

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES FOR *COTUTELLE* DOCTORAL STUDIES

Chapter I. General Provisions

1. The Vilnius University (hereinafter the ‘University’) Guidelines for *Cotutelle* Doctoral Studies (hereinafter the ‘Guidelines’) set out the principles for the organisation of *Cotutelle* doctoral studies at the University.
2. The Guidelines aim to contribute to the development of the University’s research at a high international level and the careers of its researchers by educating early career researchers (doctoral students), developing international and interdisciplinary research, and creating an international research environment.
3. The Guidelines aim to enhance the quality of doctoral studies at the University by enabling doctoral students to gain international research and study experience not only at the University but also at other foreign research and study institutions.
4. The Guidelines have been prepared in accordance with the Statute of the University (https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Adm/statutas/EN_Translation_VU_statutas_2021_11_01.pdf), the University’s Strategic Plan for 2021–2025 approved by Resolution of the Council of Vilnius University No. TPN-3 of 24 February 2021 “On the Approval of the Vilnius University Strategic Plan for 2021–2025”(https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Strateginis_planas_2020_II_dalis_EN.pdf), the Regulations on Doctoral Studies approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (<https://e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/08504a3098df11ea9515f752ff221ec9/asr> (available in Lithuanian)), the University’s Regulation of Doctoral Studies (https://www.vu.lt/site_files/DRS/DOKTORANTURA/Dokt_studijas_reglamentuojantys_dokumentai/Mokslo_doktoranturos_reglamentas_2024.05.21_suvestine.pdf), and other legal acts regulating doctoral studies.

Chapter II. Principles of the *Cotutelle* Doctoral Studies

5. *Cotutelle* is doctoral studies, the degree doctoral studies of an individual doctoral student, the implementation of which and the award of the doctoral degree in a certain field of research is agreed between two higher education and research institutions (hereinafter the ‘universities’) from different countries, allowing doctoral studies and/or research to be carried out at both universities, and the doctoral degree to be awarded by the two universities upon successful defence of the dissertation. One is the lead university and the other is a partner university.
6. A doctoral student in the *Cotutelle* doctoral studies must be a doctoral student at both universities. In addition to the lead university, they must be enrolled in the partner university in accordance with the standard procedures of that university.
7. The cooperation between the universities in the training of a doctoral student in the *Cotutelle* doctoral studies shall be the object of an agreement setting out all the conditions necessary for the implementation of these doctoral studies in accordance with the legal acts in force in the participating countries and signed by representatives of the two universities.
8. The dissertation shall be prepared at both universities under joint supervision of at least two supervisors. The evaluation and defence of the dissertation shall be carried out in accordance with the

procedure laid down in the agreement, with shared responsibilities and participation of the partner universities.

9. A double degree shall be awarded upon completion of the *Cotutelle* doctoral studies and the defence of the doctoral dissertation. A joint degree shall not be awarded for the *Cotutelle* doctoral studies.

Chapter III. *Cotutelle* Doctoral Studies Agreement and Its Conclusion

10. The legal basis for the *Cotutelle* doctoral studies is the Joint Supervision Agreement, which is based on research collaboration between researchers from the two universities (hereinafter the ‘*Cotutelle* Agreement’).

11. Under the *Cotutelle* Agreement, the parties agree on:

- 11.1. the implementation and scope of doctoral studies at both universities;
- 11.2. the supervision conditions for shared doctoral studies;
- 11.3. the criteria for evaluating doctoral studies and the sharing of responsibilities between universities;
- 11.4. the organisation of procedures for evaluating the doctoral student’s learning outcomes;
- 11.5. the conditions for funding doctoral studies;
- 11.6. the procedure for the examination, approval, and evaluation of doctoral dissertations;
- 11.7. the conditions for awarding a doctoral diploma and/or scientific degree certificate;
- 11.8. copyright.

12. The *Cotutelle* Agreement may be concluded between the University (the lead university) and a foreign university (the partner university), provided that the latter’s substantive requirements for the training of doctoral students are equivalent to the Lithuanian standards for the training of doctoral students. The partner university should also be officially part of the higher education system of the country concerned, or be recognised by the authorities of that country.

13. Each university participating in the agreement must have a right to award doctoral degrees under its national legal acts.

14. The agreement shall be concluded between the universities represented by the rectors or their authorised persons and signed by the doctoral student and their supervisors. A model form of such *Cotutelle* Agreement is set out in the Annex to these Guidelines.

15. The *Cotutelle* Agreement can also be concluded when the foreign university is the lead university and the University is the partner.

16. It is recommended to conclude the *Cotutelle* Agreement at the beginning of studies – in the first year of doctoral studies but no later than the second year of the doctoral studies.

17. The conclusion of the *Cotutelle* Agreement is normally initiated when a doctoral student has already been accepted for doctoral studies at one of the partner universities.

18. The *Cotutelle* Agreement is drawn up individually for each doctoral student and is signed when the doctoral student is registered at both universities.

19. The *Cotutelle* Agreement requires the agreement of supervisors from both universities to jointly supervise the dissertation. Supervisors may only be persons having the right to supervise doctoral students in accordance with the legal acts in force in their country and at the university.

20. Preparation of the *Cotutelle* Agreement:

20.1. in preparation for concluding the *Cotutelle* Agreement, the doctoral student and/or their supervisor and the potential doctoral student’s supervisor agree on the possibilities of joint supervision

and discuss the conditions for the funding and execution of the *Cotutelle* doctoral studies, i.e. establish which university will be the lead university and which one will be the partner;

20.2. the period of the doctoral studies is scheduled, establishing the periods during which the doctoral student will study or carry out research at the lead university and at the partner university;

20.3. the head of the VU School of Doctoral Studies (if such a school, corresponding to the doctoral field of research, is operating at the University) and the Doctoral and Postdoctoral Studies Office shall be informed of the outcome of the agreement.

21. The *Cotutelle* Agreement with the partner university is drawn up by the Doctoral and Postdoctoral Studies Office in collaboration with the School of Doctoral Studies (if any).

22. During the coordination of the draft *Cotutelle* Agreement, the following shall be established:

22.1. how much of the doctoral studies period the doctoral student must spend at the partner university, subject to the requirement that the doctoral student should spend no less than six months of the doctoral studies period at the partner university (not necessarily all of it continuously);

22.2. the language in which the doctoral dissertation will be written and defended. The doctoral dissertation shall be written in the language of instruction of one of the two universities or in a third language;

22.3. the university where their dissertation will be defended;

22.4. what the composition of the doctoral dissertation defence panel must be and how it will be coordinated;

22.5. other conditions laid down in the legal acts governing doctoral studies that must be met in order to be awarded a double doctoral degree.

Chapter IV. Process of Doctoral Studies

23. The doctoral dissertation must be prepared and the research must be carried out at both universities.

24. The doctoral student's achievements shall be evaluated in accordance with the provisions of the agreement.

25. The dissertation shall be defended at the university specified in the agreement, in accordance with the procedures laid down in the legal acts of that university.

26. The doctoral dissertation defence panel must be coordinated between the two universities and meet the requirements laid down in the legal acts of both universities.

27. The decision of the doctoral dissertation defence panel shall be recognised by both universities. It shall serve as the basis for each university to award a doctoral degree and a diploma of that university.

Chapter V. Final Provisions

28. The doctoral diploma issued to a doctoral student who has defended their dissertation must comply with the requirements for diploma templates as laid down by the State or the university awarding the diploma, and be signed by persons having the right and authorisation to sign it. The diploma shall indicate the university with which *Cotutelle* doctoral studies were jointly conducted.

29. The document certifying the award of the doctoral degree, signed by the members of the doctoral dissertation defence panel, shall be drawn up in two copies and stored at both universities.

(Model form of the agreement on the joint supervision of doctoral studies between Vilnius University and University X)

**AGREEMENT ON THE JOINT SUPERVISION OF DOCTORAL STUDIES BETWEEN
VILNIUS UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY X**

Vilnius University (hereinafter the ‘VU’), legal entity code 211950810, the address of the head office Universiteto g. 3, Vilnius, represented by Rector Prof. Rimvydas Petrauskas, acting in accordance with the Statute of Vilnius University,

and

University X (hereinafter the ‘X’ or the ‘partner university’), the address of the head office _____, represented by _____, acting in accordance with _____, hereinafter both collectively the ‘Partners’, and each individually as the ‘University’, in accordance with the following legal acts:

- the Republic of Lithuania Law on Higher Education and Research approved by Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania No. XI-242 of 30 April 2009;
- the [Regulations on Doctoral Studies approved by Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania No. V-739](#) of 18 May 2020;
- the Regulation of Doctoral Studies at Vilnius University approved by Resolution of the Senate of Vilnius University No. SPN-44 of 17 October 2023;
- _____;
- _____;

and taking into account that the Partners have a mutual interest to establish and develop scientific cooperation between their research groups and aim to promote the mobility of doctoral students, have concluded the following agreement (hereinafter the ‘Agreement’) on the joint supervision of the doctoral dissertation of _____, a doctoral VU student in the field of _____ in the area of _____, date of birth _____, residing at _____, contact details _____ (hereinafter the ‘doctoral student’).

Article 1. General Provisions

The Partners shall assume joint responsibility for supervising the doctoral student’s research activities, study progress, dissertation defence procedure, and award of the doctoral degree.

Article 2. Supervision of the Doctoral Student

The doctoral student shall be assigned two academic supervisors:

at VU:

- supervisor – (academic degree and full name);
- unit – _____;
- academic position – _____;
- contact details – _____.

at X:

- supervisor – _____;
- unit – _____;
- academic position – _____;

- contact details – _____.

The academic supervisors of the doctoral student shall undertake to assume all supervisory responsibilities and consult with each other as necessary to assess the doctoral student's progress and research activities.

Article 3. Obligations

Both Partners shall undertake to keep each other informed of the progress and completion of the doctoral student's studies.

Upon completion of the dissertation, but no later than eight weeks prior to the joint defence thereof (see Article 16), the Partners shall inform each other of the following: the completion of the doctoral study programme (if applicable) (see Article 6); the approval of each University for the dissertation defence (see Article 14); and the agreement of each University on the composition of the joint dissertation defence panel (see Article 15). Each University shall designate a person and/or unit responsible for such communication:

at VU:

the Doctoral and Postdoctoral Studies Office of the Department for Research and Innovation, email: drs@cr.vu.lt.

at X:

_____.

Article 4. Admission to Doctoral Studies. Dissertation Topic

The doctoral student shall be admitted to doctoral studies at both universities in accordance with their respective procedures, specifying the following:

- **VU as the lead university:**

science field – _____;

start of studies – _____;

- **X as the partner university:**

science field – _____;

start of studies – _____;

Doctoral dissertation topic: _____.

Article 5. Doctoral Tuition Fees

If the doctoral student is admitted to a State-funded place at VU, no tuition fee shall be applied. If the doctoral student is admitted to a non-State-funded place at VU, the established doctoral tuition fee shall be paid.

The doctoral student admitted to VU shall pay any fees applicable at the university X according to its legal regulations.

Article 6. Doctoral Studies

The doctoral student who has fulfilled all the requirements of the study part outlined in the work plan approved by VU shall be exempted from doctoral studies at the partner university unless otherwise agreed.

Article 7. Doctoral Studies Progress and Time Management

The doctoral student shall alternate studies between the partner universities. The specific periods for conducting research shall be agreed upon and set by the academic supervisors in consultation with the doctoral student.

The doctoral student's work plan shall ensure that no less than six months are spent conducting research at the partner university.

The doctoral student's supervisors shall ensure that the doctoral student adheres to the agreed schedule for doctoral studies and research.

Article 8. Finance

No financial settlements shall be made between the Partners unless otherwise agreed.

Article 9. Insurance

The doctoral student shall undertake to secure health insurance or insurance against accidental physical damage and civil liability while performing tasks related to doctoral research at the partner university in accordance with the institutional and national regulations in force at that University.

Article 10. Protection of Research Results and Intellectual Property Rights

None of the provisions of this Agreement shall affect either party's property rights to its prior knowledge and related intellectual property rights established before the conclusion of this Agreement or arising outside the course of the doctoral studies.

The research results produced by the doctoral student at either of the partner universities with the sole funding and support of that University shall be the exclusive property of that partner university and the doctoral student.

The obtained research results shall be jointly owned by both Partners and the doctoral student, provided that all parties have contributed to their creation and the characteristics of the results are such that they cannot be separated. If necessary, a separate agreement shall be made to cover protection measures and the use of jointly owned results.

The research results obtained from doctoral studies research, including the publication and use thereof, shall be protected in accordance with the applicable legal acts of each country and each University.

Each University shall have a non-exclusive, non-transferable, and fully paid-up right to use all the research results for further internal non-commercial research and educational purposes.

Article 11. Confidentiality

Each party shall agree not to disclose, to any third party, any information disclosed to it under this Agreement and identified as confidential by the disclosing party. This obligation shall remain in effect for XX years from the date of disclosure or from the date of termination of this Agreement, whichever duration is longer.

Article 12. Publications

Each publication (including the doctoral dissertation) relating to the results of the research on the dissertation topic shall be submitted to the partner university for review at least 30 calendar days before the publication submission. The partner university shall have the right to review the proposed publication within the 30-day period and submit the following proposals: (1) to remove confidential information and/or (2) reasonably delay publication to ensure the protection of the results. Such a reasonable delay may not exceed three months from the date of receipt of the publication proposal. If no comments are received within the specified period, the proposal shall be considered approved for publication or presentation.

The publication must acknowledge the collaboration between the Partners and indicate the co-authors from the partner university who contributed to the results, following generally accepted guidelines for authorship of scientific publications.

Article 13. Doctoral Dissertation

The dissertation must be written in grammatically correct language in accordance with the writing standards and language norms. The text shall be written in English or in another language if agreed thereto by the Partners.

The abstract of the dissertation shall be drawn up in Lithuanian and English.

The formatting of the dissertation shall comply with the rules of the partner university that will host its defence. The first page of the dissertation must list both partner universities.

Article 14. Preliminary Review of the Doctoral Dissertation Before Defence

Each University shall ensure that the doctoral student has fulfilled all the requirements set out in the doctoral studies' work plan before approving the doctoral dissertation for defence. The defence of the doctoral dissertation shall be organised only if both Partners, in accordance with their respective legal acts, agree that the doctoral studies' work plan has been implemented.

The doctoral dissertation shall be defended (see Article 16) at a public meeting of the doctoral dissertation defence panel, which shall be established in accordance with the provisions of Article 15. If either University does not approve the doctoral dissertation for defence, the Agreement between the Partners shall be terminated.

Article 15. Doctoral Dissertation Defence Panel

The doctoral dissertation defence panel shall be established in accordance with the legal acts governing doctoral studies at the partner universities.

In the event of conflicting regulations on the composition of the doctoral dissertation defence panel or other contradictions, the legal acts of the University hosting the public defence shall prevail.

In all cases, the doctoral dissertation defence panel shall be composed of members from both Partners and at least one external member.

Article 16. Joint Defence of the Doctoral Dissertation

If a preliminary review of doctoral dissertations is required at one or both partner universities before the public defence session, it shall be conducted upon agreement between both Partners. The outcome of this review shall determine whether the dissertation is adequately prepared, meets the applicable requirements, and can be submitted for defence. If necessary, the members of the doctoral dissertation defence panel shall be allowed to participate in the meeting via video conferencing.

Immediately after the public doctoral dissertation defence session, the minutes of the doctoral dissertation defence panel shall be drawn up and signed by all the members present at the meeting, confirming the decision on the awarding/denial of the doctoral degree. The minutes shall be sent to both Partners.

Article 17. Awarding of the Doctoral Degree

If the doctoral student successfully defends their dissertation before the doctoral dissertation defence panel, a double doctoral degree shall be awarded to the doctoral student:

- VU shall award the doctoral student the doctoral degree and the Doctoral Diploma of Vilnius University;
- University X shall award _____.

Article 18. Dispute Resolution

Any disputes shall be reported to the respective authorities of both Partners.

The rectors or their authorised persons shall mediate disputes arising between the Parties that may affect the continuity of doctoral research.

Any dispute between the Partners concerning the interpretation, conclusion, and performance of this Agreement that cannot be settled amicably shall be submitted to a competent court of first instance in

accordance with the jurisdiction and law of the defendant. However, none of the provisions in this Article shall prevent the University from seeking an injunction from any court of the competent jurisdiction.

Article 19. Protection and Processing of Personal Data

The Partners shall undertake to comply with the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, as well as with the applicable national legislation. During the cooperation period, the Partners may share the personal data of the participating individuals for administrative purposes. The Partners shall agree that the processing of contact information shall be limited to the extent necessary for the performance of this Agreement.

Article 20. Validity, Amendment, and Termination of the Agreement

This Agreement shall enter into force upon signature and shall remain valid until the issue of the double doctoral diploma.

Amendments to this Agreement must be approved by the respective institutions of both Partners and the written consent of all signatory parties.

This Agreement shall be automatically terminated in the event of the cessation of cooperation between the doctoral student and one of the partner institutions, or the doctoral student's withdrawal from the doctoral studies.

Either University may terminate this Agreement if there is clear and convincing evidence that the partner university is involved in severe human rights violations. The University seeking to terminate this Agreement shall notify the other University in writing, providing sufficient time to respond to the allegations.

Article 21. Language of the Agreement

This Agreement is concluded in _____.

Signatures of the Partners:

Signature of the doctoral student: