Director of the International Doctoral School authorises otherwise.

#### ***Article 19. The PhD Thesis Examining Board***

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Once the defence of the PhD thesis has been authorised, the examining board to assess it shall be proposed by the academic committee of the programme in accordance with the provisions of this article and appointed by the Director of the International Doctoral School.

The following should be taken into account when appointing the selection board:

- a) It shall be composed of five full members: a Chairperson, a Secretary and three members, as well as two alternates. Exceptionally, the Vice-Rector responsible for PhD studies may authorise the composition of a board of three full members.
- b) The majority of the members of the selection board must be external to the University.
- c) All members must have a doctorate degree and accredited research experience, in accordance with article 1.3. Retired doctors may sit on the selection board, provided that they meet the requirements of article 1.3.
- d) The Supervisor or Co-Supervisor of the thesis may not form part of the examining board, except in cases of international co-directorships where this is required by the regulations of the corresponding country, and provided that this is established in the co-directorship agreement.
- e) The gender proportionality principle between women and men must be guaranteed.
- f) The Chairperson of the selection board shall be the member with the highest academic standing, or the one most distinguished in terms of research.
- g) The Secretary of the examining board will always be one of the professors of Universidad Pontificia de Comillas.

#### ***Article 20. Defence and Evaluation of the PhD Thesis***

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1. The PhD thesis is assessed at the defence.
2. The defence of the thesis must take place on a working day or days in accordance with the University's academic calendar and will be convened by the chair of the examining board and communicated by its secretary to the other members, the PhD student and the International Doctoral School at least ten days in advance of the event.
3. Once the examining board has been constituted, the defence and evaluation must take place in a public session and consist of a presentation by the PhD student of the work carried out, the methodology, the content and the conclusions, with special mention of their original contributions.
4. The PhD student's training activities document cannot give rise to a quantitative score, but it can constitute a qualitative evaluation instrument that complements the evaluation of the PhD thesis.
5. The members of the examining board may ask as many questions as they consider appropriate, to which the candidate must reply. Likewise, the doctors present at the public ceremony may ask questions at the time and in the manner indicated by the chairperson of the selection board.
6. The examining board will issue a report and the overall grade awarded to the thesis according to the following scale: "Fail", "Pass", "Merit" and "Outstanding".
7. The examining board may award the mention of "cum laude" if the overall grade is outstanding and a unanimous positive secret ballot is cast in that sense. The vote cast by each member of the examining board will be kept by the secretary of the examining board, who will send it to the PhD School so that it can be counted in a session other than the one corresponding to the defence of the PhD thesis.
8. The result of the evaluation must be recorded in minutes that must be sent to the Director of the International Doctoral School, stating the result of the vote and accompanied by the votes cast. This report will be sent immediately to the Academic Management and Qualifications Service for inclusion in the student's file.

***Article 21. Remote intervention of members of the examining board in the act of defence of the thesis, by telematic means***

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Exceptionally, the Director of the International Doctoral School may, at the request of the coordinator of the PhD programme, authorise a member of the examining board, who may not be the chairperson or the secretary, to verify by telematic means his/her participation in the defence of the thesis. This authorisation shall also indicate the appropriate measures to be taken by the thesis selection board to verify the identity of the person concerned and to ensure that the signature on the thesis reading report and the vote to be cast secretly are kept at the disposal of the secretary of the selection board.

***Article 22. PhD Thesis Filing***

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1. Once the PhD thesis has been approved, the university will file it in electronic format, preferably open, in the university's institutional repository and will send a copy of the thesis, also in electronic format, together with all the complementary information required, to the Ministry responsible for universities and for the appropriate purposes in accordance with the terms established by the latter.
2. In addition, a printed copy of each approved PhD thesis must be kept and sent to the University's Office of the Archive.

***Article 23. Extraordinary PhD Prize***

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1. The annual Extraordinary PhD Prize may be awarded to those theses that are especially meritorious and that have obtained the maximum qualification, with a proposal for an Extraordinary Prize for every ten doctoral theses defended, per program. If the minimum number of 10 theses is not reached in an academic year, the candidate theses will be accumulated for the following academic year.
2. Once the defense of each doctoral thesis has finished, each member of the Examining Board will be asked for their opinion on whether said thesis should be awarded the prize in question, as well as, where appropriate, an evaluation of it in accordance with the rubric established by each program. In a closed envelope and secretly and anonymously, each member will express their opinion. The Secretary of the Examining Board will collect the envelopes and send them to the International Doctoral School. The Academic Committees of the programs will prepare the necessary rubrics to evaluate the candidate doctoral theses.
3. The General Doctoral Committee, in an ordinary session and in view of the opinions gathered from the different members of the Thesis Examining Boards and the reasoned reports of the different Academic Committees, will award the Extraordinary PhD Prize to "the best doctoral thesis defended during the course/period ..... in the ..... program." This distinction will appear on the back of the student's degree.

***Article 24. International Mention in the Doctorate Degree and thesis under International Co-Direction***

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1. The title of Doctor may include on its front the mention "International Doctorate", provided that the following circumstances occur:
  - a. That, during the training period necessary to obtain the Doctorate degree, the doctoral student has carried out one or more stays for at least three months outside Spain in one or more higher education institutions or research centers of prestige in order to complement and reinforce their research training. In the event of several stays, at least one of them will have a minimum duration of one month. The stays and activities must be endorsed by the Director and authorized by the Academic Committee and, once carried out and validated by the host entity, they will be incorporated into the doctoral student's activities document.

- b. That part of the doctoral thesis, at least the summary and conclusions, has been written and defended in one of the usual languages for scientific communication in its field of study, different from any of the official languages in Spain. This rule will not apply when the stays, reports and experts come from a Spanish-speaking country.
  - c. That at least two of the expert informants of the thesis referred to in article 18.2 belong to a non-Spanish higher education institution or research institute. These experts must not coincide with researchers who received the doctoral student and carried out tutoring or work direction tasks at the host entity.
  - d. That at least one expert person belonging to a non-Spanish higher education institution or research center, with the title of Doctor, and different from the person responsible for the stay mentioned in paragraph a), has been part of the examining board of the thesis.
2. The title of Doctor will include on its front the document "Thesis under International Co-Direction with the University U", provided that the following circumstances occur:
- a. That the doctoral thesis is supervised by Doctors from two or more universities, of which one must be Spanish and the rest foreign, who must formalize a joint supervision agreement.
  - b. That, for their doctoral thesis work, the doctoral student obtains two or more degrees, one from each of the higher education institutions responsible for the development of the thesis.
  - c. That, during the training period necessary to obtain the title of Doctor or Doctor, the doctoral student has completed a minimum stay of six months in each of the institutions with which the joint supervision agreement is established, carrying out research work, either in a single period or in several. The stays and activities will be reflected in the Co-Direction agreement.
  - d. Theses under International Co-Direction may also give rise to the inclusion of the mention "International Doctorate" in the title of Doctor if stays are carried out in institutions other than those of the formalized agreement, as established in section a) and provided that they occur. the circumstances expressed in article 24.1

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***Article 25. Industrial Mention in the Doctorate Degree***

- 1. This mention will be obtained by carrying out doctoral studies with the collaboration of the social and economic fabric in order to promote collaboration and the transfer and exchange of knowledge between the academic world and the social and economic world, whether it is in the field public or private. The "Industrial Doctorate" mention may be awarded provided the following circumstances occur:
  - a. That the thesis has developed a research project of industrial, commercial, social or cultural interest of an entity, public or private company or public administration. Universities, public research organizations (national or regional) and university hospitals are excluded. Exceptionally, this mention may be made in any of these institutions, except in universities, as long as the content of the thesis is eminently applied. The direct relationship between the doctoral thesis and the work carried out by the doctoral student in the entity or company must be formalized in a scientific-technical report that must be approved by the university.
  - b. That an agreement has been signed between the entity, company or public administration and the university for the academic development of the doctoral thesis, which will establish, at a minimum, the obligations of the parties and the industrial property rights that may be generated.
  - c. That the doctoral student has been hired by the entity, company or public administration where the research project is developed for at least one year during the development of the thesis, it being necessary that a substantial part of it be developed in the entity, company or public administration.
- 2. The doctoral student will have a thesis tutor designated by the university and a responsible person designated by the entity, company or public administration, who may be, where

appropriate, thesis Director in accordance with the provisions of these regulations. In no case may the person designated by the company be part of the thesis evaluation panel.

### **CHAPTER III. BODIES OF PhD STUDIES**

#### ***Article 26. Determination of the Bodies for PhD Studies***

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The PhD teaching bodies at Universidad Pontificia de Comillas are those listed in Article 1 of these regulations.

#### ***Article 27. Comillas International Doctoral School***

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1. The Comillas International Doctoral School was created under the Vice-Rector for PhD Studies to organise and manage the teaching and activities of PhD studies corresponding to the PhD programmes implemented at Universidad Pontificia de Comillas. The School and its affiliated programmes should ensure leadership and a sufficient critical mass of PhD professors and PhD candidates in their field of knowledge.
2. The Director of the Comillas International PhD School shall be appointed by the Rector for a period of 3 years. He/she must be a professor or researcher of recognised prestige, a condition that must be supported by proof of at least three periods of recognised research activity in accordance with the provisions of Royal Decree 1086/1989 of 28 August 1989. In the event that the researcher occupies a position where the aforementioned evaluation criterion does not apply, he/she must provide evidence of merits comparable to those mentioned above.
3. The Director of the School shall represent the School in all cases in accordance with the criteria of the Vice-Rector responsible for PhD studies and assisted by a Scientific Committee made up of researchers of recognised prestige from areas in which the University has PhD programmes, appointed for this purpose by the Vice-Rector responsible for PhD studies.
4. The Comillas International PhD School will have internal regulations approved by the Governing Board at the proposal of the Vice-Rector responsible for PhD studies, which will establish, among other aspects, the rights and duties of PhD students, in accordance with the provisions of the Student Statute approved by Royal Decree 1791/2010, of 30 December, the rights and duties of tutors and thesis supervisors, as well as the composition and functioning of the academic committees of its programmes.
5. The Comillas International PhD School will formulate and adopt a code of best practices to be subscribed to by all its members.
6. Other universities, centres, organisations, institutions and entities with R+D+I activities, whether public or private, national or foreign, may participate in the Comillas International PhD School under the terms authorised by the Vice-Rector, after consulting the General PhD Committee.

#### ***Article 28. General PhD Committee and Steering Committee of the International PhD School***

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1. The Steering Committee of the Comillas International PhD School exercises the duties relating to the organisation and management of the School and shall act as the General PhD Committee for the development of the functions listed in section 3 of this article.
2. The General PhD Committee is made up of:
  - a) The Vice-Rector with responsibility for PhD studies, who chairs it.
  - b) The Director of the PhD School.
  - c) The coordinators of the PhD programmes.
  - d) The student delegate of the PhD School, elected by the delegates of the different programmes, and
  - e) The Secretary General, who shall act as Secretary.
3. The duties of the General PhD Committee are:

- a) To advise the Rector on the proposal for the implementation of new PhD programmes, as well as on their termination, where appropriate.
- b) To issue the mandatory report for the Rector to resolve appeals against the refusal of authorisation for the defence of PhD theses.
- c) To propose common admission and enrolment deadlines related to PhD studies.
- d) To award the Extraordinary PhD Prize for the best theses defended in each PhD programme.
- e) To assist the Rector in the admission to PhD programmes of students with non-accredited degrees from university systems in countries outside the European Union.
- f) To approve the planning of activities common to the PhD programmes.
- g) To seek and obtain resources.
- h) To establish the conditions under which theses may be read in exceptional circumstances of confidentiality.
- i) Any other duties that may be attributed or delegated to it by the competent bodies of the University.

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***Article 29. The Academic Committee of each PhD Programme***

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1. Each PhD programme will have an academic committee which, in accordance with Royal Decree 99/2011, will be made up of doctors, with the following composition:
  - a) The chairperson, who shall be the coordinator of the PhD programme.
  - b) At least two members appointed by the Vice-Rector responsible for PhD studies and chosen from among professors with proven research experience.
  - c) Where appropriate, one or more representatives of the companies and institutions involved in the programme, appointed by the Vice-Rector responsible for PhD studies, provided they hold a PhD degree.
2. The duties of the academic committee of each PhD programme are as follows:
  - a) To approve the proposal for the selection of students.
  - b) To authorise part-time studies.
  - c) To assign a tutor to each PhD student, once he/she has been admitted to the programme.
  - d) To assign a thesis supervisor or co-supervisors to each PhD student when enrolling in the program.
  - e) To modify the appointment of the tutor or PhD thesis supervisor, provided that there are justified circumstances.
  - f) To annually evaluate the research plan and the document of activities of the PhD students, together with the reports that the tutor and the director must issue for this purpose.
  - g) To authorize the writing and, where appropriate, defense of the thesis in a language other than Spanish and English.
  - h) To authorise the presentation and defence of the PhD thesis.
  - i) To formulate a proposal for the appointment of thesis examining board members.
  - j) To draw up the proposal for the training activities of the respective PhD programme.
  - k) To resolve requests for approval of data processing and ethical aspects of the PhD thesis.
  - l) Any others assigned to it in accordance with the applicable regulations.

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***Article 30. Coordinators of the PhD Programmes***

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1. Each PhD programme, whether official or ecclesiastical, shall have a coordinator, appointed by the Rector after hearing the opinion of the Centres that contribute resources to the programme, from among lecturers and researchers with proven experience in research and in directing research work.
2. The duties of the coordinator of the PhD programme are as follows:

- a) To act on behalf of the academic committee to which he/she belongs before the General PhD Committee.
- b) To chair the academic committee.
- c) To coordinate the development of the programme and its follow-up.
- d) To coordinate the activity of the PhD programme with the centres where the lecturers and researchers participating in the PhD programme are located.
- e) To submit to the Director of the International Doctoral School a request for authorisation, on an exceptional basis, for the remote intervention of members of the thesis examining board in the thesis defence by telematic means, and to notify the Director and PhD candidate of its concession, if applicable.
- f) Any others assigned to it by the applicable regulations or delegated to it by the General PhD Committee.

### **TRANSITIONAL PROVISION**

Doctoral students who, on the date of entry into force of these regulations, had begun doctoral studies, will be subject to the doctoral regulatory provisions in force at the time of the start of said studies. However, the regime relating to the tribunal, defense and evaluation of the doctoral thesis provided for by these regulations will be applicable to said students from the 2024-2025 academic year. Likewise, the theses defended during the academic year 2023-2024 will be eligible for the Extraordinary PhD Prize.

### **DEROGATING PROVISION**

The Academic Regulations for Official Postgraduate Studies: PhD Studies approved by the Governing Board at its meeting held on 28 March 2022 are hereby repealed, as well as the Procedure for granting the “Honorary Distinction” to the best theses defended at the Comillas Pontifical University approved by the Governing Board in the session held on December 18, 2014.

### **FINAL PROVISION**

These rules shall enter into force on the day following their approval by the Governing Board of the University.